Information in this book was accurate at the time of printing.

However, please check with the appropriate agencies to ensure information is accurate before acting on it.

See our website for updates and changes that are brought to our attention:
www.thecalgaryfoundation.org
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Preface

The Guide for Successful Groups is for you if:

- You have never been involved in a volunteer organization before.
- You are new to the volunteer sector in Canada.
- You are trying to figure out the language of the volunteer sector.
- You want a basic map for developing your volunteer group.

The language used in the volunteer or not-for-profit sector can be very confusing. You will find a number of things in this book to help you:

- It has been written in plain language.
- Each section covers key points. If you need more information, resources are listed at the end of each section.
- Words in bold can be found in the glossary. (See page 104.)

You can read the book from cover to cover or you can read the chapters that are useful to you.

If you have any comments about the book, please feel free to contact The Calgary Foundation at info@thecalgaryfoundation.org or by calling 802-7700 and asking for the Neighbourhood Grants Coordinator.

For updates, corrections, links to useful websites, or to download this entire book go to our website: www.thecalgaryfoundation.org.
Acknowledgements

The Calgary Foundation would like to thank the following individuals and groups who worked with us to develop this book:

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**Focus groups**

Alberta New Sudan Community Association

Culturally Diverse Community Helpers

Heart of the North East Community Coordinating Council

**Production support**

Verge Design Works

Topline Printing

If you look closely you will see that almost anything that really matters to us, anything that embodies our deepest commitment to the way human life should be lived and cared for, depends on some form – often many forms of volunteerism.

*Margaret Mead, anthropologist*
Section 1

Before you start a new group

Volunteer groups get started in many ways. Sometimes they start over a cup of coffee. Sometimes they start at someone’s kitchen table. Sometimes they start at a community meeting. There are some important things to think about before starting a new group.

In Calgary, there are over 4,000 not-for-profit groups. All of these groups need resources – both people and money. It is important to think about what you want your new group to do. Is someone else already doing it? You can do more, sooner, by working with a group that is already in place.

Groups come together either because they see an opportunity or a problem. It is important to talk about how people in your group understand the opportunity or problem:

• How would each person define it?
• What facts do you have?
• How do people feel about it? What gives people hope? What makes people worried?
• What are the possible responses to the issue?

What does your group hope to accomplish? How will things look in the future because of your efforts? Some things to think about when you are discussing this are:

• What will happen if you do nothing?
• How hard are you willing to work? Is this a long term or short term project?
• Who else is doing this work?
• What resources do you need?
Your group may not be able to answer all these questions. It might help to talk to people outside your group who are working in the same area.

- Make a list of all the people or groups you know who could share their experiences with you.
- Arrange to meet with them.
- Talk to them about how they understand the issue. Which organizations are doing what? Where are the gaps?
- Bring the information back to the group.
- Talk about what you learned. Do you see different opportunities now? Do you understand the issue differently?
- Can you work with one of these groups to meet your goals?

If you feel you need to start a new group, think about:

- What you are offering to people.
- What your key messages are.
- Who you want to join you and why.
- Who you should work with right away.
- What resources you will need to start.

Section Two will help you start your new group.

**Who to talk to**

Don’t know where to start? These groups can help you find out who is doing what in Calgary.

**City of Calgary Information Centre**

Phone: (403) 268-2489

Check their website: www.informcalgary.org

This is a great place to start. They can tell you which groups in Calgary are doing what. Call them or check their website.
The RITE Line:
The RITE Line lets you call anyone who works for the Government of Alberta. There is no cost for the call. Dial 310-0000. Then, dial “0” to speak to an operator.

Hint: If you get lost in a telephone system of choices, dial “0.” That will usually get you to the receptionist or operator.

Calgary Public Library (Downtown)
616 Macleod Trail SE
3rd Floor, North Reference Desk
Phone: (403) 260-2782
The library has books that list non-profit groups and funders. You can use these books free at the library. Library staff are happy to help you.

Federation of Calgary Communities (FCC)
Phone: (403) 244-4111  www.calgarycommunities.com
FCC is a group for all community associations in our city. Call FCC to find out about the community association in your neighbourhood. They can also help if you want to start a new community association.

Calgary and Area Child and Family Services
Phone: (403) 297-8080
Each area of the city has a Community Resource Centre. Call to find out about the Community Resource Centre in your area. They can help connect you with other groups and volunteers in the community.

Community and Neighbourhood Services, City of Calgary
Phone: (403) 268-5111
This City department works with neighbourhood groups. Ask for the community social worker or community recreation coordinator for your neighbourhood.

Alberta Community Development (ACD)
ACD is a government office. They provide information and support to volunteer groups at no cost. Phone 310-0000 (the RITE Line) and ask to talk to someone in the Board Development Unit.

Calgary Multicultural Centre
835 – 8th Avenue SW
Phone: (403) 237-5850
Call them if you are a cultural group. Also, call them if your work has anything to do with cultural issues.
Volunteer Calgary

Main office: 11th Floor,
Library: 2nd Floor
1202 Centre Street SE
Phone: (403) 231-1426 (Library)
       (403) 265-5633 (Main office)

Call to check hours.
Volunteer Calgary works with many groups. They can tell you who
else works in your area of interest. Their library is open to anyone,
free of charge. To borrow books, you must pay a $25 membership
fee for the year.

Rural groups: Call your local town office. Ask for the staff person
responsible for Family and Community Support Services. Or, ask for the
person who works with community groups.

RECOMMENDED BOOK
Forming and managing a non-profit organization in Canada. (1986)
International Self-Counsel Press; Vancouver, BC.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITE
Use the Canada Revenue Agency website to find groups in Calgary.
  • Go to www.ccra.ca.
  • Choose English or French.
  • In the side bar on the left, choose “Charities.”
  • In the 2nd paragraph of the text page, click on “Search.”
  • On the Search page, enter “Calgary” for the City box.
  • Click on the words in blue that say “Category Code Description” to find
    options for types of groups you can search by. Go back to the Search page.
  • Enter the category you are looking for in the search field “Category Code.”
  • Click on “Search.”
  • You will see a list of organizations. If you click on the organization it will
give you an address.

All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library.
See page 9 for address and phone number.
Section 2

Starting your own group

A group is only as good as its foundation. The foundation of a group is its **values**, **vision** and **mission statement**. It may take a few meetings to write these statements. But, it is very important work. Take the time to build these statements now. They will save a lot of conflict in the future. They will help you tell potential **members**, **funders** and other **organizations** about your work.

Naming your group

Before you work on your statements, you may want to decide on a name. The Societies Act has rules about how to name your group. If you plan to register as a **society** (see Appendix B) your group’s name must have three things:

- One of these words:
  - society, association, club, fellowship, guild, foundation, institute, league, **committee**, council, **board**, centre, bureau.
- A unique word or location. It should set apart the group’s name. It could be Airdrie, or Calgary. Or, pick a word that means something to your group, like Jambalaya.
- A word or phrase that says what the group is or does. It could be something like Youth Employment.

Choose something short and clear. That way, people can remember it easily. Put the most important word first. Your name affects who joins. Try it out on people outside the group. What do they think?

*Example:*

Youth in Motion Employment Bureau or
The Skateboarders Council of Calgary

Will you register as a society? If so, you must do a name search to make sure no other group has the same name. See Appendix B for more information.
Values, vision and mission

Values, vision and mission statements explain why a group exists. These statements guide decisions about what programs and services to offer. They help set the priorities for spending money. They are used to evaluate the work the group does. They remind the group of where they want to go.

Values

Values are the ideas that are most important to your group. These principles guide your group’s behaviour, services and programs.

Values should be posted where volunteers can see them. They should be kept in mind while planning each year. Values should be reflected in all areas of the group’s work – from recruiting staff and volunteers to developing programs and services.

Examples:

Calgary Homeless Foundation
- To preserve the dignity of an individual to have a place to call home, a place that is adequate, accessible, safe and affordable.
- To foster respect for the homeless.
- To work in collaboration with the Calgary community.
- To advocate social responsibility to address homelessness issues.

YMCA Calgary
- YMCA Calgary is committed to practicing and demonstrating the core values of respect, honesty, responsibility and caring in all aspects of the organization.

Calgary Immigrant Aid Society
- CIAS is committed to the values of equity, inclusion and diversity.
**Vision statement**

A vision statement says how you want your future community to be. Vision statements give a group something to focus their actions on. The vision statement is written as if you have already achieved your goal. It should be realistic and doable.

**Examples:**

*Calgary Homeless Foundation*

Calgarians have access to housing where they feel safe and secure.

*Bowmont All Season Services*

Our community is a place where seniors and persons with disabilities live with independence and dignity.

**Mission statement**

A mission statement tells the purpose of the organization. It says what you do for whom. It may also say:

- Who you are (youth, seniors, teachers).
- How you do your work.
- Why you do it.

It is to the point, often one sentence. It makes sense to the public.

**Examples:**

*Calgary Immigrant Aid Society*

The Calgary Immigrant Aid Society is dedicated to assuring immigrants (for whom) the opportunity to participate fully, both as contributors and beneficiaries of Canadian society. (what)
Calgary Women’s Emergency Shelter
To end abuse and violence
in the lives of women and their families
through empowerment, protection,
intervention, advocacy, education and the
mobilization of community resources.

Bowmont All Season Service
Bowmont All Season Services is:
• A volunteer based, community driven initiative
• Dedicated to providing affordable yard care
• For low income seniors and persons with disabilities
• So they may remain in their homes

Here is an activity that will help your group write its mission statement:
1. Give everyone a paper or post-it-note. Ask them to write one sentence saying what you do and for whom.
2. Write each sentence on a flip chart.
   Or have them stick their post-it-note on the wall.
3. Find words or phrases on which everyone agrees.
4. Use these to write your mission statement.
Check with people in the group. Make sure the statement clearly says what you will do for whom.
Now that you have your values, vision and mission statements you can talk more about:

- What you are offering to people.
- What your key messages are.
- Who you want to join your group and why.
- Who you should work with right away.
- What resources you will need to start.

**What’s next?**

Now you know who you are and what you want to do. The next step is to decide how you are going to do it. Section 3 talks about tools – goals, **objectives** and a **strategic plan** – that will help you decide how to carry out your mission statement.

---

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**


**Strategic planning in social service organizations: a practical guide.** (2001) Canadian Scholars’ Press Inc.; Toronto, ON.

**RECOMMENDED WEBSITES**

[www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/sat/](http://www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/sat/)
Takes you step by step through the process of developing a mission statement and a strategic plan.

[www.mapnp.org/library](http://www.mapnp.org/library)
Online management library with short articles on everything to do with not-for-profit management.

*All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.*
Section 3

Planning tools

A strategic plan ties together vision, mission, goals and objectives. It can help keep your board and volunteers focused. It can also help you evaluate how successful you are.

Example:

Vision Statement: Calgary celebrates the gifts and assets of our culturally diverse community.

Mission Statement: To give Calgary’s many cultural communities a chance to enhance learning in Calgary schools.

Goal: Strengthen the board through board development workshops.

Objective: Hold two workshops about financial statements and fundraising this fiscal year. Workshops will take place at board meetings. They must cost little or nothing.

Why plan?

A good plan makes your work easier. It also makes your organization stronger. As people in the organization change, a strategic plan keeps everyone moving towards the same goals. A good strategic plan will:

• Explain where the group wants to go.
• Give members a way to measure things. It can measure what the group has done compared to what it planned. Members will feel good when the group makes progress.
• Help you to see future problems. That way you can avoid them.
• Make the best use of resources on hand.
• Set realistic goals for the year.
• Give a clear picture to possible funders.
• Help you attract new members and develop partnerships.
A strategic plan answers four questions:
  • Where are you now?
  • Where do you want to go?
  • How will you get there?
  • How will you measure your progress?

**What is in a strategic plan?**

A strategic plan should include:
  • A study of what is going on in the community you serve.
  • A study of your organization’s own strengths and challenges.
  • Goals and objectives for the year as well as a review of long-term goals and objectives.
  • A plan of action that says who will do what, when, and using which resources.
  • Direction for measuring the success of projects and activities.
  • Financial information to support your plan.
  • An organizational calendar. (See page 20.)

**Putting it all together**

**What is going on in your community?**

Each year, find out who does the same or similar work. Talk to these organizations and people before your planning meeting. Have volunteers call or meet with them. They can report to your group at the planning meeting. Talk about changes that affect the people you serve. Programs may change. Government policies might change. Or, there could be changes in the community (economic or social).

**What is going on in your group?**

Many groups use a tool called SWOT. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
When you do a SWOT analysis, you ask four questions:

- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What new opportunities do you see this year?
- What are the threats that you need to keep in mind?

**Goals and objectives**

You may agree on what you want to do (your vision and mission). But you might not agree on how to do it (your goals and objectives). Goals and objectives give you a road map for your organization. They help you decide what your priorities are.

Each goal says one thing you will do and how. For example, a goal of a cultural group may be, “To encourage our youth to value their heritage through art and culture classes.” Goals are more specific than a mission statement.

Objectives are the specific activities you will do to achieve each goal. Each goal may have a number of objectives. Objectives have four parts.

- What specific tasks or activities will be done?
  
  **Example:** To train youth in traditional dances.

- How much will be done?
  
  **Example:** By providing four classes each year to 20 students.

- Time limit to reach the goal.
  
  **Example:** By the end of the year.

- Cost.
  
  **Example:** Charging students enough to break even for costs but not make a profit.

Some goals will take years to achieve. Others will be achieved within the year. If you are a new group it may be best to have one large goal and one or two smaller goals. Each year you should go over them. Make sure they are realistic. Change ones that are no longer important. Add new ones as the group changes.
**Finding your focus**

As you set goals and objectives, your group may want to do many different things. You may not have the resources or time to do them all. This exercise can help your group decide what is most important.

1. Post big pieces of paper on a wall. Everyone should be able to see them. Write headings that mean something to your group. Headings might be *board development, membership, programs and services, fundraising and finances, and/or volunteers.*

2. Give everyone three pieces of blank paper and a felt pen. You can use post-it-notes if it is easier. Ask people to write in large letters. On each paper, have people write the three most important things they think your group needs to do.

3. Have people post their papers on the wall. They should put them under the right heading. “Dance groups for youth” would go under *programs.* “Find new board members” would go under *board development.* Group together ideas that are like each other.

4. Now, give people three colour-dots. Have them put dots by items they feel are important (one on each item). Now look and see which items have the most dots.

5. Look at how many resources you have. How much time do you have? How many items can you really do in the year? Decide which are most important. Which can you do well? Which are most critical to the organization? Can some wait until next year? Choose two to four to focus on for the year. Call these your areas of focus for the year. Build your goals and objectives from these.

Now that you have your goals, objectives and a strategic plan you can use it to answer some other questions about your group:

- How big should your group be? Who should be in it?
- Where should your group meet?
• What kinds of records should you keep?
• How much money do you need to do your work?

Tools for planning
Two tools can help you check your plan. They make sure that you do not plan more than you can do well. And, they make sure that you have the resources and time to carry out the plan. The first tool is an action planning chart. The second is an organizational calendar.

Action planning chart
An action planning chart helps you put all your plans in one place. It is in a simple format that anyone can read. You can check this chart through the year. That way you can see if you are making progress. You can have a separate chart for each program or committee. There should be an overall chart for the board members. Keep a copy in the board manual.

The chart helps the board think about the goals and objectives for the year:
• Are they realistic? Do they look at both human and financial resources?
• Are different groups in your organization doing the same things?
• Are planned activities in keeping with the mission statement of the organization?

Steps in making an action planning chart
• Activities: Decide on actions or activities to meet each goal. Sometimes these will be your objectives. Sometimes you will need more detail.
• Tasks: Break down each activity into small tasks that people can manage.
• Responsibilities: Give the responsibility for each task to the right person or group. This person or group can get others to help if needed.
• Time-lines: Set time-lines for the start-up and end of each task. Be sensible with the time-lines. Allow time for the unexpected.
• Resources: Figure out the resources needed to do the activities and tasks. Think about people, money and other resources.
**Example:**

Focus: Building our board

Goal: Strengthen the financial capacity of our board.

Objective: Find people to give two workshops. One will be about how to read financial statements. The other will be about fundraising. They will be held at board meetings. They will cost little or nothing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity (What)</th>
<th>Task (How)</th>
<th>Responsibility (Who)</th>
<th>Timeline (When)</th>
<th>Resources (With What)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Board training</td>
<td>Workshop: Reading Financial Statements</td>
<td>Vice-chair</td>
<td>September board meeting</td>
<td>Alberta Community Development facilitator (free?) Buy 12 handbooks @ $12.00 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workshop: Fundraising Rules</td>
<td>Director of Fundraising</td>
<td>December board meeting</td>
<td>Alberta Gaming Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Organizational calendar**

Make an organizational calendar at the start of the year. You can get one-year calendars at stationary stores. Post it where people can see it. Add to it when you need to. Include the following items on your calendar:

- Dates of regular society meetings, **Annual General Meeting** (AGM), or other meetings to which you must report.
- Deadlines for **grant proposals**, insurance payments, sending **annual reports** and financial statements to provincial authorities, reports to federal authorities about **charity** status and fiscal year end.
- Dates for events, fundraising, programs, and regular duties.
- Staff and board holidays.
Planning tips

- Be realistic. Do you have enough time and money to do these things?
- Break down activities into small tasks.
- Do not overload one person or committee.
- Spread the time-lines over the full period of the plan. Do not plan lots of activities for busy times.
- Figure out what you will need to do each task. How much money will you need? Who will do it?
- Work with those who will put the plan into action. Include those whom the plan affects.
- Make sure different people have key responsibility for different goals.
- Do not over-load busy times, for example, pre-Christmas, long weekends or summer holidays.

Evaluation

Planning and evaluation are two sides of the same coin. While you are planning, you should be evaluating what you did before. You should also be thinking about how you will evaluate next year’s work. Section 4 talks about evaluation.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The guide to strategic planning for directors of non-profit organizations. (2001) Canadian Society of Association Executives; Toronto, ON.

Nine steps to strategic planning for non-profit organizations: workbook. (1990) LAMP Consultants to Non-Profits; Kitchener, ON.


★ Splash and ripple: using outcomes to design and guide community work. (2003) PLAN:NET; Calgary, AB.

All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.
Evaluation

Evaluation is an important tool to keep your organization moving forward. A good evaluation will give you honest information about your work. If you use this information when you are planning, you will get better and better at what you do. This will bring you closer to your vision for the organization.

Every evaluation, whether it is for one event or the entire year, should answer these questions:

- **Rationale** – Why did we take this direction or action in the first place?
- **Impacts and effects** – What happened because of the activity?
- **Goal achievement** – Has the activity gotten us what we expected?
- **Value for effort** – Was the outcome worth our effort and resources?
- **Alternatives** – Are there better ways of getting the desired result?
  Did we make mistakes or have problems?
  How can we avoid them next time?

**Keep it simple**

There are simple ways to evaluate activities and events as they happen. This way the information is fresh. If you wait until the end of the year, volunteers will forget important information.

Volunteer Evaluation: Page 56 has an example of a job description for a volunteer. The bottom of the form has a list of goals. This will help you evaluate the work of the volunteer. The person who coordinates your volunteers can meet with them throughout the year to see if they are meeting their goals. If volunteers are not meeting their goals, it is a chance to find a different way to do the work. If they are meeting their goals, it is a chance to thank them and recognize their work.

Program Evaluation: Programs and services should come from your goals and objectives. Goals and objectives tell you what the outcomes of the programs should be. Use the goals and objectives to evaluate the programs.
Before any event or start of a program, think about evaluation. What information do you need to collect for an evaluation? Who will collect it? You can then make forms or worksheets for people to use during the event. (See the questions at the beginning of this section. They will help you put together your evaluation.)

Take some time after each event or at the end of a set period of committee work. Talk with everyone who took part. Then write down what you learned. Include ideas that could improve the process next time.

Share this evaluation with the board. Include it in the board record book. That way the board and staff or volunteers can look at it when they need to. It will help them decide if the program should run again. It will help new volunteers organize the program next year.

Many things can come out of the evaluation process:

- Information about your clients: Who were they? How many? Who did we miss?
- Program or project descriptions, including checklists or a “how-to” guide for next time.
- Better idea of costs.
- Forms that make gathering information easier, quicker, and clearer.

There are whole books that talk about how to evaluate your work. What is important is that you answer the questions at the beginning of this section. This is especially true if you are a small group with few resources. If you are going to create a more complicated evaluation process, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the purpose of the evaluation?
- How will the results be used?
- What will you know after the evaluation that you don’t know now?
- What will you do after the evaluation that you can’t do now because you don’t have the information?

Outcome Measures/Logic Modeling:
Some organizations use an approach called Outcome Measures or Logic Modeling. Many funders ask groups to use it for planning and evaluation.

There are a number of books available about how to use this approach. The best resource on Outcome Measures is PLAN:NET’s book, *Splash and Ripple*. The Volunteer Centre Library has a copy.
Time for change

You know you need to change your organization when:

- Two parts of your group work on the same thing and do not know it.
- No one does important tasks.
- Some people have too much to do. Others do not have enough.
- The group spends too much time making plans. It does not spend enough time on actions.
- The group spends too much time in meetings.
- People do not show up for meetings.
- There are too many rules and limits.
- No one is sure who is responsible for what.
- Tasks have nothing to do with the vision and plans of the group.
- People quit or stop coming.

Some of these things may describe your group. If so, it is time to do some evaluation and planning!

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

The guide to strategic planning for directors of non-profit organizations. (2001) Canadian Society of Association Executives; Toronto, ON.

Splash and ripple: using outcomes to design and guide community work. (2003) PLAN:NET; Calgary, AB.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITE

http://www.mapnp.org/library/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm
Management Assistance Program website. Basic guide to program evaluation.

All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.
Section 5

What will your group look like?

There are many ways to set up your new group. You can have lots of structure or just a little. It depends on what you want to do. Simple can be better. Too much structure at the start may hold back the group.

Keep it simple

A small group may have no plans to register as a society. (See Appendix A and B for more on registering as a society or charity). You may not need a board of directors. But you still need to agree on some things:

- How will the group make decisions?
- How do you decide what the group works on?
- Who makes sure the group follows its goals and objectives?
- Who decides about money? (How will you raise money? How will you spend it? And, how will you keep track of it?)
- Who speaks for the group?
- Who calls meetings and keeps records?
- Who communicates with everyone in the group?

Many groups have a formal structure. They may have a board of directors, executive, committees, formal membership and paid staff. You may want a more formal structure if your group:

- Will have a lot of members or volunteers.
- Will have lots of programs and services.
- Will have a large budget or do a lot of fundraising.

If you are a small, informal group, with no plans to register as a society or charity, there is no need to have a board of directors. Once you decide to register as a society or charity, you must have a board.
A healthy organization:

- Knows why it came together. It sticks to that vision.
- Is open to change and other ways to do things.
- Supports everyone to take part to the best of their ability. It values people’s opinions.
- Makes decisions in a way that is clear to members.
- Shares knowledge within the organization.
- Balances decisions and action.
- Works on solutions rather than focusing on problems.
- Has good communication between members – members don’t speak negatively about each other.
- Creates trust so that members feel comfortable sharing what they really think.

Creating a board of directors

The members of the organization choose the board of directors. In a small organization, the members and the board may be the same people. The board leads the group toward the group’s vision. There are two common kinds of boards. One is a policy board or governance board. The other is a working board or administrative board.

A small group, with no paid staff, usually has a working or administrative board. A working board does all the work of the group. This means board members must volunteer time above and beyond meeting time.

A policy or governance board is good for groups with paid staff. The board sets policy and does the strategic planning. The staff carries out the plan. The board evaluates how successful the plan was. This helps them create a better plan for the next year.
Sometimes boards move back and forth between being working boards and policy boards. Changes in staff and financial resources may change the way a board works. The most important role of the board is to make sure the organization is doing the right work and doing it well.

In **legal** terms, the board is the organization. It must make sure the group stays within the regulations and laws for not-for-profits. It has overall responsibility for the business, legal and financial work of the organization. This is true of both working (administrative) and policy (governance) boards.

The board has these responsibilities:

- Creates and puts into action the group’s purpose or mission. Sets long and short-term goals for the group. Keeps track of the group’s progress.
- Knows what resources the group has and needs. Balances needs against resources. Takes part in fundraising.
- Makes policies for how the group runs.
- Knows and follows the **bylaws** of the group.

Boards can be as small as five voting members. You may have advisors who sit on the board but do not vote. More than 12 members makes it hard to get everyone to a meeting. Less than 12 means that a few people have to do a lot of work. Your **bylaws** should say the least and most number of board members you allow. (See page 99 for information about bylaws.)

**Board roles**

Most of the time, a board has a:

- **Chair** or president
- Vice-chair or vice-president
- Secretary
- Treasurer

These four form the executive committee. They are called the officers of the organization. In addition, a board has **directors**. The organization decides
how many directors to have and what their roles will be. For example, there may be a program director, a membership director and a director of communications. The number of directors depends on how much work needs to be overseen by the board. If you are a society, your bylaws will say how many people are elected to the board each year.

Here are some job descriptions of key board members.

**Chair** (also called chairperson, president, or chief officer of the society):
- Is in charge of all meetings of the society and board of directors.
- Prepares the **agenda** for each meeting.
- Calls and chairs meetings of the board and the executive committee.
- Is responsible for the direction of the board.
- Makes sure the board follows bylaws and **constitution**.
- Is the main spokesperson for the society.
- Usually has signing authority for the organization. This is the person who can sign legal documents on behalf of the organization.
- Carries out other duties assigned by the board.

Groups can have two chairs, called co-chairs, to share the work.

**Vice-chair** (vice-chairperson or vice-president):
- Is in charge of board meetings when the chair is not there.
- Is in charge of the **nominating committee** if there is no past-chair on the board.
- Carries out other duties as assigned by the board.
- Is often someone who is willing to become the chair.
- Often takes on other roles. For example, they may be the Director of Human Resources.
Secretary

- Goes to all meetings of the society and the board.
- Keeps good notes (called minutes) of meetings. (See page 42.)
- Makes sure there is quorum.
- Is in charge of the board’s mail.
- Brings the board record book to every meeting. (See page 35.)
- Keeps lists of names and addresses. Lists are of all directors and members of the society.
- Sends all notices of meetings.
- Keeps a list of committees and their membership.
- Keeps track of who has paid annual membership fees if required.
- Keeps a record of all changes to the bylaws and other organizational documents.
- Files all forms with the Corporate Registry, if the group is registered. Forms include the annual return, changes in the directors of the organization, and amendments to bylaws. (See Appendix B.)

The secretary has a key role in the organization. He or she must be organized. The secretary needs to know where all of the records are. He or she reminds board members about bylaws or past decisions. Records must be free of errors.

Treasurer

- Deposits all monies paid to the group in the group’s bank account.
- Puts together a budget each year. Monitors how the group spends money.
- Provides an income statement at each board meeting. (See page 74.) Fully explains income and spending to the board.
- Makes sure an audited statement of the financial position of the society is prepared at the end of each year. The treasurer presents the statement at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).
How to be a good board member

- Act in the best interests of the group and its membership. Put the interests of the group ahead of your own. Avoid conflict of interest when you act on behalf of the group.
- Be responsible.
  - Go to all meetings.
  - Get there on time.
  - Let the chair know, in advance, if you will not be at a board meeting.
  - Give written reports in advance of the meeting.
  - Be informed. Read minutes and reports before meetings.
- Do not tell volunteers, members or staff what to do unless it is part of your board role.
- Be fair. Say what you mean.
- Keep board business and private matters to yourself.
- Tell people about your group. Say good things about it!
- Learn about each part of your group – programs, policies and services.
- Know about needs and trends within the community, your membership, and the people your group serves.

Board tips

- Write full job descriptions for each board member. (See page 56.)
- Put together a training session for new board members.
- Plan how to find new board members. Always watch for good people who might want to be on the board.
- Having volunteers serve on committees first is a good way to train them for board work.
- Protect board members with good insurance. (See page 90.)
**Executive**

The chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary often make up the executive. They meet between the board of directors’ meetings. They do the work that comes up between board meetings. The board should agree on who makes what decisions. What can the executive decide? What must the whole board decide?

**Committees**

Board meetings can be time consuming. This happens if the board must talk about and decide on all of the non-profit’s work. It helps to form committees. These are smaller groups. They focus on one aspect or program of the non-profit.

In most cases, committee members come from the non-profit’s membership. The bylaws of some groups say that committees must be chaired by a member of the board. Committees can be permanent, such as a finance committee, or temporary.

If you are a small group, you may prefer to have task teams. These teams can be responsible for completing specific tasks. Once the tasks are complete, the team no longer needs to meet. These temporary teams or committees are often called “ad hoc” committees. They are more appealing to volunteers than sitting on a permanent committee.

Committees and task teams should have terms of reference. Terms of reference include:

- The name of the committee.
- Who sits on the committee and who chairs it.
- How long the committee will work (if it’s short-term).
- The long-term goals of the committee.
- The objectives for that particular year.

Each year, the committee should look over its terms of reference. That way, they can see what goals and objectives they have met. They can also update them for the following year. The board should have up-to-date terms of
reference for all committees. The committees should also provide brief minutes or updates to the board.

**Membership**

Some groups have a formal membership. If so, the members give the board the power to act. Members choose the board members. Members identify needs and give broad direction. If you are going to have a formal membership:

- Decide how people become members. Is membership free, or is there a fee?
- Keep a list of your members.
- Tell the public that they can become members.
- Remind people to renew their membership each year.
- Give receipts and membership cards.

Often, paying members receive benefits like a newsletter or paying less for events or programs. But in other cases, people become members because they care about what a group does. They don’t expect extra benefits. If you set a membership fee, you must keep an accurate list. The list keeps track of who paid how much and when.

**Tips**

- Keep fees low, below what people are able to give.
- You may want to offer levels of membership. Each level has different privileges and benefits, such as voting and non-voting. Just make sure you keep track of who has paid for what.
- Make a simple membership form, easy to fill out and hand in on the spot. (See next page.)
- You may want to offer opportunities for people to volunteer instead of paying a fee. Some community associations give free memberships to people who volunteer at their casinos and bingos.
- Privacy laws forbid giving membership lists to other organizations unless you have received written permission from members in advance.
Example:

ABC SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
____________________________________
Postal code: _____________________________
Phone: _________________________________
E-mail: _________________________________
Fax: _________________________________

Are you interested in volunteering?  □ yes  □ no

How did you hear about the organization? __________________________

Would you like to receive mailings? □ yes  □ no

Membership rate: □ Student $10  
□ Individual $15  
□ Family $20

Make cheque payable to ABC Society

Send this form and cheque to:
ABC Society
123 Canada Drive
Calgary, Alberta
T2N 2N2
RECOMMENDED BOOKS

★ Great board, plain and simple: a guidebook for non-profit managers and board members. (2003) Silver Creek Press; Edmonton, AB.


RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

★ www.boarddevelopment.org
Everything you need to know about boards of directors on an easy to use website.

Alberta Community Development in conjunction with the Muttart Foundation has published a whole series of handouts and resource handbooks on Board Development. You can print these from the internet free of charge. Topics available are:

• Board Building: Recruiting and Developing Effective Board Members for Not-for-Profit Organizations.
• Drafting and Revising Bylaws.
• Developing Job Descriptions for Board Members of Non-Profit Organizations.
• Hiring and Performance Appraisal of the Executive Director.
• Financial Responsibilities of Not-for-Profit Boards.

There are also excellent newsletters on organizational development available at the same site.

All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library.
See page 9 for address and phone number.
Section 6

Record keeping

In groups, people come and go. Because of this, it is important to keep good records. This saves time and resources. It helps old and new volunteers know what the organization has done in the past and why certain decisions were made.

There are two very important record keeping tools: the board record book and the board manual. Remember that these only help if you keep them up to date!

Board record book

The secretary looks after the board record book. A new one is started each year. This binder has all of the group’s governing documents: bylaws, goals and objectives, and a list of board members. Through the year, the secretary adds everything that relates to the board’s work. These include: minutes, agendas, letters, important e-mail, names of committee members, marketing materials like brochures, and newspaper clippings.

The binder is a year in the life of your group. Anyone who goes through it will know everything that happened in your group that year. Keep the binder in a central place so board members can use it.

Board manual

The board manual has all of the formal documents of the society. Every director should have a copy.

The board manual might hold the:

- Mission statement
- Constitution or bylaws
- Policies and/or procedures
- Past minutes
• Promotional brochures
• Job descriptions for board members (their job descriptions)
• History of the organization
• Descriptions of any programs
• Organizational chart showing how decisions are made
• Committees’ terms of reference
• Meeting information
• Current annual report and any important dates or events
• Current financial statements and the approved budget for the year
• Job descriptions of paid staff, if any
• Names, addresses, phone numbers of board and staff members

Each board member will add any documents that relate to their own position, such as:
• Plans and budgets for a special event.
• Reports, evaluations and financial records that are presented to the board.
• Letters or e-mail that relate to their position.

When a board member leaves the board, they give their manual to the person who takes over. This is important information. Incoming board members find it very useful. It makes it much easier to train new board members.

Policies and procedures

Policies are guidelines for running the organization. Most policies relate to finances, staff and volunteers. They must be consistent with your bylaws. They are developed by the board to make sure that decisions are made in a consistent way. Committees, staff and volunteers should let the board know when a policy is needed. They should also let the board know if a policy needs to be changed.
Examples:

Members must be over the age of 18.

Expenditures over $5,000 must be approved by the **board of directors**.

Procedures explain the step-by-step process for doing certain tasks in the organization including how, when and by whom. There should be procedures for all financial transactions. This includes issuing receipts and paying bills. There may be procedures for regular tasks like entering new members in the database.

Procedures should be developed by the volunteers or staff who are most knowledgeable about the work.

All policies and procedures need to be written down. Policies should be part of the board manual and updated as soon as they are made or changed. Procedures can be kept in the board manual. They should also be kept in a place where the people who need to use them can find them.

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**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**

*By definition: policies for volunteer programs. Manual for executive directors, boards & managers of volunteers.* (1996) Volunteer Ontario Center for Volunteers; Etobicoke, ON


**RECOMMENDED WEBSITE**

**Guide for the Development of Policies and Procedures.** National Adult Literacy Database Inc. Excellent examples and templates for all kinds of policies and procedures. Only available online.

*All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.*
Section 7

Meetings that work

Do you spend a lot of time in meetings? Most volunteers do. Good meetings help move a group forward. Bad meetings leave volunteers feeling tired and unmotivated. Being able to run a good meeting takes practice and planning. Here are some simple tips that will make your meetings more successful:

- Have meetings only if there is something to talk about. Everyone should know why you call a meeting.
- Set a date for the meeting that gives people enough time to plan to come.
- Set a time for the meeting to begin and end. Stick to it. Late-comers should find out what they missed on their own.
- Try to sit in a way where everyone can see each other (a circle if possible). Meetings are better when people can see each other’s faces. This helps people to take part.
- Have an agenda. (See pages 40-41.)
- Choose a person to write down what people say and decide. These are the minutes of the meeting. (See page 42). For some meetings, it is enough to write down decisions. This is true for smaller meetings, like committee meetings or meetings to plan events.
- Have a set way to make decisions. Make sure everyone understands how the group makes decisions.
- Choose someone to lead the meeting. This person is called the chair or chairperson. If you have a president, they are usually the chair. You can change who is chairing at each meeting. This helps people learn new skills.
- An issue might be very complicated. There may be information missing. If so, ask a group to work on it. At the next meeting, they
can recommend an action. Some **organizations** have committees. Committees do the research. Then they bring a recommendation back to the larger group.

- It is important for people to come to meetings. If people miss meetings, they cannot expect the group to go back over decisions of earlier meetings. They should read the minutes from the meeting they missed.

**Role of the chair**

- Starts and ends the meeting. Makes sure the group sticks to the agenda. The chair helps move the discussion forward if the group gets stuck on a topic or is off topic.

- Must be neutral. This means the chair does not take sides. If the chair feels strongly about an agenda item they can ask someone else to chair that part of the meeting so they can take part in the discussion.

- Makes sure everyone has equal time to talk. Politely tells people when their time to talk is over. Encourages everyone to speak up. The chair can start a round robin. This is when the chair asks each person to say what they think. This way everyone gets a chance to talk. In a round robin no one can interrupt the speaker.

- In big meetings, it helps to have a list of speakers. When people put their hand up to show they would like to speak, their name is written down by the chair or secretary. People speak in the order they put their hand up. If possible, it is helpful to write the names on a big sheet of paper posted at the front so everyone can see it. Then people know when it will be their turn.

- Encourages all group **members** to be active listeners.

- Sums up what people say for each item on the agenda. Makes sure that everyone understands the decisions. Sometimes it helps if the recorder reads the decision back to the group.

**Active listening** means that you put aside your own views. You listen carefully to what each person has to say. Here are some things that make it hard to be an active listener:

- Dislike or early judgment of the subject or the speaker.

- Hearing only what you want to hear.

- Interrupting the speaker.
Agenda

An agenda is a list of things to talk about at a meeting. The group will talk about the items in the order they are listed on the agenda. Important ideas should be at the start of the agenda.

- The secretary sends out the agenda and other information before a meeting. People may need to read information to understand the issues. This helps them make good decisions.
- Items from the last meeting are called Old Business on the agenda. These were items that needed more information or were not completed at the last meeting.
- People may have things they want to talk about at the meeting. If so, they should call the chair before the meeting. Then, the chair can add the item to the agenda.
- It helps to list action items from the last meeting. Do this under Old Business. This reminds people that they promised to do something. People will see their name on the agenda. Then, they are more likely to do their task for the meeting.
- Put time on the agenda to plan your next meeting. Agree about what should be on the next agenda. Base it on the meeting you just had.
- Plan how long you need to talk about each item. Time limits keep people on track.

When you look at your agenda, you should see that most of the discussion relates to your goals and objectives.

Example (see next page):
ABC SOCIETY BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, February 12, 200X
7:00 – 9:00 pm
Old Hall

Agenda

1. Call Meeting to Order 7:00
2. Changes to the agenda 7:05
3. Read and approve or correct Minutes of the Last Meeting 7:10
   (Only those who were at the meeting can approve them.)
4. Executive/Committee Reports 7:15
5. Old Business 7:45
   5.1 Date change of Celebration Dance
   5.2 Action items from last meeting
       Dale to report on cost of hall
       Jodi to report on invitation to MLA
6. New Business 8:30
   6.1 Review Annual Budget
   6.2 Proposal to Send Delegates to Conference
7. Announcements 8:45
8. Agenda for Next Meeting 8:50
9. Date of Next Meeting 8:55
10. End of meeting 9:00
Minutes

Minutes are a written record of what you talked about. Send people minutes of meetings as soon as you can. The purpose of the minutes is to:

- Have a lasting record of what happened at a meeting.
- Remind people what they promised to do.
- Let those who were not at the meeting know what happened.
- Help new members learn about the organization.
- Have a guide for evaluating an organization’s work.
- Keep track of progress.

Minutes should record:

- Date of meeting and time it began and ended.
- Who chaired and who was there.
- Decisions or motions that the group said yes to. We usually say the motion was carried. Write the key points of the debate. If asked, note who did not vote (abstained). Write down who was against the decision or motion.
- Decisions or motions that the group said no to. We usually say these motions were defeated. Be sure to write down why.

Example:

MINUTES OF THE
ABC ALBERTA SOCIETY BOARD MEETING
Monday, April 8, 200X
7:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Town Hall

Present: Mrs. Mehta (chair), Mr. Epp (recorder), Ms. Ayers, Mrs. Vizzutti, Mr. Dale, Mr. Edu, Mr. Fahl.

1. The Chair, Mrs. Mehta, called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. There were no changes to the agenda.
3. The minutes were corrected to show that Mr. Edu voted against the motion to increase the budget for the dance. Motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting on February 12, 200X as corrected. Moved by Mr. Epp, Seconded by Ms. Ayers.
   **CARRIED**

4. Executive and Committee Reports – Reports were submitted in writing. Each Committee Chair commented briefly on their report. There were no questions.

5. Old Business
   5.1. MOTION: Change the date of the Celebration Dance to September 14, 200X. Moved by Mrs. Vizzutti. Seconded by Mr. Dale. Discussion in favour:
   a) More people will attend after the summer holidays.
   b) It will be easier to get volunteers after the holidays.
   Discussion opposed:
   c) We will waste the work already done.
   **CARRIED**
   ACTION: Celebration Dance Committee will plan event for new date.

6. New Business
   6.1. MOTION: Send two delegates to the World Health Conference in Columbia. We will pay registration fees, airfare, accommodation, and meal expenses. Moved by Mr. Edu. Seconded by Mr. Fahl. Discussion in favour:
   d) The expense is not in the budget.
   e) Only a few people will benefit.
   Discussion opposed:
   a) The conference is an opportunity to promote the activities of our group.
   **DEFEATED**

7. Announcements: There were none.

8. Agenda of the next meeting
   8.1. We will talk about the fall fundraiser at the next meeting.

9. Next Meeting will be at 7:00 pm on June 21, 200X. It will be at the Green Community Hall.

10. Meeting ended at 10:00 pm.

Signed by:

Chair: ____________________________________________

Secretary (recorder): ______________________________________
**Agenda and minutes for a small group**

Even with ad hoc planning meetings, it helps to take minutes. You should write down:

- What the decision was.
- What action the group wants to take.
- Who is going to do it.
- The deadline for doing it.

If you are a small group or a committee you can use your agenda to create your minutes. Each person receives a copy of the agenda in the form of a chart. Leave enough space for them to take notes. When the meeting is finished, each person has a record of decisions, things they have committed to do, and when they must be done by.

Use it in the next meeting to see if people have done the things they promised to do. You may still want to have a recorder to make sure that there is an “official” copy with everything written down. This can be kept by the chair.

*Example (see next page):*

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**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**

*The guide to better meetings for directors of non-profit organizations.*
(2000) Eli Mina Consulting; Vancouver, BC.

*Mina’s guide to minute taking: principles, standards and practical tools.*
(2003) Eli Mina Consulting; Vancouver, BC.

All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library.
See page 9 for address and phone number.
### Example:

**AAS COALITION**  
**Sunday, April 18th, 200X**  
**6:00 pm – 8:00 pm**  
**Richmond/Knob Hill Community Association**  
**2433 – 26th Avenue SW**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda item</th>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>By when</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>Representatives from ABC introduced themselves and talked about the current work of their organization.</td>
<td>Would like copies of past minutes.</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Prior to the next meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:05</td>
<td>Minutes</td>
<td>Ellen noted that her name had been spelled incorrectly.</td>
<td>Correction made</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:10</td>
<td>Letter writing campaign task group</td>
<td>A full list of MLAs and aldermen with correct contact information is now available by e-mail and on the website as well as sample letters.</td>
<td>Each organization to distribute to their own members.</td>
<td>All organization reps</td>
<td>Prior to the next meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6:15  | Multi-stakeholder gathering        | An outline for the event has been developed. An invitation list needs to be agreed on and funders approached.                                                                                          | Submit suggestions for who to invite. | All organization reps | Friday, May 12  
|       |                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Develop a list of funders.          | Evelyn    | Friday, May 12                   |
| 7:50  | New business                       | Website has been updated. Please provide John with feedback.                                                                                                                                              | E-mail comments to John.            | All       | Friday, May 26                   |
| 8:00  | Next meeting–location?            | Tuesday, May 10. Monterey has offered their community hall. The address is 112-39th St.                                                                                                                    |                                     |           |                                  |
Section 8

Making decisions

In Canada, groups tend to use a combination of consensus decision making and Robert’s Rules of Order or Parliamentary Procedure to make decisions. Which process you use will depend on the formality of your group and how well people work together. Your group needs to agree on how decisions will be made. You may decide to use one of these models or a combination of both. Your group should also develop rules – a code of behaviour – about how people treat each other in meetings.

Code of behaviour

Some groups experience so much conflict that people leave the group. The culture of the group can make it hard to do good work. It helps to create a code of behaviour. The code says how people should treat each other. It can talk about meetings or about the whole organization. Give the code to volunteers and members. Also, post it where people can see it.

Example:

• Listen to the person who is speaking. Do not talk with the person beside you while someone else is talking.
• Show respect for everyone. You can show respect even if you disagree with someone. You show respect when you are polite and listen without interrupting. Do not yell at people, insult them, or call them names.
• If you disagree with someone, be specific about what you disagree with. Do not bring up past conflicts. Talk about right now. Talk about the topic. Do not talk about the person.
• Speak directly to people when you disagree or have an issue. Do not talk about them to other people and cause bad feelings.
• Sometimes you just have to agree that you disagree. There may be no right answer, no matter how strongly people feel.
• Do what you say you will do.
You can post this code at the beginning of each meeting as a reminder. If the meeting is not going well, the chair can stop the discussion and review them.

**Consensus**

Consensus decision making is a popular method for making decisions. Group members work together to develop a decision. The decision reflects the concerns and creativity of all the members in the group. The group works on developing a solution that best responds to the needs of the group. The goal is for everyone to agree with a decision or action. Then people will be more willing to support the decision. Building consensus requires:

- An effective facilitator.
- Active listeners who respect everyone’s opinions.
- Lots of time for discussion.
- Good information about the topic.

Taking time to build consensus can help to reduce the amount of conflict in a group.

**Steps in consensus**

1. All the information about the topic being discussed is put forward. It is important that everyone has the same information.
2. People ask questions to better understand the topic.
3. Once people agree on the key information, they can talk about their feelings. What makes them excited about the proposal? What worries them?
4. The group talks about issues that come up, one at a time. Options and alternatives are considered. The group talks about the consequences and impacts of different decisions. Minutes include the main points. They also record any new issues that come up.
5. The chair can test for consensus by counting the number of people who:
   - Agree/disagree
   - Agree in principle, with minor changes or concerns
c. Do not agree, but can live with the decision

d. Block. (Do not agree!)

If someone blocks, the group must keep talking

6. The goal is to agree on a solution and the actions to be taken. It may take more than one meeting to agree.

**Robert’s Rules of Order**

Robert’s Rules of Order and Parliamentary Procedure are the same. They are a set of rules for how to behave at meetings. The rules give everyone a chance to speak. They are a way to make decisions without confusion. In Canada, most non-profits, governments and businesses use Robert’s Rules.

Some organizations, like Calgary City Council, use Robert’s Rules in a very formal way. Other groups like community associations use them informally. Either way, it is important to understand the basic rules. This will give you confidence when you want to participate in a meeting where Robert’s Rules are being used. The chair plays an important role under Robert’s Rules of Order. So does the agenda.

**Motions**

A key part of Robert’s Rules is making a motion. A motion is a way to get the organization to discuss an issue. A motion is made by one person and seconded by another. People talk about the motion. Then everyone votes. Usually a simple majority (50% of the people at the meeting plus one) is enough for it to pass. Some organizations only use a motion to vote on things that have a legal implication for the organization like finances and policy.

**How to make a motion**

1. Request to speak

   a. Raise your hand to indicate that you would like to speak.

   b. Wait until the chair says you can talk. In a very formal group, the chair may say, “I recognize (your name).” This means they are giving you the chance to speak.

   c. Direct your motion to the chairperson.
2. Make your motion
   a. Speak clearly and to the point.
   b. Always state a motion in a positive way. Say, “I move that we …”
      Try not to say, “I move that we do not …”
   c. Do not talk about the reasons for your motion. That comes later.
3. The chair will ask for someone to second your motion. If no one
   **seconds the motion**, there is no discussion. The motion fails.
4. The chair reads your motion
   a. The chair will say, “It has been moved and seconded that we …”
      This puts your motion before the membership. They will talk
      about it and decide.
   b. Now, you can speak in favour of your motion. The mover of the
      motion always speaks first.
   c. Speak directly to the chair.
   d. Stay within the allowed time-limit for speaking.
   e. Stay on your subject.
   f. A mover may speak again only after other speakers are
      done. If the chair asks the mover to speak before this, they
      may do so.
5. The membership either talks about your motion, or moves to a vote.
   a. The chair asks, “Any discussion?”
   b. Many people might wish to speak. If so, the chair keeps a list
      of speakers.
   c. Raise your hand to show the chair that you want to speak. The
      chair will tell you when it is your turn to speak.
6. To change the motion
   a. Someone can suggest a change to the motion.
      This is called an **amendment**.
b. If the person who made the motion agrees with the amendment, it can be called a “friendly” amendment. In this case, the group can vote on the motion with the amendment. If it is not a “friendly” amendment, the group votes on the amendment. If the amendment is carried, the group votes on the motion with the amendment. If the amendment is defeated, the group votes on the motion without the amendment.

7. Put the Question to the membership
   a. The chair asks, “Are you ready to vote on the question?”
   b. If no-one wants to talk, everyone votes.
   c. If the debate goes on for a long time, someone can say, “I call the question.” The motion is voted on immediately. In this case, it must pass by a 2/3rds vote rather than by 50%.

**Vote on a motion**

Your bylaws should say:

- How many members need to be at the meeting to hold a vote. This is called **quorum**.
- In what cases the vote has to be more than 50% plus one of the people attending.
- How you will vote. For example, the chair can ask:
  - For a “show of hands” (people raise their hands).
  - Each person to say yes or no to the motion one at a time.
  - People to write their vote on a ballot (a piece of paper).

The chair can suggest what to do if the bylaws are not clear.

The chair must ask who agrees, who disagrees and who abstains (will not vote). These should be recorded in the minutes. If everyone agrees, it is recorded as unanimous.

A motion can be **carried** (the majority agrees), defeated (the majority disagrees) or tabled. Sometimes, people must know more to make an
informed vote. If so, someone may move that the item be tabled. This means that at a future meeting, when all the information is ready, the group will talk about it again.

**Tips**

- Motions must relate to items on the agenda.
- Ask the chair if you can make a motion.
- Speak clearly and to the point.
- Obey the rules of debate. Speak only when the chair says it is your turn. This way everyone has a chance to speak.
- Most importantly, be polite.

**What to do when things go wrong**

Conflicts are normal. They can be positive. Through conflict, people can learn about one another. They can learn more about the issue. And, they can come to understand someone else’s point of view. Conflict itself is not bad. It is the way people handle conflict that may cause problems.

When your group must talk about a touchy issue, think about the following:

- Is the issue clear? Does everyone understand the issue?
- Does the decision relate to your group’s goals and **objectives**?
- Are there enough facts to make a decision?
- What will be the effect of the decision?
- Who will be affected? Have you asked for their view?
- Have you heard the minority view?
- Have you allowed enough time to make the decision?

**Conflict resolution meeting**

It is good to deal with conflicts when they come up. If you ignore conflicts they often get worse. This can make it hard for people to work together. If there is fighting or disagreement in the group, you may have to call a **conflict resolution** meeting. You may want to ask someone from outside the group to run the meeting. We call that person a mediator.
These are the steps for a conflict resolution meeting:

1. Find a facilitator or negotiator. This should be someone who can stay calm. They should not take sides. They help both sides look at the issue. Both sides involved in the conflict must feel this person is neutral. It can be someone in your group.

2. Be clear about what the problem is. There may be more than one problem. People may not understand how others see it. Look for agreement on the problem before moving on. Write it down in one clear sentence.

3. Find common ground. What do all parties agree on?

4. Talk about the problem. Does one group have more information than the other? Do people have the same information? Everyone needs to have the same information.

5. What is most important to each group? What is the least with which people can live?

6. Point out where people agree and disagree. This makes it clear where people stand.

7. Make a list of factors that you can use to rate the best solution.

8. Brainstorm options to resolve or manage the problem.

9. Look for options that are good for everyone.

10. Choose an option.

11. Plan how to put the option into action. How long will the group try this option before it meets to see if it works? How will they know that it works?

Mediator’s tips

• Focus on interests and outcomes. Do not look at the positions of each side.

Example of positions vs. interests:

These are each group’s positions.

Group 1: We will not allow children at our events.
Group 2: We will not support the event unless children are allowed.
These are each group’s interests.

Group 1: We want to raise funds by selling alcohol. This means that children cannot come to the event.
Group 2: Volunteers want to bring their children. If we don’t allow children, we will lose our volunteers.

An answer to the conflict will focus on interests. How can the group raise money and include children? You may decide to serve alcohol only in one area, like a beer garden. Then, children can come to the event but they cannot go into that area.

- Do not let personalities get in the way. Separate the people from the problem.
- Allow breaks for people to deal with strong feelings. Deep breathing or a short walk can help people calm down.
- Avoid saying things like, “This is the only way.” “There are only two choices.” Instead, come up with options that let both sides gain something.
- One group agreeing to give up is not a good answer. One group using their size or status to bully the other group is not a good answer. Avoid a win-lose answer. Work towards shared gain.

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**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**

**Wainberg’s society meetings: including rules of order.** (2001) CCH Canada Ltd; Toronto, ON.

**Facilitator’s guide to participatory decision-making.** (1996) New Society Publishers; Gabriola Island, BC.

**RECOMMENDED WEBSITES**

arts.endow.gov/pub/lessons/lessons/DUNCAN2.html
Effective meeting facilitation.

http://www.arga.org/mr_robrt.htm
Robert’s Rules of Order in an easy to follow format.

*All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.*
Section 9

Volunteers

Volunteering is offering time, energy and skills to your community without being paid. Volunteers make their communities a better place to live. In exchange they gain skills and feel good about themselves. They feel they have a place in the group.

Non-profit organizations need volunteers to get their work done. The key to a strong volunteer program is making sure that you get the volunteers you need and your volunteers get what they need from the experience. If you hope to have a successful volunteer program, you will need to:

- Attract volunteers.
- Have a safe work place for volunteers.
- Match each volunteer with the right job. Their job should make them feel useful to the organization. Their job should also be something they want to do.
- Tell volunteers clearly, what their duties are.
- Make sure volunteers get the right training for the jobs they will do.
- Make sure volunteers have the supplies or tools they need to do their job.
- Tell volunteers if they did the job well. Ask volunteers for ideas to make things better. Offer advice and support.
- Thank volunteers for what they do.
- Keep track of volunteer hours.

Finding volunteers (recruitment)

- Be clear about what you need volunteers to do.
- Don’t depend on people coming to you. Advertise your volunteer opportunities in those places your potential volunteer might visit – schools, places of worship, stores, and other not-for-profit offices.
• Advertise your need for volunteers. Fast Forward, the Neighbours section of The Herald, and Shaw TV have free ads.

• Have an “Open House” to introduce people to your group. At the event, have a table with information about your organization. You can also have a volunteer sign-up sheet there. Take membership forms and volunteer information to all your public events and meetings.

• Make it easy for people to become members of your organization. Use a newsletter or other means to let members know that you need volunteers.

• Learn about your members’ skills.

**What do your new volunteers want to do?**

- What does the volunteer like to do?
- What are their skills and experience?
- Why do they want to volunteer? Is it because they want better job skills? Or, are they just interested in the work you do?
- Does the volunteer want to work alone or in a group?
- Does the volunteer want to be a leader? Or, do they just want to be part of the group?
- How much time can the volunteer give to your group?

A new volunteer may want to start with a small task. Over time, they may be interested in a leadership position. Show them all your volunteer job descriptions. That way they know what is possible. Be careful not to push the job that you wish to fill the most.

**Volunteer job descriptions**

Volunteer job descriptions are the best way for volunteers to know what to do. You may think volunteers know what you expect of them. But often, things are not clear. Written descriptions tell volunteers exactly what is expected of them. Keep all your descriptions in a place where volunteers can look at them. This helps them choose what they want to do.

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**Job Description**

The phrase “job description” is used for volunteer positions even though the person doing the job is not getting paid.
VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION

Name of job: Chair

Term: (day/month/year) to (day/month/year)

Responsibilities:
The chair is the chief officer of the society. The chair:

• Directs all meetings of the society and board of directors.
• Calls meetings of the board and the executive committee.
• Is responsible for the overall direction of the board.
• Is the main spokesperson for the society.
• As chair, is a member of all the committees of the society.
• Is a signing authority for the society.

Reporting:
The chair reports to the board monthly. They report to the membership yearly or as required. The chair represents the organization on behalf of the board.

Skills needed:
• First-rate knowledge of the organization’s work.
• Strong facilitation skills.
• Able to communicate clearly.
• Willing to speak in public.
• Well organized.

Goals (outcomes):
• Long-term: Help the organization grow so it can provide services throughout Calgary.
• Medium term: Work with the board to fund raise. Hire one full-time staff.
• Short-term: Build up the board of directors. Attract new board members who have energy and vision.

Time needed:
• Executive and board meetings – 6 hours per month
• Preparation for meetings – 6 hours per month
• Planning – 4 hours per month
• Responding to requests for information – 4 hours per month
• Total: 20 hours per month
**Volunteer coordinator**

The volunteer coordinator is the most important job description you need to develop. The volunteer coordinator will manage your volunteers. This person will:

- Match volunteers to the right volunteer job.
- Keep up the binder of volunteer job descriptions.
- Tell new volunteers about the group.
- Make sure the volunteer has someone who can train and mentor them. That person will answer their questions.
- Evaluate the volunteer and the work they do.
- Find ways to thank volunteers.

A strong volunteer program means a strong organization. It is important to have a volunteer or paid staff person who manages your volunteers. If this person is a volunteer, they should also be on your **board of directors**.

**Training volunteers**

Every new volunteer needs an **orientation**. An orientation helps them understand the whole organization as well as their volunteer job. It is also helpful to give them a manual with information about the organization.

An orientation manual might include the following:

- Welcome to the organization
- History of the organization
- **Vision, mission**, plan for the year, **goals** and **objectives** of organization
- Organization structure
- Existing services or programs
- **Constitution** and **bylaws** of the organization
- Copies of **minutes** of past meetings
- Recent financial report, **budget** (optional)
- Names and contact information that may be important to the volunteer
- Information about parking, childcare, or other concerns
Choose a person who knows about the volunteer job. They can train the new volunteer. This person should check in with the new volunteer from time-to-time. They can answer any questions or concerns.

Think about the kinds of support the volunteer needs. Do they need other kinds of support or training?

Plan how and who will evaluate the volunteer’s work. Is the volunteer clear about expectations? How often will they be evaluated?

**Keeping volunteers**

To keep volunteers, make them your main concern. Communicate with them.

- Tell volunteers what is happening in your organization.
- Answer volunteer questions and concerns right away.
- Take action on requests from volunteers.
- Answer volunteer phone calls and letters right away.
- Listen to suggestions from volunteers.
- Give feedback, **evaluation**, and recognition for every volunteer.
- Tell volunteers who they report to.
- Make sure every volunteer gets an orientation and training.
- Give every volunteer the tools, supplies, and authority they need to do their tasks.
- Include volunteers in planning and decision-making.
- Let volunteers take on more responsibility. Give them room to grow.

**Volunteer recognition**

Volunteer recognition thanks volunteers for what they do. There are many ways to thank your volunteers. Some volunteers prefer a quiet thank you. Others like being thanked publicly. Have a person or a **committee** in charge of planning volunteer recognition.
Suggestions for volunteer recognition:

- Thank you notes – Thank you cards are a great way to let volunteers know you’ve noticed their work.
- Letters or certificates – Often you give these out at a large meeting. That way the person gets public recognition for their work. You can also mail them.
- Speeches or awards – At a large meeting, you can give plaques or trophies. When you present the award, tell people about the work the volunteer does.
- Gifts – Groups may give flowers, calendars or books. Sometimes the gifts are items donated by businesses that support your group. Examples would be tickets to an event or gift certificates to a store.
- Rewards – Groups may have special items for the organization to give to volunteers, such as T-shirts, pens, coffee cups, or pins.
- Celebrations – Informal parties can celebrate volunteer activities. You may order pizza or have snacks after a meeting. This gives people a chance to talk about things other than the business of the organization.
- Special attention – Newspaper articles and TV or radio often cover volunteers’ work. TV stations look for positive stories about activities in the community. Your organization may have a newsletter. If so, you can write about a volunteer who does extra work.
- Promotion – Some volunteers feel rewarded by being part of making decisions. Giving people more responsibility shows that they are important to the organization. First ask the volunteer. See if they want more responsibility. They may be happy with the way things are.
- Share with each volunteer how their work has changed the organization. Make it an individual statement. Example: “Because you spent an evening volunteering at the fundraiser, we have enough money to send ten kids with disabilities to camp.”
RECOMMENDED BOOKS

★ Volunteer calgary media guide. Produced quarterly by the Volunteer Centre, this guide lists all media in Calgary, contact information and deadlines. Available from the Volunteer Centre for $25.00 (see page 9 for phone number and address). Worth the investment!


RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

Volunteer Calgary, www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca


All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.
Section 10

When volunteers are not enough

You may be thinking about hiring staff. There are good things and bad things about having paid staff. Here are some questions to ask before you decide to hire:

- Paid staff means you need to raise more funds. Is paid staff the best place to put money right now? Are you able to keep up funding for a staff position?

- Paid staff means payroll. You must know what taxes to pay. You may also have to think about benefits. Does your group know how to handle payroll?

- Having staff means your board of directors or group members will have to do more work. You must supervise staff. You need to give them direction, support and evaluate them.

- Your members need to understand clearly the role of the staff person. When you hire staff, volunteers often want to pass their work to staff. Board members and volunteers need to be aware of the staff person’s job description. That way they know what they can and cannot ask the staff to do.

- Sometimes volunteers lose control of the group to the paid staff person. It is important that the members keep control. This is done through the board or a steering committee. Members should keep on making decisions about the goals and objectives. Staff must fulfill these goals and objectives. They do this through programs and projects that the board approves.

- Your organization needs to have hiring policies before you hire. These policies should include rules about hiring friends and family of board members, hiring board members for paid work, and the hiring process including interviewing candidates and checking resumes.
There are a number of free work and volunteer programs. You may want to try them out before you hire paid staff.

**Free work programs**

Alberta Fine Options Program – This community service program is for people who cannot pay their fines. Call 297-2345. People in this program usually need to work in the evening or on weekends.

Community Work Program – Your office or building may need painting or a spring or fall clean-up. If so, the Alberta Department of Justice can give you a crew of 8-12 people. They are minimum-security, adult offenders. You can get a crew seven days a week. Call the Calgary Attendant Centre at 297-2345.

Calgary Youth Attendance Centre – Alberta Justice Program offers communities help with projects that require stuffing envelopes, folding flyers or putting together newsletters. Call 297-4948.

**Job training programs**

Alberta Job Corps – This is a job training program for people on social assistance. The Alberta Government pays the worker. The employer must provide full time work for four months or more. The job must help the employee build skills in their area of interest. The employer must provide supervision and training. Call Alberta Human Resources and Employment at 297-7667 for more information.

**Student programs**

U of C Students’ Union Volunteers – This program is open from October through April. Students will help with special events or projects. Call the “Into the Streets” Program Coordinator at 220-3092 to ask for help. You can get between six and 25 volunteers for a day.
Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP)

STEP is a program of the Alberta Government. STEP allows organizations to hire students from May through August. It gives students work experience in their field of study. STEP pays part of the wage (about $4.50 an hour). The employer pays the rest of the wage. The employer must supervise and support the student. The job must be 30 to 40 hours a week. To qualify, groups must be a registered society in Alberta. Call 310-0000 and then dial (780) 422-5082.

Summer Work Experience Program/Summer Career Placements

This Government of Canada Program provides a wage subsidy to organizations who create summer job opportunities for students in their area of study. Students must be between the ages of 15 and 30. Information is posted on the Human Resources and Skills Development website at: http://youth.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/newprog/summer.shtml.

Employment Standards Code

Call Alberta Human Resources and Employment before you hire. They will explain the Employment Standards Code. This is a free call. Dial 310-0000, and then dial (780) 427-3731.

Also, call Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (1-800-959-5525). They will tell you what deductions you must take off your staff’s pay cheque. You must send deductions to Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. Board members are legally responsible for making sure this is done.
Communications planning

Successful organizations have a plan for communicating. The plan looks at communication inside and outside of the organization. It is for the organization as a whole. It is also for each event and program. Your audience (who you speak to) can be the people within your group. Or, it can be those outside of your group. No matter who, you need to think about some questions.

- What do you need to say?
- Who do you need to say it to?
- When should you say it?
- How should you say it?
- How often should you say it?
- Is it interesting and relevant to your audience?
- How much should you say? Do you need a one-page summary or a one minute overview?
- Who should say it? Should it come from the chair of your board, a staff person, or the key volunteer? It is best to have one spokesperson.
- How will you know your message has been successful?

Each time you want to send an e-mail, letter, newsletter, or press release, ask these questions. Do you want people to do something with the information? If so, tell people how they should respond, to whom they should respond and by when.

Media tips

The media and public like a good story. You must be organized to get the media to tell your story.
• Be strategic. Talk to the media only when you have an interesting story to tell. Do not talk about ongoing things. Things like AGMs may only interest your members.
• Keep your calls to the media short and to the point.
• Return media calls as soon as possible.
• Tell the truth! If you do not know something they ask, say so. Tell them you will find out quickly and call them back. If the information they need is confidential, tell them you cannot say anything.
• Do not promise anything to the media if you are not 100% sure you can deliver.
• Be the expert the media will call first if a story breaks about your particular field.
• Thank reporters when they call or come to an event.
• Do not be scared of the media. They need you as much as you need them.
• Some media outlets provide time for free public service announcements (PSA) about events and programs. Volunteer Calgary sells a media guide that lists media contacts in Calgary.
• Learn about which reporters cover what kind of stories. Send news releases and information to specific editors or news directors. Call the person who you want to cover the story. Tell them about the story. Ask if you can send the information to them (have it ready). Calling helps you find out if you are speaking with the right person. It is better to call than to send an unannounced fax or letter. Do your homework about deadlines.

News release
A news release or press release is a one or two page information sheet you send to reporters to get them interested in your story. It gives them enough information to get them interested. It should never be more than two pages long.

Off the record
When talking to the media, there is no such thing as “off the record.” Only tell reporters those things that you want the public to know. A reporter can use anything you say.
In a news release, each following paragraph from top to bottom should be less important than the one before it. All releases should say who, what, why, when and where.

*Example:*

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NEWS RELEASE

Title (make it sound interesting)

Contact person’s name
Full address
Telephone and fax numbers
Cell phone number if possible
E-mail address

Date of press release
or
“FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE”

1. State your purpose. Describe your event. Be clear. Say what the event involves. This is the purpose of the press release. The first sentence is the most important. It should be interesting. It should have newsworthy information.

2. Identify yourself and your group. Say who you are and who you represent.

3. Place, times, and dates, if important.

4. Other information. Give any other important facts. You might confirm the appearance of a local celebrity. You can talk about the goal of your event.

5. End note.

If the press release is more than one page, write “more” at the bottom of each page.

On the last page, write: - 30 -

to show that you are done. This makes you look professional. Try to keep your press release to one page.
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Image tools

Think about companies and organizations that are successful, for example McDonald’s or Nike. Often they have an image that you connect with them. Maybe it is a logo, certain colours or even a song. You can create a standard look for all of your communication tools. This helps people remember who you are and what you do.

Logo

A logo is a drawing. It is a symbol of your group’s purpose. It should be very simple. Someone in your group may be artistic. If so, they can create something for you. You can also choose a symbol (for example a heart) that you use with the name of your organization. The logo should appear in everything you print.

Brochure

A brochure gives basic information about what your group does. Brochures help you when you invite people to join your group or talk with potential partners, funders, donors, politicians or clients. This way, they have information they can take with them. A brochure should have your mission statement, general goals and objectives, programs and services and how to get in touch with you.

The contact information for your group may change a lot. Put an empty box on your brochure. Volunteers can use this space to write in contact information. This way you don’t have to reprint the brochure if the contact information changes.

Annual report

Many groups have an annual report. It tells people about the group’s work. It is for group members and people in the community. An annual report can be a very useful tool. It can keep you in touch with the people who already know about your organization. You can also give it to people you hope will support you. Annual reports usually include:
• Message from the president – This states the goals the society has set for the year, activities of the group, main concerns, and future directions.
• Treasurer’s report – This should highlight anything unusual about the organization’s finances including revenues and expenses. It should explain major financial decisions made by the board of directors during the year.
• An auditor’s report.
• Program information – This can include interesting stories about programs, special projects or activities with examples, descriptions and photographs.

A well-done annual report makes your group look good. People will know that you are here to stay.

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**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**

*Take action! A guide to active citizenship.* (2002) Gage Learning Corporation; Toronto, ON.

*Strategic communications for nonprofit organizations: seven steps to creating a successful plan.* (1998) Provides a 7 step program for developing a communications plan. All the worksheets and tools are included on a 3.5 disk.

**RECOMMENDED WEBSITES**

Use the internet to see how other organizations tell their story on their websites.

All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library.
See page 9 for address and phone number.
Section 12

Financial management

Good financial management is key to the health of your organization. Often times, volunteers and board members feel uncomfortable talking about budgets and financial statements. For small groups there are simple things you can do to make sure money is received and spent properly. For big organizations, it is important to provide board members with training so they can make good financial decisions.

There are laws about the way charities and societies handle their money. You must keep careful track of every dollar that comes in and goes out. Members, funders and potential partners will ask you about how you manage the group’s money. You must have written policies about how funds are spent. No matter who is on the board or staff, money should always be handled the same way.

Even if your organization has an accountant or a paid staff person, the board is responsible for making sure that:

- Financial information is accurate and reliable.
- Assets and records of the organization are not stolen, misused, or accidentally destroyed.
- The organization’s policies are followed.
- Government regulations are followed.
- Board members, staff and volunteers understand and follow the board’s financial policies.

It is important that board members understand what they are approving. Board members must attend board meetings. They must read and understand financial reports. And, they must take part in approving the annual budget, audit, annual financial report and financial statement. If board members do not understand the finances of the organization, the organization should provide some training to inform them. If your board members are all new, spend some time learning about financial statements.
Budget

A budget is your money plan for the year. You should link your budget directly to your goals and objectives. Your organization needs a budget for three reasons:

- To know what you can and cannot afford to do for the year.
- To keep track of how you raise and spend money throughout the year.
- To predict shortfalls. These are times when you spend money before you get it. This may happen with special events.

Your board should be able to answer four questions about your budget:

- Does the budget reflect the organization’s main goals and objectives?
- What are the underlying assumptions upon which you base the budget? Are they realistic?
- Who keeps track of and controls spending?
- What has the board decided about how to prepare and keep track of the budget?

To prepare the budget:

- Research the cost of each objective and goal of your group for the year. These are your expenses. Add operating costs, such as salaries, phone, photocopying, postage, and space rental.
- Estimate revenue for the year. This is your best guess about how much money your group will receive. Be realistic. Look at last year’s revenue. For example, if you only made $100 in membership fees this year, you are unlikely to make $1,000 next year.
- Compare the total revenue to the expenses for the year. Are your expenses more than your revenue? If so, you may need to decide which activities not to undertake. Or, you may need to come up with some fundraising ideas.

Your board must approve the budget. If you are a society, your members must also approve it at your Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Have a budget for every special project. The board should approve the proposed budget before you start the project. Develop forms volunteers...
can use to track revenues and expenses. Once the project is finished, a final report of revenue and expenses should be prepared for the board. This will be helpful for future planning.

**Example:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Day Picnic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date:</strong> July 1, 200X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of participants:</strong> 40 families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue (money in):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of family lunches</td>
<td>$5 per family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations from Fortune Foods</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnival games</td>
<td>5 games/20 players@$1/game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$600</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses (money out):</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lunches</td>
<td>40@$10/lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment for carnival games</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total expenses</strong></td>
<td><strong>$600</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Income/Loss</strong></td>
<td><strong>$0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Record keeping**

It is important to keep clear records of how your group gets and spends money. You must provide this information to the government if you are a registered charity or society. Funders will want it if you apply for grants.

Your finances might be very simple. If so, you should keep the following records:

- Cash receipt book: This shows everything that comes in (income or revenue).
- Cash disbursements book: This shows everything that goes out (expenses).
- A record needs to be kept of equipment or “fixed assets” – where it is, warranty information, what condition it is in, receipts from repairs, and other related expenses.
Internal controls

No one person should handle all parts of getting and spending money. Even for an event, two people should be responsible for collecting money and depositing it in the bank. There are some basic rules to follow to make sure no one person can misuse funds. These are called internal controls.

Revenue

- Buy a numbered receipt book. Write a receipt each time money comes in.
- One person should accept and receipt money. Another person should deposit the money in the bank account. This person makes sure the receipts and money add up.

Invoices

- Have the person responsible for the expense sign the invoice (bill) before you pay it.
- The person who signs the invoice should not sign the cheque.
- Paid invoices should be marked “paid.” Write on the invoice the date the cheque was written, the cheque number, the signature of the person who approved payment, and the amount of the cheque.

Cheques

- Find a friendly bank. Be sure you understand the bank’s service fees.
- Give the bank information about the three people who will sign cheques. They may ask for a copy of your minutes from the meeting where you decided who would sign cheques.
- Get cheques that have
  - The name, address and phone number of your group.
  - Space for two signatures.
  - A stub that stays in the cheque book when you rip out the cheque. All the information about the payment is written on the stub. This includes the date, amount, who it is to, what it is for (invoice number), and who approved it. There should be some kind of
paper record for each cheque. The record can be an invoice, an expense form signed by a volunteer or a receipt.

- Keep all cheques, even damaged or voided ones. Never throw a cheque away. This is also true for receipts.
- Be careful when you change signers. Tell the bank who is no longer allowed to sign cheques. Tell them who the new signers are. The bank will not clear outstanding cheques signed by old signers.
- Each month, check the bank statement against the cheque book.
- Have a policy about who can sign cheques and who can approve the payment of bills. These should not be the same people.
- Pick three people who can sign cheques. Every cheque must be signed by two of these three people.
- A cheque should not be signed if there is not an invoice or other documentation attached.
- A funder or donor might give you money for a certain purpose. If so, you may need to open a separate bank account. Check with your bank about an account that helps you keep track of that money. You must make sure that you can explain how you spent the money. You must not use it for other purposes.
- Cheque signers should not sign blank cheques. Cheques should be mailed promptly after they are signed.
- Cheques should not be made payable to cash.

Petty Cash

- This is a small amount of cash (for example, $50.00) kept on hand for small expenses.
- You need to keep a book that shows payments made with receipts attached.
- Volunteers should receive approval before spending their own money if they expect to be paid back out of petty cash.
- The board should have a policy saying how much petty cash is kept on hand and how much can be paid to one person.
**Write it down**

Develop a manual for accounting procedures. It should include instructions on receiving and depositing money, paying bills, petty cash and procedures for approving the spending of money.

**Financial Statements**

Your treasurer must supply a revenue and expenditure statement or income statement. They do this for each meeting of the board and at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The statement shows income and expenses. It also compares income and expenses to your budget. A difference will be a surplus (extra) or a deficit (loss). The board should ask:

- How are finances different from this time last year?
- Has revenue gone up or down?
- Are there big changes in expenses? Did you expect these changes? Will these increases or decreases in expenses be ongoing? If so, what changes do you need to make?
- Is there a chance of a cash crunch? This means that you will spend money before you get it.
- Are you getting the results you expected or wanted?

If your group spends more money than it gets, it has a deficit. If this happens, the board must decide what to change. They may look at how to make more and spend less. It is important to look over financial statements at each meeting. That way, you can act before your group has a deficit. Remember, board members might be responsible for the debt. (See page 96.)

At some point, your group may have more than cash. For example, you may own a piece of property. In this case, your treasurer must put together a balance sheet. This shows your assets and liabilities. If your group has investments and loans, you also need a statement of changes in financial position.
Audits

Registered charities and societies must audit their financial statements every year. An audit is the independent study of a group’s accounting records and systems. The audit finds out if a group’s financial statements are fair and reliable. It also finds out if the group follows “generally accepted accounting principles.” These are rules that accountants say are the common way to do things. The auditor will tell the board if it needs to change the way it keeps its records.

If you are a small organization, a volunteer who knows about accounting can audit your books. It cannot be the same person who is responsible for keeping your financial records and preparing the financial statements. If you are an incorporated society, the auditor for the coming year is to be appointed at your Annual General Meeting (AGM). If your revenues are over $250,000 you must pay a professional accountant who is not associated with your organization to prepare audited financial statements at the end of each year.

Financial checklist

A healthy organization:

- Writes and monitors policies that state responsibilities and authority.
- Reviews regularly the activity of those with responsibility.
- Has the board look at financial statements regularly.
- Can see when cash flow problems may happen.
- Files correct reports with the government on time (in the case of a registered society or charity).
- Gives banks accurate information about signing authority.
- Ensures spending is consistent with budget priorities.
- Approves the annual budget at a membership meeting. Has a set policy to approve things that are outside the budget.
- Separates funds for special purposes from other funds.
- Keeps numbered cheques in a safe place.
• Keeps voided cheques.
• Keeps a record of petty cash.
• Keeps financial records in a safe place so they are accessible over a long period of time.
• Keeps enough cash in the bank to cover a minimum of three months of expenses.

Goods and Services Tax (GST)
Only organizations who earn more than $50,000 each year selling goods and services have to register to charge GST. Registered charities are eligible for rebates on GST paid for goods and services. Not-for-profits must receive more than $40,000 of their revenue through federal funding to be eligible for a rebate. It is important to get advice from the Canada Revenue Agency if you think you need to register to charge GST.

RECOMMENDED BOOK
★ Taking care of “cash”ews. (1992) Johnstone Training and Consultation; Carp, ON. Easy to follow templates and examples.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES
Financial Responsibilities for Not-for-Profit Boards (January 2000) Alberta Community Development Board Development Program
www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/rural/facts/factshts.htm
Three excellent resources that you can print:
• Understanding your organization’s financial statements
• A guide to bookkeeping for non-profit organizations
• Fundraising for your organization

All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.
Section 13

Fundraising

In time, every new group asks, “How will we get money to do our work?” There are two ways you can support your group. You will most likely want to do both. The first is to have ongoing sources of money. This may be through fees you charge for services or through membership fees. The second way is through fundraising activities. You need to find a balance between the amount of time your organization spends fundraising and the time you spend doing your work.

There are some key ideas to keep in mind when deciding how to raise money for your group:

• Anything you do to raise money should be in keeping with the culture and goals of your organization.
• Make a budget. What are the costs of a proposed event or activity? How much have other groups raised doing the same thing?
• Keep in mind the volunteer hours required for a fundraising activity. If volunteers are working on the fundraiser, are there more important activities that won’t get done?
• Remember that if you keep costs low, you will not have to do as much fundraising!
• In all cases, say thanks!!! Recognize people who support you financially at every opportunity.

Fee for service

Some organizations provide a service as part of their program. For example, the Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers has a catering service. They charge for the food they provide. The money from the catering service supports their program. Fee for service gives some financial stability. The service must be related to the work of your organization if you want to
be considered a charity. In the case of the Calgary Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, the catering service teaches immigrant women how to run a small business.

**Events**

Special events, that people pay to attend, are a popular way to fund raise. But, they take a lot of time and effort to arrange. They are often better at raising the profile of your group than actual dollars. It is quite common to make only 20 cents on every dollar. This is because of the costs related to the event. Let us say that you make a $2 profit on each person who shows up. To raise $1,000, 500 people must come. Be clear about your purpose when you organize the event. Is your main concern to raise money or the profile of your group?

For any event you plan, you need a full list of tasks, timelines and who is responsible. You also need an accurate budget. You should also have money on hand. This will be for expenses that you must pay for before the event. Be sure you have a process and forms in place to track cash.

Before the event, decide how you are going to evaluate it: number of people who come, money raised, amount of media publicity. Then make sure that you gather the information you need. That way you can talk about the event’s success when it is over. Take notes and present them to the board. If you hold the event next year, organizers will know what went well and what needs to change.

**Event tips**

- **Get good people:** Make sure you have a strong crew of volunteers. They should be clear about their roles and responsibilities before, during and after the event.
- **Use your contacts:** Have your group or board list all the people and businesses they know who might be able to help with the event. Send them a letter, followed by a phone call.
- **Allow enough time:** Give yourself enough time to plan and advertise the event. You will need six to eight months to arrange most events.
• Be unique: Remember that every other group in town has fundraising events. Your event needs to be unique or attractive.

• Have strong credibility: People are more likely to come to your event if you have credibility in the community. If your organization is new or unknown, try to find a partner or sponsor. This could be another organization or a business.

• Sell tickets: Direct selling sells more tickets than advertising. Be sure your board and volunteers will sell tickets. Make lists of people to ask. Make it easy to buy a ticket. Give a prize to volunteers for selling tickets. For example, if they sell nine tickets they get the tenth one free. They can use it themselves or give it to a friend or family member.

• Get people to pay in advance. If they do not come, you have not lost money.

Sales

Another popular form of fundraising is sales – bake sales, car washes, selling raffle tickets, and promotional products like mugs, t-shirts and fridge magnets. Even though they seem like small fundraisers, it is still important to have a plan and a budget. Promotional items should be ready in time for events where there will be lots of people around. Car washes and bake sales need a lot of volunteer time.

In-kind donations

These are resources that people give instead of money. Space, equipment, expertise, advertising, services and computers would cost money if you had to buy them. Find ways to get people, businesses or other groups to donate them. Make sure you do not abuse their good will. If they give you space, keep it clean and use it only at agreed times. A group may offer photocopying or other services. If so, make sure volunteers use it only for the work of your group.

Raffles

In Alberta you must have a license to hold a raffle (selling tickets to win a prize). Call Alberta Gaming at (403) 292-7300 for more information. You can get the application form from their website: http://www.aglc.gov.ab.ca/policies/forms.asp.
**Sponsorships**

If you have a particular program that you think would be of interest to a company, ask them to sponsor the costs of the program. You can also ask companies to sponsor events. You will need to prepare a package explaining the work of your organization, the program or event you would like them to sponsor, and why it will be good for their company to sponsor it. Include information about how they will receive recognition for their contribution.

**Alberta Gaming**

In Alberta, registered societies can apply to receive profits that come from gambling operations. Societies register to have volunteers work at bingos or casinos. Alberta Gaming provides training and volunteers are supervised. In addition, profits from video lottery terminals and other gaming activities fund the Community Initiatives Program and the Community Facilities Enhancement Program (CFEP). Societies can apply to receive grants through these two funds. For more information about these opportunities, call Alberta Gaming at (403) 292-7300 or go to their website at www.gaming.gov.ab.ca.

**Know the rules**

Alberta’s Charitable Fundraising Act (CFRA) has laws about fundraising. CFRA outlines rules that groups must follow in Alberta when they ask for donations. One rule is that you must give people enough information. That way they can decide whether to give. CFRA protects people from false, misleading or confusing requests for donations.

CFRA applies to all not-for-profit groups. Groups can be incorporated or unincorporated. CFRA also applies to any person who asks for money that is for a charitable purpose or charitable organization. This is even if that person does not belong to any charitable organization.

CFRA does not apply when:

- A charity asks for donations from its members or their immediate families.
• A charity asks for goods (e.g. furniture for an office, not for resale) or services (e.g. volunteers). And, it uses these goods and services for its administration, or other non-charitable purpose.

• A charity asks for donations for an event that the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission allows. The event could be a raffle, pull tickets, a bingo or a casino.

**Registration**

Before you ask for donations in Alberta, your group must register its fundraising activities if:

• You want to use a professional fundraiser, and/or

• You want to raise more than $25,000. CFRA looks at gross contributions for your financial year.

• Your group may raise more than $25,000 without meaning to. If so, you must register within 45 days after the donations reach $25,000.

**How to register**

It costs money to apply for a certificate of registration. All registry agents have application forms. (See License and Registry Agents in the yellow pages of the phone book.) Someone must sign the completed form. It must be a person that your group lets sign on behalf of your group. That person must swear before a Commissioner for Oaths (See Commissioner for Oaths in the yellow pages) that the information on the form is true. The Commissioner for Oaths must then sign the form. For more information call the Alberta Government’s Consumer Services Branch at 1-877-427-4088.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS**

**Fundraising for non-profit groups.** (2002) International Self Counsel Press Ltd.; Vancouver, BC.


*All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.*
Section 14

Applying for grants

In Canada, there are groups and parts of the government that give money to non-profits. The money helps non-profits carry out their work. We call these groups funders. The dollars they give are called grants. To get a grant, a group must write a grant proposal. Each funder has different rules and set ways to apply. Here are some general ideas for when you apply for a grant.

Step 1: See if you qualify

Many funders only give money if you are a registered charity. All funders require that you be a society under the Alberta Societies Act.

Step 2: Do your planning

Funders will look for:

- Sustainability – how your group will carry on the work when the funding runs out.
- Financial history – usually the financial statements from your last fiscal year.
- Contribution – what your group will give to the project, such as volunteer hours, equipment, space.
- Participation – who will be involved including members, volunteers, and the community.
- Collaboration – how you will work with other groups who do similar work.
- Appropriate approvals – what kind of approvals are needed from government offices (municipal, provincial, and federal).
- Demonstrated need – how do you know people need this project? Whose idea is it? Does the community support it? Clearly show that your project meets an identified need.
• Supporting documentation – letters of support from those involved with or helped by the project.

Step 3: Do your homework

Project research – Make sure you clearly explain your purpose. What is the need? How do you know your approach will work? Who else is doing the same thing or something similar? And, what will the real costs be?

Donor research – before you apply:

• Check the funder’s website.
• Call – Find out who and what they fund. When do they fund? And, what do they want to know about you? Ask if they will review a draft version if you submit it before the deadline.
• Letter of inquiry – The funder might not be available by phone. If so, send a letter. Give contact information, such as a phone number or e-mail address. Find out if your project meets their criteria and if they would like a full application.
• Do not waste time applying to the wrong funder.
• Use the donor format. Give them exactly what they ask for.
• Get your application in early.
• Call the funder to see if they got your application.
• Include up to three thoughtful letters of support.
• In your proposal tell them how you will recognize their donation in an innovative way
• Do not send form letters.

Step 4: Write the proposal

Most funders provide application forms. If they do not have an application form or ask for a letter of intent, make sure you include the following:

• Ask for the gift: Start the letter by telling of your past contact, if any, with the funder. Say why you are writing. Also, say how much money you need from the funder.
• Describe the need: Be clear and to the point. Tell the funder why there is a need for this project, piece of equipment, and so on. Tell them how you know there is a need.

• Say what you will do: In a full proposal, explain exactly what will take place because of the grant. In a letter of intent, say enough to interest the funder.

• Give agency data: Help the funder know more about your group. Tell them your mission statement. In a few words, explain your programs. If it fits with your project, you can also tell about number of people served and staff, volunteer, and board data.

• Include budget data about the project: Even a letter of intent may have a budget that is a half page long. Decide if you should put the budget into the letter or on a separate page. Either way, show the total cost of the project. Tell the funder where remaining funds for the project will come from.

• Close: As with a longer proposal, your letter needs a strong last sentence.

• Attach any extra information needed: For small and large requests, the funder may want the same kind of backup information. You may need to give the funder a list of your board of directors and your financial statement from the past fiscal year.

• If a funder has their own application form, use it!

**Tips**

• A funder should know who you are, what you want to do and the grant amount you are requesting, by the end of your first paragraph.

• Have a title that is simple and to the point.

• Check your spelling. The proposal should be neat, clean, and easy to read.

• Be clear and to the point in your request. Remember that the funder may read dozens or even hundreds of proposals.
• Avoid jargon. Define abbreviations. Do not assume that the funder knows about you or your work.
• Do not guess at the budget. Make sure your math is right.
• Give ALL the information. And, give them what they ask for. Don’t bother with fancy covers.
• Get someone to read it before you send it. Does it make sense to them?
• Include complete contact information including a phone number, mailing address and, if possible, an e-mail address. You can include two contact names as long as both people can answer questions about the proposal.
• Reuse. Most funders need the same information. You will put a lot of work into the first proposal. But, you can use the same information for other proposals.

Remember, everything you give to a funder says something about your group. Each step you take with a funder should build a relationship for the future.

**Why proposals fail**

The key reason why groups fail to get grants is because there are always more applications than dollars. Aside from that, here are the most common reasons groups fail:

• They do not follow the funder’s guidelines.
• The group does not match who the funder wishes to fund.
• There is missing, inaccurate or incomplete information.
• The group is slow to respond to requests for information.
• The group does not clearly state:
  • needs (why it is needed),
  • benefits (who it will be good for and how), or
  • outcomes (what can be expected because of it).
• Budgets are poorly prepared or are unrealistic. (This includes asking for too little as well as too much.)
• The group missed deadlines.
• The group does not talk about sustainability or **evaluation**.
• The work plan is unrealistic.
• There is no sign of collaboration. Most funders know who is doing what. They will not fund something that already exists.

Funders look for innovative projects. The project should offer new insights or benefits. It should be inclusive and collaborative. And, it should be sustainable in the long-term. The project’s idea should relate to the group’s mission and **vision**.

**Follow Up**

Once you have submitted the proposal, call the funder and ask if they have everything they need.

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**Fiscal agents**

Many funders can only provide grants to **organizations** that are registered charities. A registered charity can raise funds for a project that they ask a non-registered society to carry out on their behalf. The organization doing the work is called the agent.

Charities must follow these three principles when supporting projects of non-registered groups:

• The registered charity must be in control of the funds.
• The registered charity remains responsible for the outcomes of the project, even if most of the work is being done by the non-registered society.
• The work being done must be consistent with the charity’s charitable purposes.

Charities that allow their charitable number to be used by another group in ways that fall outside these principles **risk** losing their charitable number.
Where to Look

Calgary Public Library
The Calgary Public Library has current books that list funders.
3rd Floor, North Reference Desk (403) 260-2782

Volunteer Centre Library
The Volunteer Centre Library has an on-line database of funders called
the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy List of Canadian Foundations and Grants (Directory 2). You must be a member ($25.00) to use the database. They also have books about how to write grant proposals.
2nd Floor, 1202 Centre Street SE (403) 231-1426

Community and Neighbourhood Services
Community and Neighbourhood Services at the City of Calgary has fundraising resources. (403) 268-5111

Alberta Gaming/Alberta Lottery Fund
The Community Initiatives Program and Community Facility Enhancement Program give money from lottery and gaming activities. These grants are for community groups. You must be a society registered in Alberta to apply. You do not have to be a registered charity. www.gaming.gov.ab.ca/cip/ (403) 297-8676

Other funders
Wild Rose Foundation
www.cd.gov.ab.ca/all_about_us/commissions/wild_rose
Muttart Foundation
www.muttart.org/fundprog.htm

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES
For detailed help in writing a full proposal visit these websites:
www.fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html
www.fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop2.html
Section 15

Legal issues

The number of non-profit groups in Canada is growing. Non-profits are becoming more important in our communities. The public is more and more worried about accountability. Governments are making more laws about how to run groups and organizations.

Members of your group must know what they are responsible for as they do their work. Volunteers are responsible and legally liable for their actions.

Duty of care

Duty of care is the most important idea for your volunteers to understand. Think about how you would reasonably expect a person of your knowledge and experience to manage their own affairs. Each volunteer is expected to use their best knowledge and experience in their work with the organization.

The organization, itself, has a duty of care. It must avoid injuring or harming anyone. It must foresee whether its actions could injure or harm.

The organization is legally responsible for the work it asks volunteers, including board members, and staff to do. The agency must properly select volunteers. It must keep a safe work-place. It must give volunteers the proper tools and support. The agency must provide coordination, training and supervision. The work must match the skills of volunteers and staff.

Examples:

You should not ask a staff person or volunteer to take children on a field trip to the mountains if they have no experience hiking in the mountains.

You should not ask a staff person or volunteer with a bad driving history to transport volunteers or clients.

Some volunteers will work with those who have disabilities. The law expects those volunteers to act with a greater duty of care. This means you must choose these volunteers very carefully.
**Conflict of interest**

Board members also have a **fiduciary duty**. This means they must be loyal, and honest. They must act in good faith in the best interests of the organization. Board members and other people who make decisions must not allow personal interests or those of someone they know to conflict with those of the organization. If they do, they are in a **conflict of interest**. The board member must declare to the board that they have a conflict or a potential conflict. They should then withdraw from discussion on the issue and should not take part in a vote regarding the issue.

**Directors** are personally and legally responsible for some expenses. Directors must make sure the organization pays these expenses. These are unpaid wages, taxes and deductions, such as Employment Insurance (EI) and Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Your legal responsibility carries on for six months to a year after you stop being a director. In some cases, it lasts up to six years. If these expenses do not get paid by the organization, the directors have to pay them.

If something goes wrong, you cannot use as a defence or excuse: being unpaid, carelessness, lack of knowledge, failure to act, having good intentions or having resigned after the fact. For this reason, you must think carefully about decisions that you help make. If you feel something your organization is doing is irresponsible or too risky, make sure your concerns are noted in the **minutes**. This protects you in case the decision results in problems for the organization.

**Information privacy**

The government is making far-reaching new privacy laws. You need to know two important things:

- You can only use information for the reason that you collected it.
- You must keep that information safe.

You will probably get information from people for your membership list. If so, you cannot give that membership list to another group. Also, board members cannot use the list to try to get clients for their personal business. For more information see the government website at www.psp.gov.ab.ca.
Risk management
The law says all people who represent the group must avoid risks that are likely to happen, such as risks that are:

- known to have caused injury before,
- can be removed easily, and
- can be dealt with using common practices.

Example:
An organization serves hot food at an event. The food has not been kept hot enough. Some people become ill from the food. The organization knows the risk of not handling food properly. They are responsible for the person becoming ill.

Risk management is working to prevent these things from happening. In the example above, ensuring all volunteers working with the food have proper training is a form of risk management. Your organization needs to look at the work it does, decide if there are areas that could pose risks, and find ways to prevent and fix those things that could go wrong. An insurance company can help you decide what your risks are.

Liability insurance
Your group should consider buying two kinds of insurance. The first is comprehensive general liability insurance. This covers things like:

- Injuries to people visiting your organization or participating in an event.
- Injuries to volunteers or staff.
- Damage to property.

The second is director and officer insurance. This provides coverage if your directors are sued for not managing the affairs of the organization properly. In legal terms this is called, “negligent and wilful breaches of the directors’ standard of care.” This is a concern if directors knew they were acting carelessly. It should provide coverage for six years beyond the directors’ term on the board. It should cover your volunteers as well.
RECOMMENDED BOOKS


All print resources can be found at the Volunteer Centre Library. See page 9 for address and phone number.
Appendix A

Becoming a registered charity

The Government of Canada is responsible for groups that become registered charities. You must apply through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). Charities have a charitable tax number. They can give tax receipts to donors. Registered charities are only those organizations who have registered through CRA.

Why do groups become registered charities?
There are a number of reasons for becoming a required charity:

- Many funders only give to registered charities.
- Registered charities can give out tax receipts for donations. People and groups can use these receipts as tax credits. This means they will pay less income tax. They may donate more if they get a tax receipt.
- Registered charities are eligible for a rebate on GST paid for goods and services.
- There are rules for running registered charities. Businesses, government agencies and other non-profits assume registered charities follow these rules. If you are registered, they will be more interested in working with you.
- A charity can buy insurance, enter into contracts, buy land or borrow money. It can have bank accounts and hire staff.
- A charity keeps going even when membership changes.

It is better to apply first to become a registered charity before becoming a society. CRA’s rules are stricter than those in the Societies Act. If you use the standard bylaws for a society, you may not be eligible to become a registered charity. You can still apply to become a society under the Societies Act if you are not successful registering as a charity.

Who can become a registered charity?
The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) decides if a group is a charity. Charitable purposes include:

- The relief of poverty.
- The advancement of religion.
• The advancement of education.
• Other purposes which benefit the community.

Charities must use their resources for charitable activities. They must be based in Canada. Charities cannot use income to benefit members.

A charity must also meet the public benefit test. It does this by showing that:
• Its activities and purposes do good for the public.
• The public as a whole (or a major part of the public) benefit from the group’s work. They cannot be a restricted group or share a private connection, such as a social club or professional association.
• The activities are legal and are not contrary to public policy.

Your group must have an independent board of directors.

Charitable organizations can only run businesses that relate to their mandate or are run mostly by volunteers.

Not all good works are charitable. It is important that you talk to someone at CRA before you apply. Make sure that your group falls under CRA’s definition of charitable. Call 1-800-267-2384 for service in English. 1-888-892-5667 gives service in French. 1-800-665-0354 is for those who are hearing impaired. These calls are free.

Responsibilities of a registered charity
• The charity must give out official tax receipts to donors. Donors use them as a credit to pay less income tax.
• A charity must file an income tax return (T3010) within six months of each year end. They must make these files available to the public. The charity does not pay income tax.
• Charities may also have to track their GST. This will mean that they have to return GST to CRA. This depends on the charity’s budget and fundraising.

Arms length
Canadian law has an idea called arms length. This means that those responsible for the organization must have some distance from each other. This includes both business and family relationships. To be eligible:
• Less than 50% of board members can be “related” to each other. Related means through blood, marriage, adoption, or common-law relationship. It can also be through a close business or corporate association (business partners, employee or employer).
• Less than 50% of the dollars can come from related donors.
• No part of the charity’s income can be paid to any proprietor, member, shareholder, trustee, or settler of the organization. The exception is if you pay them for services or for expenses tied to the normal working of your charity.

Advocacy: The 10% rule
A registered charity cannot spend more than 10% of its money on advocacy. This means:
• Education must not promote a particular point of view or political party. Nor must education persuade or indoctrinate. It must not be propaganda.
• A charity cannot have political purposes.

It may do some political activities. The activities have to be non-partisan. They must be a small part of the charity’s purposes (less than 10%).

A registered charity can spend up to 10% of its money on non-partisan political activities. These are activities meant to influence law, policy and public opinion on matters related to its charitable purposes.

How do you apply?
You must fill out CRA’s application form. You must have a constitution and/or bylaws. You must also have objectives for the organization.
• These need to be signed by three directors.
• You cannot have a mix of charitable and non-charitable purposes in your constitution and bylaws. They must be very clear and specific.
• CRA does not accept the objectives listed in the Application to Form a Society from the Province of Alberta. This is because they are too general.
• CRA will ask for details about who, what, where, when and how objectives will be completed. You may have completed the planning exercises in Sections 2 and 3. If so, you already have this information!

Rules and regulations about charities are always changing.
Please contact CRA for the most current information.
A constitution must include:

- The group’s name
- The group’s purposes
- A section that explains how the group will do its work
- A statement that it will not be for the purpose of gain for its members
- A statement that any profits or other gains of the group shall be used solely to promote its objectives
- The group’s structure (president or chair, secretary, treasurer, etc.)
- A statement that explains how the group will replace its directors
- The effective date of the document
- The signature of at least three of the group’s directors

See Appendix C for a sample of a basic constitution. See Appendix B to find out more about bylaws.

Someone at CRA will look over a draft version of your application. They will do this for you once. They will give you feedback on how you would have to change your constitution and/or bylaws to be eligible. Call CRA to ask about this service.

If you are a group dedicated to amateur athletics, the application process is different. You need to get Form T1189. It is called Application to Register a Canadian Amateur Athletic Association Under the Income Tax Act.

You can phone Canada Revenue Agency free of charge at 1-800-267-2384. The application form and full instructions are available on their website. Go to www.ccra.ca. Choose “English.” Once you are in the site, use their search function to find Registering a charity for income tax purposes. You can also search by the document number: T4063.
Appendix B

Becoming a registered society in Alberta

The Government of Alberta makes the rules for societies in Alberta. The rules are found in the Societies Act. When your group becomes a society, it is called incorporating as a non-profit society. Many words are used for organizations incorporating as non-profit-societies: society, registered society, not-for-profit, non-profit corporation and incorporated society. Only those groups who have registered with the Alberta government are a registered society.

What does it mean to become a “society” in Alberta?

• Societies agree to follow the laws of Alberta’s Societies Act.
• You need at least five people to form a society. Those five people share a common interest. It may be about recreation, culture, science or benefiting the community.
• The main goal of the society cannot be to run a business or make a profit.

Why do groups register as a society?

• There are rules for running registered societies. Businesses, government agencies and other non-profits assume registered societies follow these rules. If you are registered, they will be more interested in working with you.
• A society can apply for government grants. Most funders only accept funding applications from registered societies. In Alberta, you must be a society to hold raffles. Only a society can have members volunteer at a bingo or casino.
• Board members of a society are not responsible for the debts and errors of a society. However, board members can still be personally liable if they have been irresponsible or have acted without the consent of the society. If the organization has paid staff, board members are personally liable if the organization fails to send employee deductions like Employment Insurance (EI) and Canada Pension Plan (CPP) to the federal government. (See page 89.)
• A society can buy insurance, enter into contracts, buy land or borrow money. It can have bank accounts and hire staff.
• A society keeps going even when membership changes.

You will need four things to become a society: a name, your purpose or mission statement and objectives, bylaws and an address. See the end of this section for information about how to access the application forms.

How to apply
To become a society in Alberta you will need to:

1. Fill out the Application to Form a Society. Five people must sign this form. The law says a registered society must have a board of directors.
2. Include your mission statement. The form includes some generic objectives. You may plan to register as a charity through the Canada Revenue Agency. If so, you need to be very careful about your objectives. Make sure that the objectives you use on the Societies form do not put at risk your group’s eligibility to register with the CRA as a charity. See Appendix A for more information.
3. Confirm your name. You must submit an original Alberta Search Report. This is called a Nuans Report. You can get this report for a fee at any registry office. (Look in the yellow pages of the phone book under License and Registry Services.) This report must be less than 91 days old when you send it. This report makes sure that no other group already uses the name you have chosen. It costs money for this report so call a few registry offices to find out what the prices are.
4. Complete a Society Bylaws Form. Bylaws outline the way a group is organized. They are the rules for how a group will operate. They also say how you will close your group when you are done. The same five people who signed the application form must sign this form.
5. Complete a Notice of Address Form. The Corporate Registry will send mail to this address.
6. Mail two copies of all these forms to Corporate Registry. Include a cheque for the registration fee.
There are three ways to get the forms you need to become a society:

- Call Corporate Registry on a touch-tone telephone. Dial 310-0000. Enter (780) 427-2311. Then press “3.”
- Write a letter to Corporate Registry, Box 1007, Station Main, Edmonton, AB, T5J 4W6.

You will get three forms: Application to Form a Society, Society Bylaws Form, and Notice of Address Form.

**Responsibilities of a society**

You must do the following to keep your society status:

- A society must follow the rules set out in the Societies Act. You can be fined $100 for not following these rules.
- A society must hold an **Annual General Meeting** (AGM) every year. All the members of the society attend this meeting. At the AGM, members vote to elect the board of directors. You must also have your financial statements for all the members to review. If your annual **income** is more than $250,000 these statements must be audited.
- You must complete and mail an **Annual Return** form every year. Corporate Registry will mail you this form. If you move you must let Corporate Registry know so they can send the form to the correct address.
- You must keep a list of all the members of the society, past and present. The list must give each person’s full name. It must say when they joined and when they stopped being a member. It must also say how much they paid for their membership.
- You must keep **minutes** of each meeting of the society. (See Section 7 for information on **agendas** and minutes).
- If you change your bylaws or objectives, you must let Corporate Registry know. Use their form called **Articles of Amendment**. You will have to pay a fee.
- If you move, you must let Corporate Registry know. Use their form called **Notice of Address** or **Notice of Change of Address**. Do so within 15 days of the change.
• Any member can ask for a copy of the membership list, your bylaws and your application to become a society. You can charge them for the cost of photocopying.
• You can lose your status if you do not follow the rules. If you keep on operating after you lose your status, you can be charged $500.00.

At some time, you may decide to close down your society. If so, fill out an Articles of Dissolution form. This formally lets Corporate Registry know that your group no longer operates. It also stops individuals from using your name without your permission. If you choose to restart the group, you will have to pay a fee. You will also have to do a name search again, for which you will have to pay. You will need to complete an Articles of Revival of a Society form.

**Society bylaws**

Bylaws are the rules of the society. They say how and by whom a society will run. Bylaws are different for each society. But, every society should have bylaws that outline the following:

• Name of the society.
• Objects of the society (mission statement).
• Membership in the society. How do people become a member of the society? How can your group remove people as members?
• Meetings of the society. When will you hold the AGM?
• Government of the society. How many people will be on the board of directors? Will there be an executive committee? What committees will the society have? How will you elect a new board?
• Definition of a special resolution as defined by the Societies Act.
• Financial and management matters.
• How do you make changes to the bylaws?
• Liquidation and dissolution. How will your society close operations?

The Government of Alberta has a simple set of bylaws. You can just fill in the blanks. It is better to use them as a guideline. Take some time to develop your own bylaws. That way they meet the needs of your group.
Go to the Alberta Community Development web site: http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/building_communities/volunteer_community/programs/bdp/services/resources/workbooks/index.asp#Drafting. This web site has a sample set of bylaws. It is in the Appendix of Drafting and Revising Bylaws for Not-for-profit Organizations in Alberta.

**Special resolution**

Some changes in the society can only be made by special resolution. This is true for changing the bylaws. You must give 21 days notice to members to call a meeting of the membership to present a special resolution. The **motion** must pass by 75% of the vote. This kind of meeting is only necessary if a decision has to be made that cannot wait until the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

**Proxy**

Some groups have a bylaw that allows people to vote by **proxy**. This means they give someone else the right to vote for them. The person voting for them must have a letter giving them permission. Members can provide the secretary with a letter asking the secretary to vote in a certain way on their behalf.

**Members under 18**

Your group may elect and admit as a member, a person under the age of 18. Such a member must pay the same fees as other members. They are also liable under the rules of the society as if they were an adult. Make sure they and their parents know this. Your group should ask for a letter of permission from the parents.

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**Success!**

When you become a society, you get a *Certificate of Incorporation* from the Government of Alberta. Some provinces call it a *Letter of Patent*. This is a very important document. Keep it in a safe place. In some cases, someone may ask you to show you are a registered society. You can do this by providing a copy of the certificate. *Do not give them the original.*
Appendix C

A simple constitution

This is all that is required by the Canada Revenue Agency for a Constitution.

1. The name of the organization is:
2. The objective(s) of the organization is/are:
3. The organization shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other gains to the organization shall be used in promoting its objectives.
4. The organization structure (president or chairperson, secretary, treasurer, etc.) of this organization shall be:
5. The term of office of the organization’s directors or directing officers shall be:
6. The agreement of 2/3rds of the membership is required to close the organization. Everything owned by the organization at the time of closure will be given to (name of another charity doing similar work).
7. The effective date of this Constitution is:
8. We certify that this Constitution is the governing document for the operation of this organization.

President ___________________________

Secretary ___________________________

Treasurer ___________________________
Glossary

**Agenda:** A list of things to talk about at a meeting.

**Amendment:** A change that is made to something, such as a change to a bylaw or a motion.

**Annual General Meeting:** This is a meeting that registered societies must hold for all their members each year. Sometimes people call it an AGM. The board of directors is elected at this meeting. Members have the opportunity to see and approve the financial statements of the organization.

**Annual report:** Information about the group’s work for the last year. It usually includes financial statements and information about programs.

**Audit:** The independent study of a group’s accounting records and systems. Once the accounting records are audited, they are called the *audited financial statements*. The audit finds out if a group’s financial statements are fair and reliable. It also finds out if the group follows “generally accepted accounting principles.” These are rules that accountants say are the common way to do things. The person who does the audit is called the *auditor*.

**Balance sheet:** A financial statement that gives a picture of the group’s financial situation. It shows how much money and other resources (equipment, land) the group has. It also shows how much a group owes.

**Board of directors:** The group of people in an organization who are responsible for how the organization does its work. They are usually elected by the members of the organization. Charities and societies are required to have boards.

**Budget:** A plan for making and spending money.

**Bylaws:** Rules for a society saying how it will be organized and run. Societies under the Alberta Societies Act must have bylaws.

**Carried:** When a group says yes to a motion, we say it is carried.
Chair/Chairperson: The person who leads a meeting. Also, the person who leads the board of directors for a society or charity. In this case, they may also be called chairperson, president, or chief officer.

Charity: A group of people who work for the benefit of society rather than for profit. A registered charity is one that is registered with the Government of Canada.

Committee: A small group made up of people from a larger group. Usually it does work related to a single issue, topic or project.

Conflict resolution: A process used to help people reach a decision when they strongly disagree with each other.

Conflict of interest: When one person’s interest and the group’s interest are not the same. A volunteer, board member or staff person is expected to set aside their own interests and act in the best interest of the group.

Consensus: When everyone agrees with a decision or action. Consensus is reached by working together to make a decision.

Constitution: A constitution outlines the way a group is organized and how it will be run. A constitution is similar to bylaws. Often registered charities have a constitution rather than bylaws. See Appendix C for an example.

Defeated: When a group says no to a motion, we say it is defeated.

Deficit: If your group spends more money than it makes, it has a deficit.

Director: Someone who controls or manages. Board members are often called directors of the organization.

Duty of care: Also called standard of care. A volunteer is expected, by law, to use their best knowledge and experience in their work for an organization.

Evaluation: The process of finding out how good a program or service is. The results of an evaluation are used to make the program or service better.

Executive: The chair, vice-chair, treasurer and secretary form the executive. They meet between the board of director’s meetings. They do the work that comes up between board meetings. They are able to make some decisions on behalf of the board.
Facilitator: Helping others to work or make decisions in an efficient and effective way. Often groups will ask someone who is a good facilitator to run a difficult or important meeting. A group may also ask a facilitator to help them through a process like strategic planning.

Fiduciary duty: Usually relating to members of the board. A board member must be loyal and honest. They must act in the best interests of the organization. Board members and other people who make decisions must not allow personal interests or those of someone they know to conflict with those of the organization. This is their fiduciary duty.

Financial accountability: Having rules that make sure a group spends and receives money in a responsible manner. Being able to provide members and funders with accurate financial reports.

Finances: Having to do with money and how to manage it.

Fiscal year: Not all groups use the calendar year (January to December) as their financial year. It is common for groups to have a “fiscal year” of April 1st to March 31st. A group can choose any date as the first day of their year.

Fund raise/Fundraiser/Fundraising: Asking people, organizations or businesses for money so that your non-profit group can do its work.

Funders: Anyone who provides money to a non-profit. There are organizations, like the United Way and The Calgary Foundation whose primary work is to provide money to charities.

Goal: Statements of what you want to achieve through the activities of the organization. A group can have a number of goals for the year.

Grant: A sum of money that a funder gives to the group for a specific purpose.

Income: Money made by the organization.

Income statement: A financial record that shows how a group made and spent money over a period of time.

Legal/Legally: Having to do with the law.

Liable: Legal responsibility for harm or loss.
**Member:** A person who belongs to a group. *Membership* is all of the people who belong to the group.

**Minutes:** The notes of what happens at meetings. The secretary or recorder takes these notes.

**Mission statement:** A brief, clear statement that describes the business or purpose of the organization including what, for whom and how.

**Motion:** In Robert’s Rules of Order, the way to get the group to talk about something is to make a motion. A person will say, “I move that we ___ (some action).” Example: “I move that we approve the minutes of the last meeting.”

**News release:** A formal fax or letter about an event or story of interest that you send to radio, television and newspapers.

**Nominating committee:** A small group whose members come from your organization. They find people for board and committee positions.

**Non-profit groups:** A group of people who have come together out of a common interest not related to making money. Other names for non-profits are societies, charities, and not-for-profits.

**Objectives:** More specific than goals, these say what activities a group will do to achieve their goals.

**Organization:** In this book the word organization means a group of people who have come together out of a common interest not related to money. However, the word organization is also used in the business world to talk about the parts of a company.

**Orientation:** Like a workshop or presentation. It introduces people to a certain topic. When volunteers first join a group they are given an orientation to learn about the group.

**Parliamentary Procedure:** see Robert’s Rules of Order.

**Policy:** Decisions about how a group does things. General directions to make sure decisions are made the same way. For example, there could be a policy that there will be a membership fee to join the organization.
**Procedures:** The organization’s guidelines for how specific things will be done, when and by whom. For example, there could be procedures for adding a new member to the membership list. Procedures are often the specific instructions for carrying out a policy of the organization.

**Proposal:** An idea that you put forward for someone to think about. A funding or grant proposal is a written request to a funder for money.

**Proxy voting:** Providing a letter that says someone can vote in your place.

**Quorum:** The least number of people needed at a meeting to make important decisions. Your bylaws tell you how many you need.

**Registered charity:** A non-profit group that is registered with the Government of Canada. Its work must be for the benefit of the community.

**Revenue:** Money that you bring in.

**Risk:** The possibility of suffering harm or loss. A situation of danger. Risk assessment is the process of identifying the possibility of someone suffering harm or loss because of the way the organization does its business. Risk management is changing the way things are done to prevent harm or loss.

**Robert’s Rules of Order:** (same as Parliamentary Procedure) A set of rules for how to behave at meetings. The rules give everyone a chance to speak. They are a way to make decisions without confusion. In Canada, most non-profits, government and business use Robert’s Rules.

**Second the motion:** In meetings that follow Robert’s Rules of Order, someone must say, “I second the motion,” to show that they support the motion. This means they agree with the motion. If someone seconds the motion, the group can talk about it and vote on it. If not, then the motion will not be talked about or voted on.

**Society:** A not-for-profit group who agrees to follow the rules of Alberta’s Societies Act. They must register with the Government of Alberta to call themselves a society.

**Special resolution:** Changes in a society that can only be made by special resolution. This is true for changing the bylaws. Members must have 21 days notice for a meeting to pass a special resolution. 75% of the members must vote. Your bylaws will say if they must vote in person or if they can vote by proxy.
**Steering committee:** A group of people who oversee and direct work.

**Standard of care:** See *duty of care*.

**Strategic plan:** A plan that says what a group wants to accomplish and how it is going to do it. It brings together a group’s vision, mission, goals and objectives. It provides a road map for the organization. It can be for just one year or for many years.

**Surplus:** If you have money left after you have paid all your expenses, you have a surplus.

**Terms of reference:** A job description for a committee. It includes the name of the committee, who is on the committee, how long they will work, who they report to, and their goals and objectives.

**Values:** What the organization stands for. Principles, standards and qualities that the organization would like to see in all its work and relationships.

**Vision statement:** One or two sentences that tells how you want your future group or community to be as a result of your work.

**Volunteer:** Someone who works for free. Also, offering to work for free.
Sources

Section 2: Starting your own group

Section 3: Planning tools

Section 4: Evaluation

Section 5: What will your group look like?

Section 6: Record keeping

Section 7: Meetings that work
Section 8: Making decisions

Section 9: Volunteers

Section 11: Communications

Section 13: Fundraising

Section 14: Applying for grants

Section 15: Legal issues
“So you are a director of a non-share capital corporation: tips to avoid personal liability.” (Spring 2002). Not-for-profit Law Alert: Borden Ladner Gervais.
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