

# Informal Volunteering

Informal volunteering is a growing trend, defined as “voluntary action that directly or indirectly benefits people outside the family or household or else benefits a cause.” This refers to volunteers who may give their time outside of structured volunteer roles. Alongside Volunteer Canada’s recent research on how individuals recognize their actions as volunteering, the information below will help you understand and connect with informal volunteers in new ways to enhance your volunteer program.



## Individual Social Responsibility

Released in 2017, Volunteer Canada’s “Recognizing Volunteering” report pointed to great things Canadians are doing outside of formal volunteer roles, applying the term “Individual Social Responsibility” (ISR). Volunteering through ISR refers to the social good informal activities – ranging from donating used clothing and shoveling a neighbour’s driveway to attending a public meeting or protest – can encourage.



**Canadians who help out in the community but do not consider it volunteering**

## Engaging Informal Groups

Many informal volunteering activities take place in groups, with friends and families helping out in the community. You can reach out to these groups by seeing what’s going on in your community and connecting in-person or through social media. You should also be open to groups coming to you with pre-planned events or specialized skills that can enhance the impact your organization makes in the community. Consider putting out messaging welcoming informal volunteer groups to contribute to your cause.

**Sources:** Volunteer Canada’s “Recognizing Volunteering in 2017”  
150 for 150 Volunteering Challenge ([volunteer150for150.ca](http://volunteer150for150.ca))  
NCO Microvolunteering resource: [blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2013/11/27/micro-volunteering-terms-and-conditions/](https://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2013/11/27/micro-volunteering-terms-and-conditions/)  
Volunteer Toronto informal research project on “Good Deeds”

## Micro-Volunteering

Engaging informal volunteers requires making new opportunities that can further your cause with minimal effort. Micro-volunteering allows people to contribute time in bite-sized ways, from tweeting about a community cause to dropping by a lonely neighbour. Since micro-volunteering takes place in every community, determine which small actions can contribute to your cause and invite people to do them – such as retweeting an important post on social media or baking cookies for a fundraiser.



**Canadians who believe that many people help out in the community but are not thought of as volunteers**

## Good Deeds for Torontonians

**Write letters of appreciation to members of your community**

**Help out a neighbour by performing chores or errands**

**Share your garden with neighbours**

**Visit with isolated members of your community**