

The background of the entire page is a stylized image of the Toronto skyline. The CN Tower is the most prominent feature on the left side. Other skyscrapers are visible in the background. The sky is a solid blue color with vertical stripes of varying shades of blue. The bottom of the image transitions into a white diagonal band.

CONNECTING COMMUNITY

Annual Report 2024–2025

Volunteer
toronto

A Message from Volunteer Toronto

When we launched our **2021-2025 Strategic Plan** four years ago, we were in the thick of a global crisis. Yet, it was also a moment of possibility. People across Toronto were stepping up in new ways. The need for community connection was urgent, the energy was real—and Volunteer Toronto rose to meet it.

In the following years, including this past year, we continued to rebuild sector capacity, created tools for safe engagement, and ensured volunteers remained a vital part of Toronto's recovery under **the two pillars of our strategic plan**. As you explore this report, look out for these symbols to see how we put our plan in motion:



**Foster
Volunteerism**



**Elevate
Volunteerism**



Joanne McKiernan
Executive Director

Sushma Narisetty
Board Chair

In 2024-2025, we focused on what it takes to keep people connected. We re-vamped the tools that make volunteering easier and more accessible—like our **new website**. We supported informal action through **microgrants** that gave residents the resources to act on what matters to them. We got stronger with **data**—spotlighting what's happening on the ground and becoming a source of insight for the sector. Making the case for investment in volunteerism starts with showing what's at stake when people step back, and what's possible when they step in.

This year we also deepened our focus on the ethics of civic engagement. We developed and shared a clear message about **decent volunteerism** and invited organizations across the sector to join us in advancing it. Together, we've started a broader conversation about equity, access, and the kind of conditions that support meaningful, respectful volunteering. These are the questions we'll keep asking in our next chapter.

However, as we prepare to mobilize our next strategic priorities, **the landscape has shifted again**. The urgency during the pandemic has been replaced with exhaustion. Fewer people are volunteering, and fewer are donating. People are prioritizing paid work. But the need for connection, care, and collective effort hasn't gone away. If anything, **it's grown**.

We're building our new strategic plan based on this **complex community participation reality**. That includes exploring a broader **role across the GTA and province**. It includes deeper partnerships, ongoing efforts to connect communities, bolder advocacy informed by data, and continued investment in optimizing the tools and ground-level access points that help people contribute safely and meaningfully.

It's not an easy time. But we've seen what's possible when communities come together. We know the power of collective effort—and we're committed to making that power **visible, valued, and sustained**.

Thank you for walking with us—then and now into a bold future.

Land Acknowledgement

Volunteer Toronto has the privilege to build community and work in T'karonto on the traditional lands of the Chippewa, the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy of Six Nations, and more recently, the Territory of Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit, part of the Anishinaabe Nation. **We recognize that saviourism and colonization continue to influence how Torontonians perceive and participate in volunteerism in our society.** In acknowledging this, we strive to build communities of empathy in the spirit of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Covenant, a pre-colonial agreement that encourages everyone to only take what they need, leaving enough for each other and our future generations.

At Volunteer Toronto, we are committed to evolving our services and welcome feedback from Indigenous individuals, organizers, Friendship Centres and other collectives on fostering decolonized and anti-oppressive volunteerism as a form of community building.

Why do we acknowledge this land?

We hope that the land acknowledgements that we deliver at the start of our internal meetings and public events serve as a reference point for our audiences to do their own research into the history of Indigenous resiliency in the face of colonial oppression.

Furthermore, we hope that our land acknowledgements inspire our audiences to take action in support of reconciliation by following the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action**.



This year we also captured different perspectives of what it means to "volunteer." In this video, Mike shares Indigenous ways of knowing which often include principles like, **taking only what you need, and leaving the rest for others and future generations**. Click above to get Mike's perspective of what it means to be a volunteer.



State of Volunteering in Toronto

As Toronto's local volunteer centre, we support over **650 non-profits** and **500,000+ residents** looking to volunteer each year. Through our engagements with the community, we analyze **trends** to discover how volunteerism happens in Canada's largest urban hub.

In April 2025, we released a snapshot of our latest insights on the state of volunteerism in Toronto, informed by data collected during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

Our Data Tells Us:



[Click Here to Read the Full Snapshot](#)

68,460

volunteers gave **1.85 million hours** to local causes in our network of non-profits.

That's equal to:

\$59M

in labour, or **50,000+ full-time work weeks** shared with local organizations (\$32/hour)*.

or about:

27

hours per year or just **2–3 hours a month**, on average, given by Toronto's volunteers to causes.

We know that:

16x

more volunteers are engaged by non-profits that have a **dedicated volunteer manager**.

However:

42,519

new volunteers are needed to support Toronto's non-profits through 2025, a **33% increase** over last year.

*hourly rate set by [Independent Sector](#) as of April 2025

Our insights are telling: non-profits are looking to recruit more volunteers than ever. This is a symptom of the pressure on volunteer labour to keep essential programs running in our communities. By understanding the trends—both the challenges and opportunities—we can target what enables volunteerism where it's needed most.

— Joanne McKiernan (she/her),
Executive Director,
Volunteer Toronto



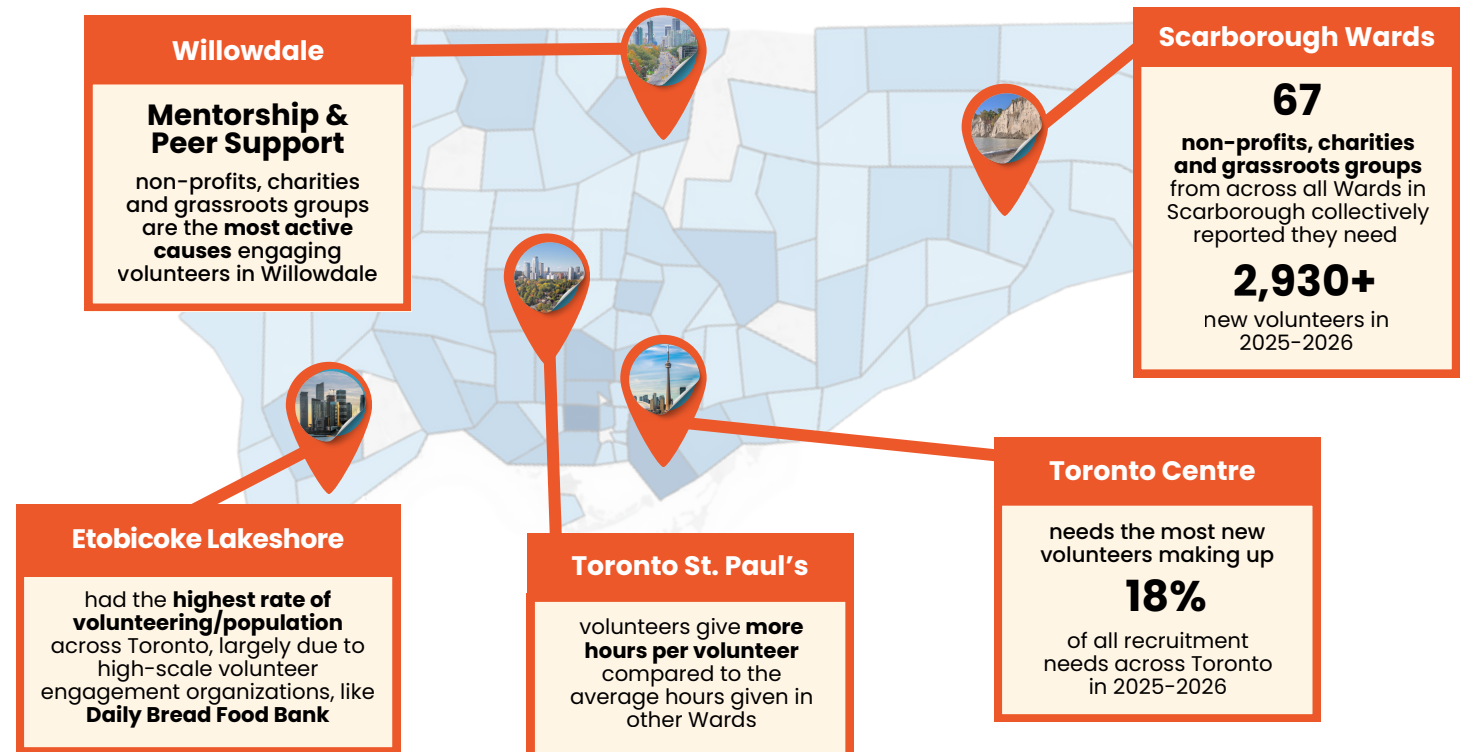
Drilling Deeper by City Ward

Toronto is home to **25 Wards**. By analyzing data from the **650+ non-profits** in our network, Volunteer Toronto can understand volunteerism trends by geographical area. Each ward differs in terms of population, community needs, and active causes engaging volunteers.

Using Spatial Mapping to Identify Needs

The map below showcases a sample of our data from 5 of 25 Wards. **The data tells us:**

- **How many volunteers were engaged in each Ward?**
- **How many new volunteers are needed to fill needs in each Ward?**
- **Which sub-sectors are actively recruiting volunteers?**



In April 2025, for the first time, Volunteer Toronto distributed data snapshots to brief City Councillors on volunteerism trends and needs by Ward.



Defining Decent Volunteerism

In line with our commitments to fostering and elevating more equitable and inclusive volunteerism, Volunteer Toronto debuted the philosophy of Decent Volunteerism in 2023. Our goal was to open a conversation about **anti-oppressive** and **decolonial volunteer engagement** to move volunteer engagement approaches towards being places of belonging.

9 Decent Volunteerism Workshops delivered in 2024–2025

250 volunteer managers trained on Decent Volunteerism

Volunteer Toronto's **Director of Programs & Organizational Systems, Kasandra James (she/her)**, facilitated most Decent Volunteerism workshops in 2024–2025, in addition to publishing an **opinion-editorial in Future of Good** and delivering a **speech at a Walrus Talk** on the need to tell new stories of volunteerism.

» **Read the Opinion-Editorial** [“Newcomers' volunteer work quickly becoming exploitation in Canada”](#)

» **Watch** [Kasandra's Walrus Talks Speech](#)

“I was immediately struck by [Kasandra's] work on this topic and recognized the need to adapt it for Community Food Organizations. Our collaboration revealed a shared vision: [placing community members at the core of volunteer programs](#).”

– **Rekha Cherian (she/her)**, Director of Equity and Strategic Initiatives, Community Food Centres Canada



We Believe:



As participants in a colonial system, **we are all responsible for the work** of identifying, interrogating and dismantling systems of power and oppression in volunteerism within our spaces.



We reject a single definition of ‘volunteerism’ that is limiting and exclusive. We embrace diverse forms of community-making, and work to enable the many ways people have always shown up in, and for, community.



We actively work to **reduce barriers to civic participation, and foster spaces of safety, inclusion and belonging**. We embrace universal design in volunteer engagement: developing engagement for those at the margins creates a space of belonging for everyone.



“We do a disservice when we pretend engagement just happens. Volunteering can’t be a defining part of our civic life, or our way of enabling our non-profit sector, unless we understand and support what it takes to make it real.”

– **Cara Eaton (she/her)**,
Senior Director of
Strategy & Growth



Advocacy for Sector Infrastructure

Volunteering doesn’t just happen, it takes infrastructure. This year we delivered eight advocacy activations to elevate the role of those that enable volunteerism.

for Volunteer Centres

In April 2025, we released an **Opinion Editorial in the Philanthropist**, advocating for nation-wide investment in volunteer centres as core infrastructure. Canada is home to just over **200 volunteer centres** – that’s 200 local institutions mandated to make volunteering happen. Two hundred organizations with wisdom on how to reduce social isolation, increase civic engagement, settle newcomers, improve health outcomes for seniors, and kick-start young people’s careers. Volunteer centres are necessary and long-term institutions in our communities. We’re advocating so government, funders, and community stakeholders understand and value volunteer centres as critical infrastructure enabling volunteerism in Canada.



Read the opinion-editorial:
**“Canada Doesn’t Need
More Volunteers—
We Need more Enablers”**

The **PHILANTHROPIST** *Journal*

for Volunteer Managers

In early 2025, alongside non-profits across Ontario, we submitted a **Provincial Pre-Budget Submission** asking the Government of Ontario to provide needed support to non-profits. We continue to push for investment to upskill and hire volunteer managers in Ontario.

Read our [Pre-Budget Submission](#).



ONTARIO NONPROFIT NETWORK

We also **spoke on a panel** at the Ontario Nonprofit Network’s conference in Spring 2024 and **co-hosted a State of the Sector webinar** in Fall 2024, amplifying new data and insights on the challenges facing volunteer managers in Ontario.

for Sustainable Labour

Volunteer Toronto continued advocating for sustainable labour in food delivery programs based on **our primary research over the last 5-years**. In 2024-2025, **we participated in Toronto Food Charter Consultations** and **convened senior leaders** to explore collective advocacy.



15

volunteer centres
regularly convened
by Volunteer Toronto
in 2024–2025

Convening Ontario's Network of Volunteer Centres

The Ontario Volunteer Centre Network (OVCN) is a province-wide network of volunteer centres. Volunteer Toronto is a steering committee member of the OVCN and represents OVCN on the National Volunteer Action Strategy Advisory. As a leader in the network, this year, we kept centres connected through regular Zoom-based calls named Centre Syncs where we coordinated collaborative grant applications, led efforts to advocate for provincial investment in volunteerism, and rallied centres to envision a modernized approach to our work. We look forward to continuing our OVCN leadership role.

Hosting a Micro-Summit

Ongoing convening efforts resulted in the first in-person summit of Ontario volunteer centres in six years on January 30, 2025. Thanks to funding support from Volunteer Canada, **24 OVCN staff and volunteers** came together in Peel Region for a day of connection and rebuilding. This in-person gathering resulted in a **renewed focus on the role of volunteer centres** in enabling volunteerism across the province, with a **mindful approach to leveraging data**.

“At the Micro-Summit in January, we had deep conversations about data storytelling and the [National Volunteer Action Strategy](#). We heard new perspectives on our work, shared valuable insights into our sector and built a network which strengthens the work of all centres in Ontario.”

– Jane Hennig (she/her), Executive Director, Volunteer Waterloo Region



1,594

Subscribers
having accessed
our services in
2024-2025

3,800+

non-profit staff
engaged
annually in
capacity building

**"This experience
has strengthened
my foundation and
encouraged me to
keep growing in
this field."**

– **Kseniia Lebedeva (she/her)**,
Coordinator, Volunteer
Services, Circle of Care

How We Uplift Non-Profits

We enable volunteering in Toronto by building capacity for non-profits, charities, and grassroots groups through volunteer recruitment support, consultation, training and advocacy. We do this by offering a subscription program that enables organizations to recruit for volunteer roles and access learning opportunities for non-profit staff.

Volunteer Recruitment

This year, we **refreshed our website** and **volunteer recruitment portal**, upgrading to a modern and dynamic feel to make roles posted by non-profits more easily accessible by interested volunteers.

To enable volunteer recruitment, we also **provided feedback to our Subscribers** on roles posted on our portal, ensuring that organizations attract the volunteers they are looking for with high-quality, clear position descriptions.

Our **promotional avenues**, like our Opportunity Of The Week advertisements and Community Response Team newsletter, also provided enhanced recruitment support for highly in-demand volunteer opportunities. We promoted non-profit roles monthly to our **25,895** newsletter subscribers made up of community members looking for the right opportunity for them.

Subscriber Circles

Over the 2024-2025 year, Volunteer Toronto hosted four Subscriber Circles. These virtual networking and connection events enabled volunteer managers in our Subscriber network to explore targeted issues and pain points affecting their work. Topics included:

- **Newcomers and Volunteering**
- **Leading Volunteers While Black**
- **Meals on Wheels Volunteer Engagement**
- **New Volunteer Managers**

We create safe spaces for volunteer managers to connect with their peers. This year, **51 participants** attended our Subscriber Circle networking events.





The Non-Profits We Serve as Subscribers

Our subscription network consists of **650+ non-profits, grassroots groups and charities**. We are the primary support for volunteer recruitment in Toronto. Our current subscriber model consists of two tiers: Subsidized for organizations with an annual revenue of \$75,000 or less, or a Paid subscription for organizations that gross \$75,000+ annually.

Every Subscriber chooses three sub-sectors to identify the impact area of their cause and volunteer activities. For the past three years, the top sub-sectors Volunteer Toronto supports has remained consistent. However, across all 50+ sub-sectors, in the past three years **we have tracked a broader equity of representation in our Subscribers**, indicating deeper reliance of our support across the entire non-profit sector, regardless of sub-sector.

Top Sub-Sectors Volunteer Toronto Supports



1
Education and Literacy



2
Arts and Culture



3
Health Promotion



4
Youth-Led/ Youth-Serving



5
Mentorship and Peer Support



6
Kids and Family



7
Poverty Reduction



8
Environment



9
Disability and Accessibility



10
Newcomers and Immigration



65%
of subscribers are considered grassroots groups



199
subscribers are from health-related sub-sectors

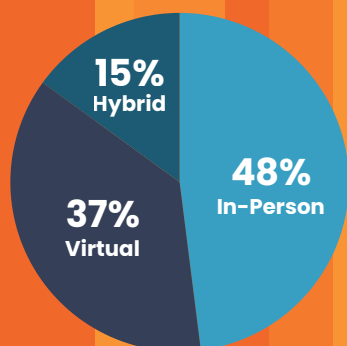


144
subscribers are from poverty-reduction sub-sectors

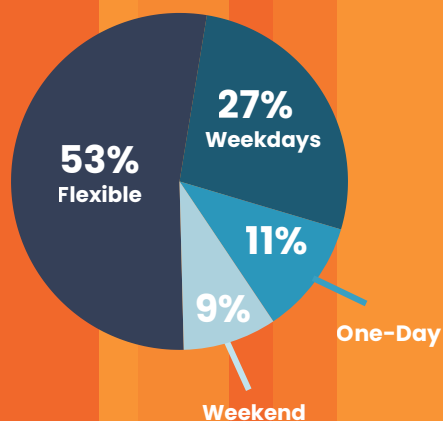
25,000+

volunteer roles
posted on our
portal in
2024-2025

Labour Needs by Location



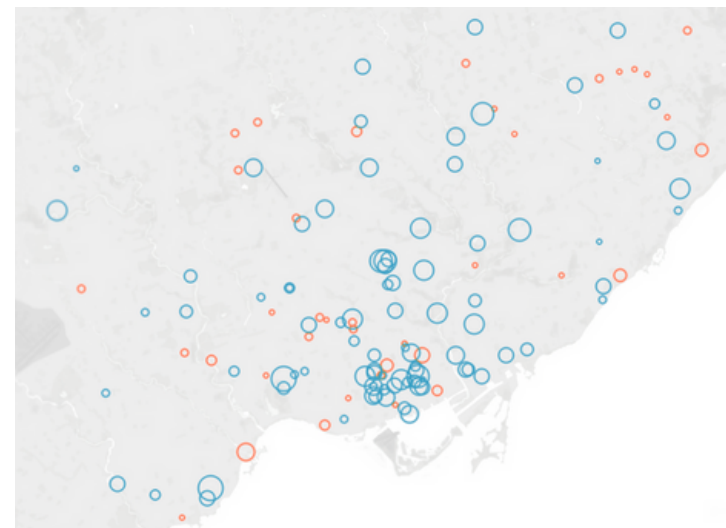
Labour Needs by Schedule



Non-Profit Volunteer Labour Needs Across Toronto

Volunteer Toronto's Subscribers are located in every Ward. Each circle on the map to the right represents a non-profit (blue) or grassroots group (orange) in our Subscriber network. The larger the circle, the more volunteers they engage.

Volunteer Toronto also tracks our Subscriber's **volunteer labour needs through role postings** to understand how non-profits plan to engage volunteers to enable their mission.



Top 5 Needs by Cause

Seniors and Long-Term Care Homes	24%
Social Services and Poverty Reduction Services	20%
Health and Mental Health programs	19%
Education and Literacy initiatives	14%
Literacy and Youth	14%

Top 5 Needs by Activity

Event Assistance and Planning	13%
Marketing, Communications, and Fundraising	13%
Administration and Customer Service	10%
Boards and Committees	7%
Food Preparation	7%



Training for Volunteer Managers

At Volunteer Toronto, we create learning programs, develop resources, and share data to assist non-profits in building strong volunteer programs. Volunteer managers need a place to go for information on the risks, safety and leading practices in developing decent volunteer roles for community members. ***That's where we come in.***

Volunteer Management Foundations

This year, we launched a new 2-day, in-person intensive workshop called Volunteer Management Foundations (VMF), which brings together volunteer managers from across the city and province to learn the essentials of the volunteer engagement cycle. Developing VMF was inspired by a noted **increase in new volunteer managers seeking support** from Volunteer Toronto. This year, 49% of all volunteer managers participating in learning were new to the profession in their first 3 years, and 27% were new in their first year! **After three successful local offerings, Volunteer Toronto worked with other volunteer centres in Ontario to bring the training where it's needed.**

- 📍 Kitchener via Volunteer Waterloo Region
- 📍 Burlington via Volunteer Halton
- 📍 Ottawa via Volunteer Ottawa
- 📍 Oshawa via United Way Durham

1,500
non-profit
staff engaged
in learning

89%
made at least one
change to their
volunteer
engagement
approach after the
session

"The Volunteer Management Foundations course was incredibly helpful in launching my journey as a new volunteer manager. It gave me the **confidence and tools to address challenges our program was facing and encouraged me to think creatively and approach volunteer engagement in new ways."**

– Rachel Weatherbee (she/her), Manager, Volunteer Services, SE Health





Non-Profit Webinars, Resources and Courses

Volunteer Toronto also produces resources, hosts online courses, and delivers regular topic-based webinars for volunteer managers, grassroots leaders and non-profit staff in Toronto. This year we provided **50 live training sessions**, developed **22 new resources**, and were engaged to deliver **29 custom sessions**. We also trained **128 board members** to better govern non-profits. **LearnVT**, our online learning platform, houses the majority of our volunteer management resources and online courses which are available to both Subscribers and interested learners outside of our non-profit network.

Most Popular Volunteer Management Resource Topics



Police Checks



Volunteer Waivers



Engaging Newcomers as Volunteers



Engaging Seniors as Volunteers



Unpaid Interns are Not Volunteers

“As a relatively new leader of volunteers, I know I can learn from a number of Volunteer Toronto's offerings to make **informed decisions about volunteer management.”**

– Anonymous Volunteer Manager



Uplifting Community Centre Volunteering

In Fall 2024, Volunteer Toronto was engaged by the senior leadership team at **Warden Woods Community Centre** to redesign the organization's **volunteer engagement strategy**. The project included an audit of existing volunteer engagement practices, stakeholder consultations with staff and volunteers, and capacity-building training for staff.

About the Consulting Project

The four-month process entailed conducting **interviews with leaders, staff and volunteers**, ultimately culminating insights into the **creation of a new Volunteer Engagement Framework** grounded in the organization's neighbourhood-centred values and Volunteer Toronto's decent volunteerism philosophy. This process has resulted in a fresh, community-centered approach that seeks to create meaningful and sustainable volunteer opportunities.

It's been a privilege for Volunteer Toronto to partner with Warden Woods in developing this framework for volunteer engagement. We are grateful for the trust placed in us and the generosity of their staff team, who **truly empowered this work**. We look forward to seeing how the framework supports the continued growth of volunteer engagement at the organization.

Key Themes



Neighbourhood Over Everything:

The needs, experiences and expectations of the neighbourhood must be central to shaping volunteer engagement at Warden Woods.



Engagement Needs A System:

There is a clear need for a cohesive, streamlined system to strengthen and deepen volunteer involvement at Warden Woods.



Volunteers as Valuable Labour:

Volunteers contribute valuable labour that enhances the Centre's ability to serve the community and fulfill its mission.



"As a fifty-year-old neighbourhood centre, our volunteer structures and systems needed modern analysis that would also honour historical context and culture. [Volunteer Toronto] shared useful models and practices, to re-shape a more sustainable Volunteer Program that makes sense for our community."

– **Julia Gonsalves (they/them)**, Executive Director, Warden Woods Community Centre



534,760

searches for roles
on our portal

35,399

of visits to our high
school volunteer
webpage



How We Support Volunteer Seekers

As a destination point for information on volunteerism, we are **experts in volunteer trends** and the **resource of choice** for volunteers in Toronto. We support volunteer seekers by hosting information sessions, volunteer fairs, and other opportunities for volunteers to kick-start their volunteer journey.

Online Search Portal

Our refreshed portal offers a **modern and dynamic feel** that makes volunteer roles easily accessible for opportunity-seekers. After **two years of development** and calibration, we were proud to unveil a modernized and more accessible search portal in April 2025. We have enhanced our search categories, creating a simplified and streamlined approach for people to explore opportunities.

On average, each person looking to volunteer reviews 3-5 opportunities on our site and spends 20 seconds deciding if they are going to apply or not. The average volunteer role receives over **2,970 views** as hundreds of thousands of Torontonians look for the right opportunity for them.

Information Sessions

Information Sessions provide volunteer seekers with all the information they need to safely get involved as a volunteer. Available as interactive live in-person and virtual formats, the sessions are hosted by knowledgeable volunteers. Role seekers learn **where to search** for opportunities and how to find the best match for their needs and goals.

Over this past fiscal year, we have hosted 79 info sessions like **High School Volunteer Ask Me Anything Sessions**, Volunteering as a Senior, Volunteering as Youth, or other topics like **police checks** or volunteering to enhance **resumes**. These sessions served volunteers seeking topic-specific information about the voluntary sector in Toronto.

TORONTO STAR

Thank you, Toronto Star, for also helping us highlight ways to get involved this year!

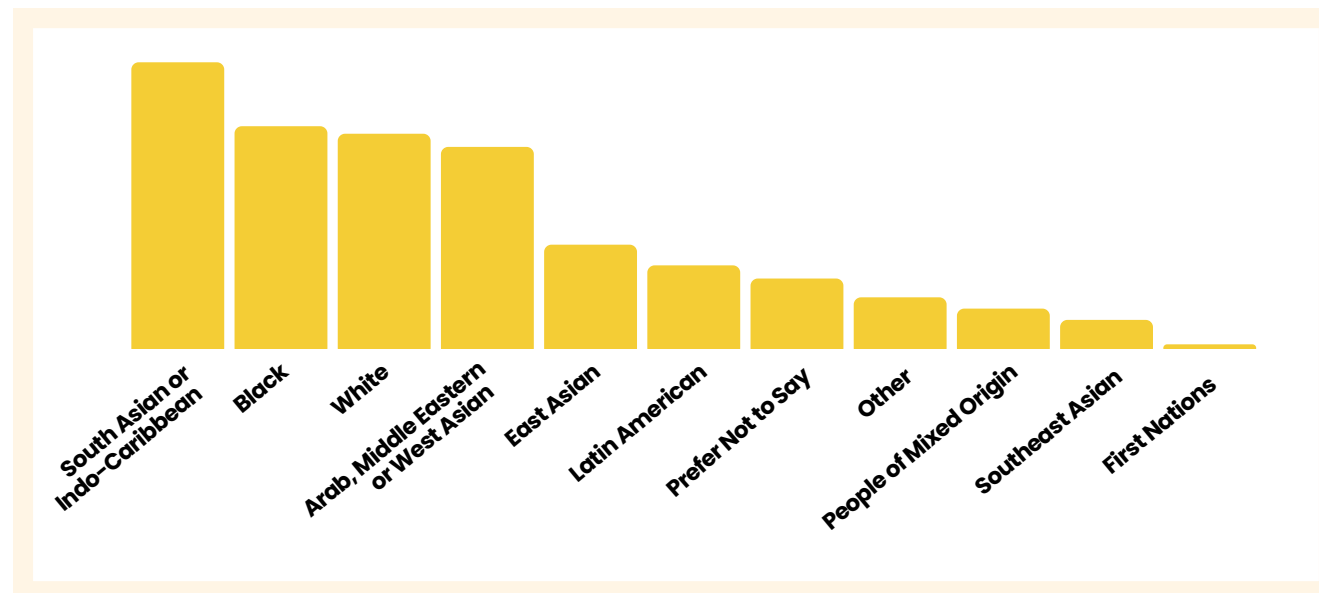
» [Volunteering in Times of Financial Hardship Can Seem Impossible. Here's How to Balance Giving](#)

» [This One Simple Habit Can Increase Your Quality of Life in 2025: Here's How](#)

1:1 Support for Volunteer Seekers Facing Barriers

Our Volunteer Advisors work to bridge questions and curiosity about how to volunteer. Accepting phone, email, and Zoom video appointments, Volunteer Advisors **guide potential role seekers** to find their passion or cause they care about, how to apply, and the norms and expectations that exist in the voluntary sector. Thousands of volunteers **rely on this service**, and our knowledgeable and experienced Advisors connect volunteers to organizations, easing the process and ensuring that volunteers understand what to expect.

Ethnocultural Representation of Advisor Participants



2,000+
people supported
through our
Volunteer Advisor
program



589
bookings for a
phone appointment



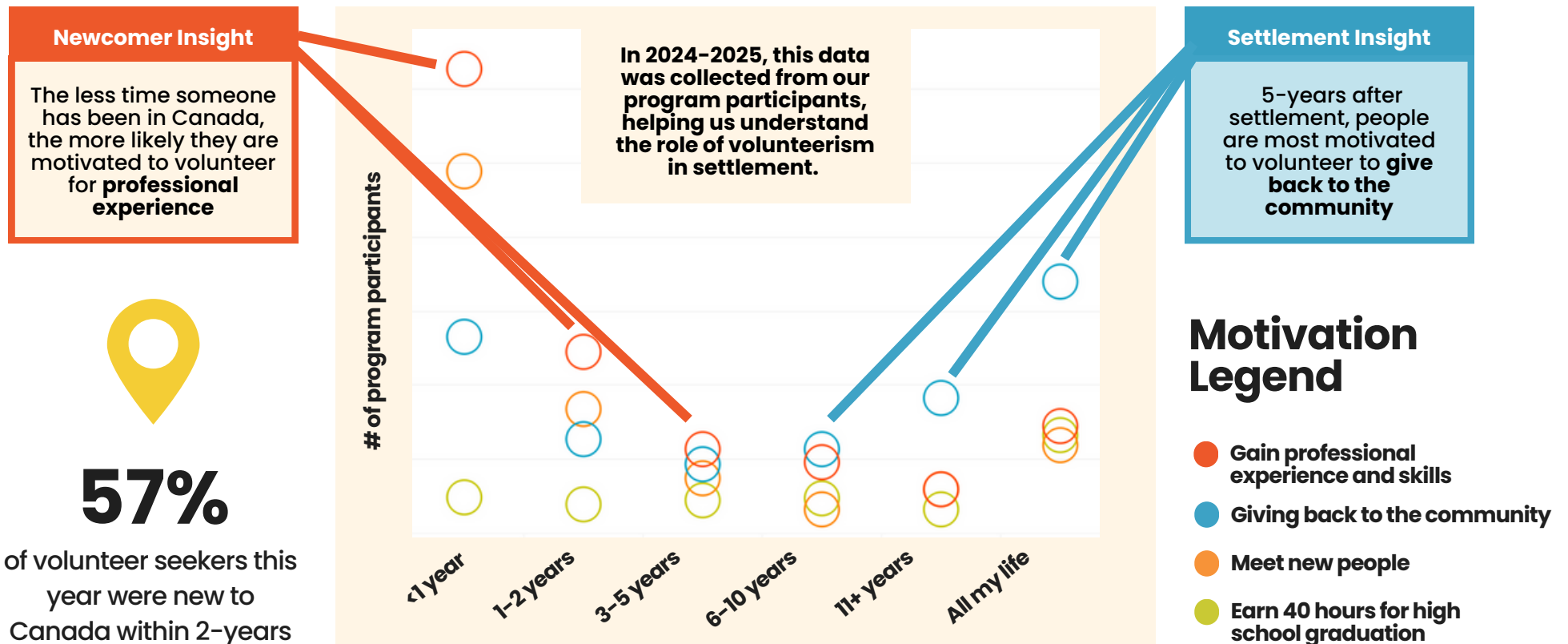
181
bookings for a Zoom
video appointment



What Do Volunteers Seekers Want?

Through every program we deliver to support volunteer seekers, we track their **motivation to volunteer**. We can then layer motivation-based data with demographic data to understand who wants to volunteer, why, where, and how their relationship with volunteering changes over their age and/or time in Canada. We use this data to adapt our programs to meet the needs of today's volunteer seekers.

Tracking Motivation Trends to Volunteer by Time in Canada





Celebrating Toronto's Volunteers

Every April, Volunteer Toronto is proud to celebrate our city's dedicated volunteers. A city of helpers. It's who we are. The theme for National Volunteer Week 2024 was **Every Moment Matters**, capturing the importance of recognizing every, even small, voluntary contributions that make a difference for many across our communities.



Watch a special message for Toronto's volunteers from Toronto Mayor, Olivia Chow.

"Toronto is a city full of hope and care. A place where we can do incredible things, when we do them together."

– Mayor Olivia Chow (she/her),
City of Toronto

Toronto Lights Up for Volunteers

Both the **TORONTO** sign at Nathan Phillips Square, and Toronto's iconic **CN Tower** lit blue and orange in recognition of the city's thousands of volunteers, millions of service hours, and the skills and talents that volunteers share in our communities every day.



**MET
RADIO**

Podcast
April 2024

As part of National Volunteer Week 2024, we also partnered with MET Radio to create a short podcast series discussing issues, engagement, and key topics in the volunteerism sector. The podcast was hosted by Quinton Bradshaw (MET Radio), Anastasiya Tregubenko (VT), and Tatiana Letang, (VT).

» [Listen to the Podcast Here](#)

Volunteer Appreciation

Each National Volunteer Week, we celebrate and acknowledge the successes, time, and efforts shared by Toronto's volunteers. In April 2024, we continued our partnership with **Panago Pizza**, Toronto's pizza place for volunteers, by distributing **100 free medium pizza vouchers** to dedicated volunteers.

PANAGO

We also partnered with **Cirque du Soleil** to provide a ticket discount for volunteers, and one of our volunteers received two in kind tickets for the show!

Reducing Social Isolation through Informal Volunteerism

In 2024, Volunteer Toronto and the Toronto Foundation tested a new idea that would reduce social isolation in Canada's loneliest city. We believed in **uplifting small groups of neighbours** who know their communities to imagine and build a better future. These small groups can reach residents who have been isolated for years, build trust with people in ways institutions can't, and as informal volunteers, they are motivated to lead something for their own community.

With a \$1,000 microgrant and capacity building from Volunteer Toronto, 35 groups of neighbours delivered an initiative or event in 2024 to reduce social isolation in their community—and it worked.

The funded initiatives create **opportunities to activate neighbourhoods**, animate public spaces, or bridge connections between people to increase a sense of belonging in our communities and address the growing challenge of social isolation.



Volunteer Toronto is thrilled to share our first Civic Spark Zine in Fall 2025. The Zine shares impact data, micrograntee stories and lessons learned in reducing social isolation through enabling informal volunteerism.

Coming Soon in Fall 2025!



35
informal
volunteerism
projects funded

3,609+
community
members
participated

210+
volunteers
engaged

93%
reported an
increase of
friendships or
connections



Meet Three of our 2024 Micrograntees



\$1,000 microgrant helps newcomers overcome isolation through art

If you were to stroll through Christie Pits Park last summer, you might have seen a small group of diverse people gathered, painting, drawing, chatting, and laughing. The reason they were together? A series of art workshops organized by **Colective Bandita Latina**, a group dedicated to engaging newcomers in Toronto through the power of artistic expression.

Newcomers embraced a safe space to share their feelings and creativity with the support of a Volunteer Toronto microgrant.



\$1,000 microgrant kick-starts connections for the seniors of Sunrise Tower

We all know that the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly hard on older adults. The residents of **Sunrise Tower in Victoria Village** were no exception. Typically a vibrant community, the pandemic left residents isolated. Resident and organizer Cornelia Harrison explains: “COVID-19 really left a bad dent on our community and our ability to get together to socialize. Without community events, there is less trust with neighbours. We want the ability to help each other when things happen...”

With the support of a Volunteer Toronto microgrant, seniors made new friends and found a space to share their feelings.



\$1,000 microgrant helps community elders find hope and connection

Etobicoke grandmother Lydia Brown was grieving the death of a son during COVID when she decided to join a micro-funded group in Etobicoke, called **Sistaz in Sound**, which offered tutorials on steel drums, and other activities, including beading and crochet, to encourage people to interact with one another. It ran over six weeks.

» **TORONTO STAR** «

This project was highlighted by the Toronto Star for its success in reducing social isolation.



Engaging Our Community Online

Volunteer Toronto's communications channels have a wide reach, engaging members of the public, non-profits and sector leaders through newsletters, social media, and on our website.

Our Communications

Our newsletters and social media channels garner hundreds of thousands of impressions and engagements every year. We connect with thousands of members of the public through our monthly **Volunteer Times** and **Community Response Team Alert** newsletters, as well as non-profit staff through our monthly **Sector Space** newsletter.

Our social campaigns, such as National Volunteer Week or International Volunteer Manager's Day, also strengthen our thought leadership and harness external relevancy to draw awareness to needs in our community.



279K

Unique Users on
VolunteerToronto.ca



2.0M

Page Views to
VolunteerToronto.ca

Our Website

[VolunteerToronto.ca](https://www.volunteertoronto.ca) is the most visited volunteerism focused website in Ontario. This year, we completed a project that started two years ago — the **rejuvenation and modernization** of our website. We self-funded this project to ensure our portal matches a modern, accessible and user-friendly experience.

Our website is accessed by both non-profits and members of the public. We're constantly creating new content to better serve and support both audiences.



231,758

Social Media
Impressions



25,895

Newsletter
Subscribers



60

volunteers
engaged last
year

1,997

hours given
by volunteers

**"I love being
able to be a
part of
Volunteer
Toronto. I would
love to join
more events to
support."**

– Anonymous Volunteer

Our Volunteers

At Volunteer Toronto, we are lucky to have the support, knowledge and skills our volunteers provide. Ranging from **14 to 65+ years old**, our volunteers represent wisdom, community connection, and a diversity of Torontonians coming together for the common goal of enabling our mission.

Each Volunteer Makes a Special Impact

Volunteers are on the front-lines of our work. Our Volunteer Advisors and Ambassadors provide the information volunteer role-seekers need by offering support **both in-person and virtually**, guiding and explaining the volunteering process. While Community Outreach Volunteers and our Fair Support Volunteers connect with people through events to get the word out that there are volunteer opportunities available!

Digitally, our volunteers offer support through roles such as Digital Receptionists and Social Media Feature Writers who guide those who reach out to us via social media and promote **meaningful volunteer opportunities online**. While our Posting Support volunteers maintain the reliability of available volunteer roles on our website and our Zoom Support, Notetakers, and Special Projects volunteers help behind the scenes, ensuring smooth program delivery!

Lastly, our Board of Directors offer skills, wisdom and guidance to lead our organization. Thank you for your contributions!

Roles Supported by Volunteers

- » **Advisors**
- » **Ambassadors**
- » **Posting Support**
- » **Zoom Support**
- » **Community Outreach**
- » **Board Members**
- » **Fair Support**
- » **Social Media Feature Writers**
- » **Digital Receptionist**
- » **Notetaker**
- » **Special Projects**



Hear From Our Volunteers

We spoke with Meseret Beleke and Eden Agulnik about their experiences as volunteers and with Volunteer Toronto. Eden and Meseret help connect members of the public to the volunteer roles they are looking for by guiding role seekers down the right path on their journey. The experience, advice, and knowledge they share is vital to **creating positive experiences for volunteers**.

Eden Agulnik

“Find your passion, and start small. First, focus and finish all your school work in class so after you are able to volunteer and work. Pick days a week you would like to volunteer versus work and know your value.”

Eden started volunteering with us in December 2024, as a Volunteer Advisor, and also hosting our **Ask Me Anything Information Sessions** for youth and high school students.

Eden started volunteering from a young age, even before she was looking to fulfill her **40-hour requirement** for graduation. Being able to work with others and do what she loves, Eden has found numerous volunteering experiences through Volunteer Toronto.

Eden shares her **experience and knowledge** about volunteering and available opportunities for others who want and need to volunteer, as an Advisor. Eden recommends **finding your passion**, start volunteering with a cause that's important to you. Get experience, go above and beyond and **have fun!**

Meseret Beleke

“The most rewarding part [of volunteering] has been seeing the impact of small actions – a conversation, a piece of advice, a few hours of time – on someone else's journey. Knowing that I can help others feel more confident or connected, just as others did for me, is something I will always treasure.”

Meseret started with Volunteer Toronto in September 2024, as a Community Outreach Volunteer. As a newcomer to Canada, Meseret **wanted to find their place**, volunteering offered that.

For Meseret, volunteering is a way to **connect, learn, and give back** to a community that welcomed them when they first arrived to Canada as a newcomer. Getting involved and giving back gave them a sense of **purpose and belonging** during pivotal period of change in their life.

Meseret believes the most important quality a volunteer can have is **empathy**. When you bring empathy into your interactions, you are able to meet people where they are, without judgment, building stronger relationships, with a **meaningful and lasting impact**.



Our Staff

Joanne McKiernan
Executive Director

Sammy Feilchenfeld, CVA
Senior Manager, Learning

Samah AbdelAziz, CVA
Coordinator, Programs

Cara Eaton
Senior Director, Strategy
and Growth

Tatiana Letang
Manager, Marketing and
Communications

Olivia Sonnenberg
Communications and
Engagement Specialist

Kassandra James
Director, Programs and
Organizational Systems

Nira Mariathias
Manager, Operations

Roshini Matthews
Engagement and Outreach
Coordinator (Partial Contract)

Anastassiya Tregubenko
Marketing Assistant
(Partial Contract)

Our Board

Sushma Narisetty
Chair

Kanta Wadhwan
Director

Vernis Cheung
Director

Helen Moroz
Vice Chair

Horace Wright
Director

Polina Kosareva
Director

Jenny Okonkwo
Treasurer

Sarah Llewelin
Director (Partial Term)

Tony Nguyen
Director

Aseem Bhatnagar
Director

Martin Cassaza
Director





Staff Accomplishments

Volunteer Toronto is delighted to announce the accomplishments, awards, and certifications earned by our staff in 2024-2025. As **thought leaders** in the sector, our committed staff develop new ideas, deepen best practices and **elevate the impact of volunteerism**.

Joanne McKiernan

In 2025, Volunteer Toronto's Executive Director, Joanne McKiernan, was presented with **The King Charles III Coronation Medal** in recognition of her exceptional leadership and dedication to fostering collaboration in the voluntary sector.

Joanne has played a pivotal role in coordinating the Greater Toronto Area's volunteer response to the COVID-19 pandemic, co-publishing a peer-reviewed academic paper on shifting trends in volunteer participation, and provided vital resources and spaces for leaders of volunteer centres to connect and collaborate.

Kassandra James

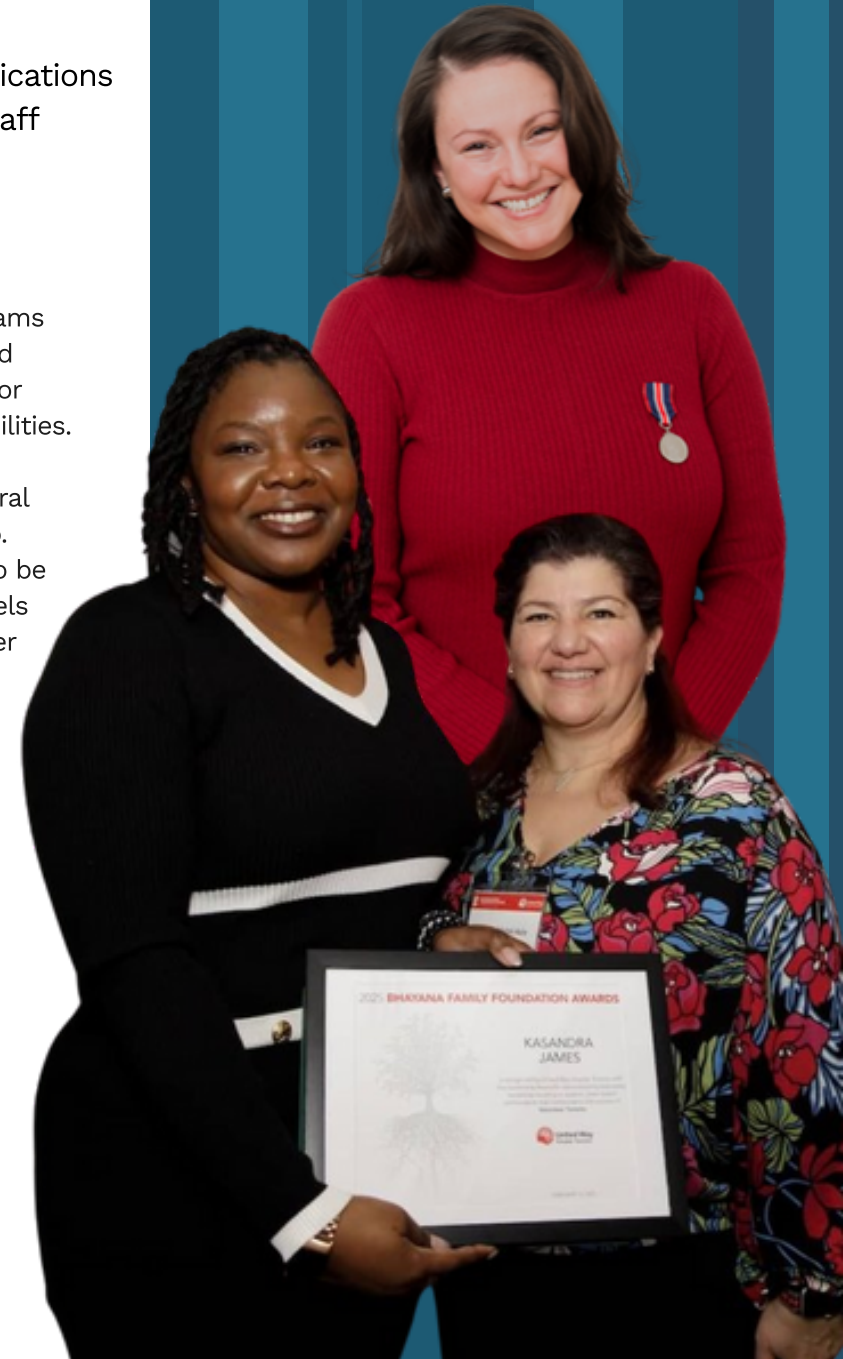
In 2025, Kassandra James, Director of Programs and Organizational Systems, was recognized with a **Bhayana Family Foundation Award** for demonstrating exemplary leadership capabilities.

For nearly a decade, Kassandra has led several high-impact programs at Volunteer Toronto. This includes advocating for youth voices to be heard, researching systemic Meals on Wheels volunteer shortages, leading major volunteer program audits, supporting volunteer managers in rebuilding post-pandemic, and being a champion for reducing barriers to volunteer engagement.

Samah AbdelAziz, CVA

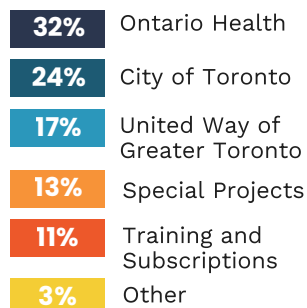
Volunteer Toronto's Programs Coordinator, Samah AbdelAziz, was certified in Volunteer Administration, achieving her [CVA designation](#) in 2024.

The CVA is the only **internationally recognized professional certification** for leaders in the field of volunteer engagement. It demonstrates a professional standard in volunteer management, indicating the individual's knowledge, skills, and competencies in the volunteer engagement field.



Financial Snapshot – 2024/2025

This was a high-impact year for Volunteer Toronto—one where strong earned revenue performance and stable core funding gave us the confidence to invest in our future. Our core funders—**Ontario Health**, the **City of Toronto**, and **United Way Greater Toronto**—continued to provide essential, steady support. Their long-term investment ensures we can stay focused on impact, even as project-based funding shifts with emerging needs across the sector. Highlights from this year include:



TOTAL: \$1,017,643.42



TOTAL: \$1,047,021.07



Our **earned revenue** reached its highest level since before the pandemic, driven by strong demand for training, sector-wide learning, and non-profit capacity building.



Our partnership with the **Toronto Foundation** gave rise to a microgrant pilot rooted in civic engagement. The program is currently being revitalized for its next phase.



We're also grateful to **Meridian Credit Union** for their generous investment. Their support strengthened our capacity at a critical time, allowing us to deepen our sector-wide contributions—including helping bring Ontario's voice to the development of Canada's first National Action Strategy on Volunteerism, in partnership with **Volunteer Canada**.

These successes positioned us to make a forward-looking decision: to invest directly in the **development of our next strategic plan**. We engaged external expertise to support this work—ensuring our board and organization are equipped to meet this moment with clarity and strength. This one-time investment, alongside operational changes like co-locating with **Crohn's and Colitis Canada**, resulted in a planned **3% operating deficit**. It was a strategic and values-aligned choice, made possible by our strong financial foundation and healthy reserves.



Our Mission

Volunteer Toronto increases the positive impact that volunteering has on the City of Toronto through innovative initiatives that inspire, inform, and connect volunteers and the organizations that need them.

Our Vision

We envision a Toronto that is caring, inclusive, and engaged where volunteering is an important avenue through which everyone has the opportunity to participate and contribute meaningfully.

VolunteerToronto.ca

CRA# 119287092RR0001

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Volunteer
Toronto