

“Treat volunteers as a strategy, not extra help.”

and other lessons learned from



Volunteers build four kinds of capacity



Program

More consistent support, stronger ratios, and richer activities.



Community

Families, students, businesses, and partners who understand the mission.



Fundraising

Volunteers become storytellers, connectors, event leads, and donors.



Leadership

Placements grow into committees, board members, and ambassador pipelines.

“When people understand the need, see their role, feel valued, and know the next step, they stay - as volunteers, donors, ambassadors, and partners”.

- Michelle Del Carmen, BSW, RSW,
CEO Centre for Dreams

Capacity grows when volunteer roles are connected to your organization's outcomes.

The desire to help is unchanged. The formal pathways have weakened.

73%

overall volunteer rate, 2023
down from 79% in 2018

32%

formal volunteering rate, 2023
down from 41% in 2018

4.1B

volunteer hours, 2023
down from 5 billion in 2018

*Fewer people are entering formal roles, so volunteer roles must be **easier to start** and more **meaningful to sustain**.*

From first yes to lifelong champion

Discover

Try

Belong

Lead

Champion

The mindset shift: Curiosity → Contribution → Commitment



The most common mistake is asking people to commit before they feel they belong. Make the first yes **low-risk, build connection**, then **grow responsibility**.

12 of 15

staff at Centre for Dreams started as placement students.

One community of support

Volunteers and fundraising are no longer two separate files. The volunteer, advocate, donor, and connector are converging into a single relationship.

Head, heart, pocket



Head

Once people get to **know** you...



Heart

...then make a **connection**...



Pocket

...the conditions for **giving** are met.

CASE STUDY

The 10-10-10 Campaign

Donate \$10 • Invite 10 friends to give \$10 • Engage on social media

A peer-to-peer micro-fundraiser with near-zero overhead. It surpassed its goal in about five weeks and built database growth and engagement value beyond the dollars raised.

Small enough to say yes, simple enough to explain, **meaningful enough to share.**

Funded by the Government
of Canada's Social Development
Partnerships Program

Canada