

High school students in Ontario must perform 40 hours of community service in order to graduate and many students aim to complete far more, making youth volunteers an abundant and valuable resource for the voluntary sector. To help you engage youth, Volunteer Toronto hosts an annual youth volunteer fair (Youth Expo) and has a team of youth ready to give advice and feedback to your organization (Youth Auditors). The information below draws on these sources to help you engage youth volunteers effectively and meaningfully.

Preparing for Youth

Roles for youth volunteers should be accessible by transit or bicycle, and consider subsidizing transit costs. When working with youth, talk about roles and the work in straightforward language, don't micromanage them and try to avoid perceptions of ageism in your organization. When you can, provide food (snacks are a form of meaningful appreciation) and consider ways to provide casual, meaningful recognition of youth volunteers that is relevant and personal to them (such as informal social gatherings or free training).

81%

Youth Expo attendees plan to or have gone over the 40 hour requirement

“As much as possible, give youth roles that are on-par with non-youth volunteers, so they don't feel segregated or pandered to; they want to feel like part of the whole!”

— Youth Audit Team

Sources: Volunteer Toronto Youth Audit Team
Volunteer Canada's "10 ways to make your organization youth-friendly," (www.volunteer.ca/youth)
Volunteer Toronto Youth Expo 2016 survey, 98 respondents



What Youth are Looking For

Youth volunteers are looking for: social opportunities in volunteer roles (and the chance to volunteer together); shifts that take their school schedules into account: 2-3 hour shifts after 4:30 p.m. on weekdays, longer shifts on weekends and school breaks; the chance learn something they're not learning school, like professional development and soft skills; a website and online presence that is up to date.

75%

Youth Expo attendees hope to learn new skills from volunteering

Top 3 Tips

1. Provide short weekday shifts after school hours, and longer weekend shifts
2. Offer roles on-par with non-youth roles
3. Provide opportunities to develop & expand skills, or to take on more responsibility