Mentor, Volunteer, Co-op, Internship, Field Placement Guidebook

June 2025

National Centre for Critical Infrastructure Protection, Security and Resilience

NC-CIPSeR

NC-CIPSeR

The National Centre for Critical Infrastructure Protection, Security and Resilience (NC-CIPSeR) is a nimble, not-for-profit organization working at the intersection of national security, critical infrastructure protection, and societal resilience. Through collaborative research, innovation, and education, we bring together academia, government, and industry to advance Canada's ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from all hazards.

Vision Statement

To be Canada's leading collaborative platform for critical infrastructure protection, security, and resilience, where academia, government, and industry unite to help safeguard our nation's essential systems and services.

Mission Statement

NC-CIPSeR is committed to enhancing the protection, security and resilience of Canada's critical infrastructure through interdisciplinary research, innovation, and education. We aim to foster multi-stakeholder engagement, develop innovative, actionable strategies, and provide independent, data-driven advice that aligns with national objectives and evidence-based priorities. Our mission is to build a resilient Canada by bridging sectors, sharing knowledge, and driving meaningful change. **Research into real-world solutions**.

Volunteer Program Vision Statement:

To create a dynamic and inclusive community of dedicated volunteers who contribute their expertise, energy, and passion to Canada's critical infrastructure resilience.

Volunteer Program Mission Statement:

To empower individuals by providing meaningful opportunities to contribute through education, training, and collaboration. Volunteers support research, innovation, and national priorities across sectors.

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We are looking for doers.

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Purpose of this Guidebook

This guidebook is designed to equip volunteers with the information, tools, and support they need to confidently and successfully engage with NC-CIPSeR—whether as a volunteer, co-op student, intern, field placement participant, or mentor. It serves as a comprehensive and user-friendly resource to help clarify your role, define expectations, and connect your skills and interests with meaningful opportunities that contribute to Canada's critical infrastructure protection and resilience.

Whether you're joining to gain hands-on experience, share your expertise, or build professional networks, this guide offers a simple and consistent onboarding experience that sets you up for success.

1. **Introduction:** Learn about our mission, vision, values, and the unique roles you can play. Be a doer.
2. **Onboarding**: Follow clear steps to get started—submit forms, attend orientation, and meet your mentor. Create the win-win-win.
3. **Development:** Explore training resources, workshops, and ways to build your knowledge and skills. Have a plan.
4. **Expectations:** Understand your responsibilities, our code of conduct, and shared values. Work hard with integrity, while being humble and curious.
5. **Support:** Access mentoring, peer guidance, contacts, and resources throughout your journey. Be deliberate and strategic.

Introduction
Onboarding
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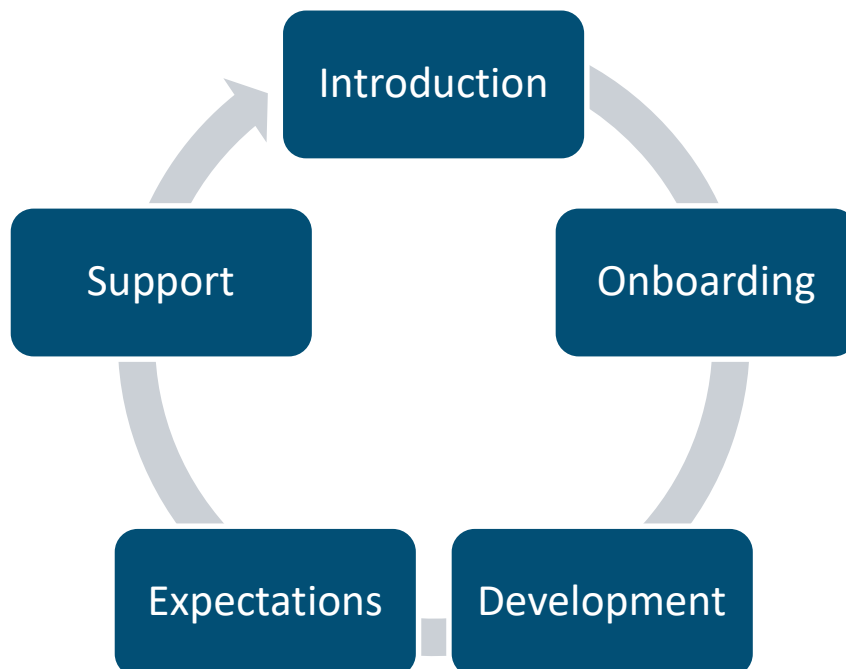
Introduction

Discover your interests, explore NC-CIPSeR's mission, and begin mapping how your unique background can support meaningful work in research, innovation, collaboration, and education.

Research	Contribute to interdisciplinary studies on national security, climate resilience, infrastructure threats, and public policy. Volunteers may assist with literature reviews, data analysis, writing, or publishing through platforms like *Pulse & Praxis* or Project CANVAS, blogs or white papers.
Innovation	Engage with forward-thinking initiatives that develop new tools, strategies, or frameworks to address emerging threats. Volunteers might help prototype ideas, support digital tools, or participate in scenario-building projects.
Collaboration	Work across academic, government, and industry boundaries to help build Canada's resilience. This includes participating in cross-sector working groups, joint initiatives, and communication efforts with key partners. Our Energy Sector Task Force is an example.
Education	Gain and share knowledge through peer learning, workshops, seminars, and mentorship opportunities. Volunteers also contribute to public outreach materials, knowledge translation, our certificate program and helping others onboard.

Actions:

- ✓ Identify your top few areas of interest (e.g., data, policy, engagement, writing).
- ✓ Identify your role (mentor, coop, intern)
- ✓ Explore opportunities on the website.
- ✓ Explore current projects that pique your interest.
- ✓ Explore your own capacity to volunteer.
- ✓ What is your Why?

Insights:
Volunteering at NC-CIPSeR is a gateway into real-world policy impact and academic advancement. Volunteers are encouraged to pursue independent initiatives within their field of interest aligned with NC-CIPSeR's mission..

Our Work and Projects

Explore. Contribute. Lead.

NC-CIPSeR is actively engaged in a wide range of research and applied projects that support the protection, security, and resilience of Canada's critical infrastructure. While our projects evolve over time in response to emerging threats and opportunities, the one constant is this: **volunteers play a meaningful role. There are a variety of opportunities.**

Research and Publications	Assist with literature reviews, white papers, co-author reports, conduct interviews, or analyze data.
Threat & Hazard Profiling	Contribute to mapping, classifying, and describing risks to infrastructure and systems. Exploring the use of AI.
Workshops & Events	Help organize, document, or participate in expert roundtables, simulations, or public sessions.
Innovation Pilots	Support early-stage testing, digital tools, scenario development, or knowledge translation.
Policy & Strategy Support	Assist in building frameworks, briefings, or white papers to inform decision-makers.
Outreach & Communication	Write blog posts, develop visuals, support social media, or contribute to educational campaigns.
Intelligence Analysis	Contribute to intelligence gathering and analysis related to critical infrastructure.

Roles and Responsibilities

At NC-CIPSeR, we welcome a variety of participants—each bringing unique strengths and goals. Clearly defining roles ensures that expectations are aligned, contributions are meaningful, and growth is supported. Whether you're a mentor guiding others, a student gaining hands-on experience, or a volunteer diving into research, your role is vital to advancing our mission.

Mentor	Support 1–2 volunteers; provide guidance, feedback, and goal-setting support. Participate in check-ins and help align projects with NC-CIPSeR priorities.
Volunteer	Contribute time and skills to one or more NC-CIPSeR initiatives. Commit to regular communication, complete assigned tasks, and pursue learning opportunities.
Co-op	Complete academic requirements while actively participating in structured NC-CIPSeR projects. Engage with mentors, attend team meetings, and submit evaluations.
Internship	Participate in time-bound, project-based placements. Assist in research, writing, or analysis while building professional skills and networks.
Field Placement	Apply academic learning in a real-world context under supervision. Complete hours, deliverables, and reflections as required by your academic institution.

Actions:

- ✓ Clarify your role with your mentor or supervisor at the start of your placement
- ✓ Use your role description to set goals and measure progress
- ✓ Attend relevant team meetings and engagement activities
- ✓ Submit deliverables and reflections as needed (for co-op/field placements)
- ✓ Provide feedback on your experience to help strengthen the program

Insights:
Our flexible roles are designed to grow with you. Many volunteers evolve from participants to mentors over time, and field placement students often return as long-term contributors. Your path with NC-CIPSeR can expand beyond a single role—if you're eager to grow, we're here to support that journey.

Onboarding

Gain access to tools, training, and mentorship that connect your skills to current projects, ensuring your early contributions are aligned with both your goals and NC-CIPSeR's national impact.

Apply online	Visit the [Application Portal](#) and submit your form, resume, and reference information. Be sure to indicate your interests and preferred role type.
Initial Screening	Some applicants may be invited to a short interview to better understand your goals and match you with a suitable opportunity. References checks completed.
Mandatory onboarding requirements	If selected, you'll receive onboarding documents including: Volunteer Agreement; Confidentiality & Conflict of Interest Form; Police Record Check (if applicable) and AODA and Health & Safety Training links
Orientation	Attend your orientation session and get set up with your mentor or point of contact.

Actions:

- ✓ Complete online application through the NC-CIPSeR portal
- ✓ Provide reference contact and upload resume
- ✓ Respond to interview invitation (if applicable)
- ✓ Sign and return onboarding documents
- ✓ Complete AODA and safety training modules
- ✓ Attend a virtual or in-person orientation
- ✓ Approve Volunteer Agreement
- ✓ Mentor and Project introduction
- ✓ Join your project and begin contributing

Insights:
Onboarding at NC-CIPSeR is more than administrative—it's your entry point into a national community of changemakers. This process is intentionally designed to connect your strengths and interests with real-world projects that matter.

Development

Build new competencies and deepen your involvement through workshops, research opportunities, and innovation-driven experiences that help grow your expertise in a collaborative setting.

Skill-building Workshops	Join sessions on research methods, policy writing, GIS tools, public speaking, and more.
Project-Based Learning	Work directly on NC-CIPSeR initiatives such as Project CANVAS or the Energy Sector Task Force and present results to stakeholders.
Mentorship & Coaching	Participate in structured peer-to-peer and expert mentorship opportunities.
Leadership Development	Step into a leadership role as a project lead, mentor, or committee liaison.

Actions:

- ✓ Enroll in at least one workshop or training opportunity per quarter.
- ✓ Request feedback from mentors or supervisors on your growth.
- ✓ Set personal development goals during your initial onboarding meeting and frequent touchpoints
- ✓ Track your completed training using the Training Completion Form.
- ✓ Identify one NC-CIPSeR initiative where you can apply or grow your skills.
- ✓ Track your work including all projects you've had an impact on.

Insights:
Volunteering at NC-CIPSeR isn't just about giving your time—it's about investing in yourself. Many volunteers use this phase to explore new career paths, test ideas in a collaborative setting, and gain experiences they can immediately showcase in academic, professional, or leadership contexts. Your development is a shared priority.

Expectations

Understand the shared values and ethical standards that guide how we work together, fostering trust, accountability, and security across multi-stakeholder environments.

Integrity	Be honest, reliable, and accountable in all tasks and communications. Be a do-er with integrity.
Respect and Inclusion	Treat all team members and stakeholders with professionalism and empathy.
Protect Confidential Information	Never share internal documents or data without explicit permission.
Uphold Professional Conduct	Follow the Code of Conduct; represent NC-CIPSeR with maturity and care.
Engage Actively	Participate in check-ins, ask questions, and raise concerns when needed.

Actions:

- ✓ Read and sign the Volunteer Code of Conduct and Confidentiality & Conflict of Interest Agreement.
- ✓ Practice respectful, inclusive communication with peers and partners.
- ✓ Participate in bi-monthly check-ins to stay aligned with your team and address challenges early.
- ✓ Ask questions when you're unsure about privacy, project boundaries, or ethical concerns.
- ✓ Represent NC-CIPSeR in a way that reflects our values of resilience, responsibility, and collaboration.

Insights:

Volunteers often tell us that their time at NC-CIPSeR helped them strengthen their ethical decision-making, navigate complex stakeholder environments, and prepare for real-world challenges in national security and public policy. These expectations aren't just rules—they're foundations for trust and leadership.

Support

Tap into a responsive support network that includes mentorship, peer learning, and professional guidance—ensuring your journey is well-supported, purposeful, and aligned with your evolving interests.

Mentorship & Supervision	Every volunteer is paired with a mentor or supervisor for guidance, feedback, and check-ins.
Peer Learning Community	Collaborate with fellow volunteers through Pulse Check meetings and shared resources.
Access to Staff Support	Reach out to the NC-CIPSeR team when you encounter questions, roadblocks, or need direction.
Recognition & Feedback	Receive ongoing feedback and formal recognition of your contributions and growth.

Actions:

- ✓ Attend bi-monthly **Volunteer Pulse Check** meetings to stay informed and connected.

- ✓ Contact your assigned mentor or project lead when you need help or direction.

- ✓ Use the **Volunteer Feedback Form** to share suggestions or highlight issues.

- ✓ Reach out to the NC-CIPSeR team for administrative, onboarding, or technical questions.

- ✓ Track your progress and contributions in your **Training & Engagement Log** (optional).

Insights:
Support is a cornerstone of the NC-CIPSeR experience. Volunteers consistently say that having direct access to mentors, leadership, and fellow volunteers helps them feel more confident, connected, and valued. You're never navigating this alone—there's always someone here to support your growth and success.

Why Mentors Matter

Mentors are the backbone of the NC-CIPSeR volunteer experience. They help create an environment where volunteers feel supported, challenged, and aligned with our mission. Whether you're guiding a new co-op student, supporting a peer, or advising a research intern, your role as a mentor extends our culture of collaboration and continuous learning.

Welcome & Orient	Help new volunteers understand their role, navigate systems, and feel included in the NC-CIPSeR culture.
Guide and Support	Offer regular check-ins, provide feedback on projects, and help troubleshoot challenges.
Model Expectations	Demonstrate professionalism, respect, and confidentiality in every interaction.
Encourage Growth	Help mentees align their interests with active projects and identify personal development goals.
Communicate with Staff	Share progress, concerns, or ideas with the volunteer committee or NC-CIPSeR leadership.

Actions:

- ✓ Initiate a welcome call or message to your assigned mentees within the first week.
- ✓ Schedule monthly 1:1 check-ins (or more frequently as needed).
- ✓ Use the Training & Engagement Log to track development milestones.
- ✓ Encourage mentees to attend Volunteer Pulse Check meetings.
- ✓ Provide input during surveys or debriefs to improve the mentorship experience.

Insights:

Be the kind of mentor who remembers what it was like to be new. Stay humble enough to learn and curious enough to grow—together. The mentor experience is often just as transformative as being mentored. Many of our mentors find that the relationships they build deepen their own professional insight, reinforce leadership skills, and expand their network across government, academia,

Tips for Effective Mentorship

- **Be present, not perfect.** You don't need to have all the answers—just show up, listen, and offer what you can.
- **Encourage reflection.** Sometimes asking a good question is more helpful than giving advice.
- **Give space to grow.** Let your mentee take ownership of their work and ideas, even if it's not how you would do it.
- **Share mistakes as learning tools.** Vulnerability builds trust—and wisdom.
- **Stay curious.** Ask questions not just about work, but about who they are and what matters to them.
- **Champion progress, not perfection.** Celebrate every step forward.

At NC-CIPSeR, we believe the best mentors are not those with all the answers, but those willing to explore better questions.

- **Humility** means recognizing that everyone—regardless of experience—has something valuable to teach. It invites openness, active listening, and shared learning. **Curiosity** keeps our work fresh. It encourages mentors and mentees alike to ask *why*, *how*, and *what if*—especially when facing uncertainty or complexity.
- Together, these qualities help build deeper trust, stronger relationships, and more thoughtful, engaged teams.

Questions to Explore with Your Mentee

These questions aren't about checking boxes—they're conversation starters that deepen engagement and build mutual understanding:

1. What brought you to NC-CIPSeR? What excites you about this space?
2. What are you hoping to learn or improve through this experience?
3. What does a meaningful project look like to you?
4. Where do you feel confident—and where would you like more support?
5. How do you prefer to receive feedback?
6. What's one thing you've learned here that surprised you?
7. If you could lead a project one day, what would it be about?

Volunteer Committee

The purpose of the NC-CIPSeR Volunteer Committee is to provide strategic oversight and guidance for the recruitment, management, and engagement of our volunteers and co-op participants. This committee plays a vital role in shaping the volunteer experience by ensuring alignment with NC-CIPSeR's mission and values. Their responsibilities include developing volunteer policies, overseeing onboarding processes, facilitating ongoing training and development, and creating opportunities for recognition and growth. The committee also works to foster a positive and inclusive environment, ensuring that volunteers feel supported and valued, while continuously evaluating and improving volunteer program effectiveness to meet the organization's goals.

Annual General Meeting

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM), the NC-CIPSeR Volunteer Program will be a key agenda item, highlighting its contributions to the organization's mission and overall progress. During this session, we will present an overview of volunteer achievements, including successful projects, training initiatives, and the impact volunteers have made in advancing critical infrastructure protection, security, and resilience. The meeting will also provide an opportunity to discuss future plans for the program, gather feedback from volunteers and stakeholders, and recognize the invaluable contributions of our volunteers. This ensures that the volunteer program remains aligned with NC-CIPSeR's strategic goals and continues to grow in a meaningful, collaborative way.

Engagement and our approach with Mentors.

At NC-CIPSeR, engagement is more than participation—it's about growth, contribution, and connection. Our approach with mentors is designed to ensure that every volunteer is not only learning but actively doing—contributing to real projects, receiving meaningful feedback, and continuously improving. Mentors serve as guides and sounding boards, helping volunteers align their interests with NC-CIPSeR's mission while fostering an environment of encouragement, accountability, and mutual learning. This model ensures that each volunteer journey is purposeful, supported, and impactful from day one.

Volunteer Journey Enhancers

Once volunteers are onboarded, NC-CIPSeR is committed to making their experience rewarding, supportive, and impactful. This section focuses on deepening engagement—through mentorship, recognition, continuous improvement, and structured career development. We invest in our volunteers as collaborators and future leaders, creating space for growth, feedback, and contribution across sectors.

Work Environment and Culture

- **Cross-Sector Mentorship:** Initiate mentorship programs that pair participants with mentors from government, industry, or academia, providing a broad perspective on CIP challenges and solutions.

- **Professional Development Opportunities:** Offer workshops and seminars led by experts from government, industry, and Carleton University, focusing on current CIP issues and innovations.

- **Recognition of Collaborative Efforts:** Celebrate successes and contributions that result from the synergy between NC-CIPSeR, government, industry, and academic partners.

Relationship Building

- **Partnership Showcases:** Regularly feature collaborative projects and successes with government and industry partners and highlight student contributions through Carleton University's programs in newsletters, social media, and events.

- **Feedback and Engagement Sessions:** Conduct sessions with partners from government, industry, and academia to gather insights on improving collaboration and engagement strategies.

- **Career Pathway Development:** Work with government and industry partners to establish clear career pathways for students and volunteers, facilitating transitions into meaningful roles in the CIP sector.

Evaluation and Improvement

- **Partnership Impact Metrics:** Develop indicators to measure the effectiveness of collaborations with government, industry, and academic institutions in achieving strategic objectives.

- **Continuous Strategy Reviews:** Conduct regular assessments of the strategy with input from all partners to ensure it remains responsive to the evolving landscape of CIP.

- **Adaptive Stakeholder Engagement:** Maintain open lines of communication with government agencies, industry leaders, and academic partners to refine and enhance the capacity-building efforts.

Volunteer Hours & Project Reporting

Our volunteers are the heart of our mission to protect, secure, and build resilience across Canada's critical infrastructure. Whether you're leading research, supporting outreach, mentoring others, or contributing to behind-the-scenes work, every hour you give helps move vital work forward.

Every Hour Counts: Tracking volunteer hours helps us recognize your contribution, measure impact, and highlight the true value of in-kind support to our funders, partners, and communities.

Every Project Tells a Story: Logging the projects you're working on allows us to identify where energy is being invested, improve collaboration across teams, and ensure strategic alignment across sectors and initiatives.

Mentors Matter Too: Mentors play a critical role in guiding volunteers and advancing our shared vision. By tracking your advisory and support hours, we better understand the ecosystem we're building together.

What We Do With This Information

- Report on impact to funding partners and stakeholders
- Inform resource planning and capacity building
- Identify growth areas and engagement gaps
- Celebrate volunteer milestones and successes
- Issue certificates of contribution or references upon request

Forms

These forms and links help ensure that the organization can manage volunteers effectively while adhering to legal and regulatory requirements. We have created a suite of forms that help create a seamless process for onboarding and improving our.

Form Name	Purpose
Volunteer Portal	Outlines the application process and provides a variety links to get started. Volunteer Portal
Volunteer Application Form	Collects personal details, interests, and availability via the Application Portal
Reference Form	Online form submitted by a referee via the Reference Portal
Volunteer Agreement Form	Outlines mutual responsibilities, finalized via ShareFile.
Confidentiality & Conflict Agreement	Protects sensitive information and aligns with legal expectations. Privacy & Confidentiality
Code of Conduct	Establishes expectations for ethics, behavior, and inclusion. Code of Conduct
Emergency Contact Form	Ensures we know who to contact in urgent situations.
AODA Training & Safety Awareness	Required onboarding modules for accessibility and health and safety compliance. AODA Training
Background Check & Consent	Completed if the role involves sensitive data or vulnerable populations.
Security Clearance Forms	Provided if the role intersects with protected federal or critical information.
Media Release Form	Grants permission for photos to be used in communications.
Orientation Checklist	Confirms volunteer onboarding steps are complete.
Quarterly Survey & Engagement Form	Tracks Mentor/Mentee engagement. Survey and form can be used to help track progress: Engagement Form
Volunteer Engagement Survey	Brief check-in on your experience—your feedback helps us make this the best it can be. Engagement Survey
Volunteer Feedback	Helps make our portal better. Volunteer Feedback
Volunteer Hours	Volunteer Hours & Project Reporting
Advisory Panel	Brief Check-in for our Advisory Panel members. Survey

Resources

This manual has been adapted from many of the sources listed below.

AODA Training Link City of Ottawa	AODA training link [Accessibility training for volunteers	City of Ottawa](#)
Canadian Blood Services	Reference link template – Excellent example https://forms.office.com/r/2GXxKg58DW
Volunteer Ottawa Resources	https://volunteerottawa.ca/
Volunteer Canada	https://volunteer.ca/
VMPC Volunteer information database	https://www.vmpc.ca/
Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement	https://volunteer.ca/ccvi Volunteer Canada created the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement (CCVI) to support organizations that engage volunteers. The CCVI is a guide for involving volunteers in all levels of an organization. This includes volunteers working in leadership, direct service and virtual roles. [Download the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement](#) to design and implement your volunteer program. The CCVI aims to improve volunteer involvement across the country. It is designed to be adaptable and can be adopted and implemented by organizations of all sizes. The CCVI clearly states the values and benefits of volunteer involvement. It provides a framework for discussion and decision-making within organizations. It also promotes meaningful volunteer involvement that meets the needs of both the organization and its volunteers.
Putting the Code into Action	https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/researchandresources_docs/Volunteer_Canada_Putting_the_Code_Into_Action.pdf Now that your organization is familiar with and has adopted the CCVI, use this series of checklists to implement the CCVI ten standards of practice.
Code Audit Tool	https://audit.volunteer.ca/

	The *member-exclusive* online Code Audit Tool is built to align with the CCVI and helps your organization assess and analyze its volunteer involvement strategies and practices. It includes suggested steps, tools and resources to increase the positive impact of your volunteer program on the mission of your organization and on your volunteers. Complete the Code Audit as part of your CCVI adoption or regular review.
Volunteer Management	https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=338
Value of Volunteering Wheel	https://volunteer.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=383 The Value of Volunteering Wheel illustrates the many benefits of volunteering to building confidence, competence, connections, and community. It also serves as a portal to research that examines the social and economic value to organizations, neighbourhoods, businesses, society-at-large and to volunteers themselves.By clicking on the different sections within the document or scrolling down, you can explore this field from many angles.
Top 15 volunteer management software	https://www.wildapricot.com/blog/volunteer-management-software
New Volunteer Checklist:	How to Onboard and Welcome New Volunteers https://www.wildapricot.com/blog/new-volunteer-checklist
VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK:	https://volunteer.ca/vdemo/EngagingVolunteers_DOCS/VMH_Eng_2016_Print.pdf A Resource for Service-Providing Organizations Assisting Newcomers to Canada
Toronto Volunteers	Welcome to Volunteer Toronto's Volunteer Policies & Procedures resource centre. https://www.volunteertoronto.ca/page/Policies good examples and resources
National Roadmap	National Volunteer Action Strategy Roadmap (2025-2035): https://volunteerstrategy.ca/
VMPC	Volunteer Management Professionals of Canada (VMPC): https://www.vmpc.ca/

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