

Dianne: Hi, I'd like to thank everyone for joining us today for this panel discussion on module number four, the intersectionality of volunteering and human resources. And I'm really happy that all of our volunteer managers are here today for, for the panel discussion. Thank you so much, everyone. You're also very busy and these have been challenging times to actually pull together this course. So, thank you for your time. To start off with, Heidi Elliott, from community support connections, is going to give us a little summary of what she did present and some of the takeaways that she was hoping to provide us in her, her module. And we'll have a short discussion about that. Heidi, thank you for joining us.

Heidi: Thanks Dianne. So, as Dianne mentioned, I'm Heidi Elliott. I'm from community support connections in Breslau, and I've been there for approximately two years. And our organization helps to support individuals living in the community. We have a variety of programs and services and we have about 70 or so staff and about 500 volunteers. And we service probably approximately 5- to 6,000 clients a year. So, that's sort of our scope. Our volunteers obviously hugely important to what we do. And so, in this module, we looked at how to create a really good culture. For our org, our organization, we have, like I said, our volunteers are really pivotal, and we wouldn't be able to do what we do without them. So, we talk about culture. Recognition of volunteers is huge as well. And I know that we're going to talk about that in other modules as well. We went over the onboarding. So, with COVID obviously there's been a lot more check boxes to, to do when you're taking on a new volunteer. So, we talk a little bit about the onboarding process and how that is different from staff. We talked about risk management a little bit and how to retain volunteers- obviously that's hugely important. We don't want volunteers turning over after a month. We were really fortunate that when the pandemic hit a spotlight was on our organization and we were able to retain a lot of our meals on wheels volunteers, which was great. We kind of thought that a lot of them would leave maybe a month after we know when the pandemic was to end. But many of them have stayed on with us and have become donors, which is wonderful. We recently put out another call as we had some people heading back to work and realized that we needed more meals on wheels volunteers. So, I was talking with Dianne about this. We've had almost a hundred people apply in October, so we are very fortunate that we've got another spotlight on us. But to get all of these volunteers onboarded, screened, trained virtually is again, another challenge. So yeah, we've really been, we've been busy with that. So, that's a little bit about, I guess, the last couple of years, but maybe we can just have a bit of a conversation about the module. Dianne is there some questions that maybe you want to ask out of that that would work?

Dianne: Yeah. And I'm sorry. I wanted to share this correct screen about our panelists as well. And, and if others want to jump in and talk about. Perhaps, you know, the, the variety of organizations that have volunteer engagement are listed here on this panel. You can see that they can range in, in size. In fact, this list of volunteer managers are folks that have positions, paid positions in the industry. So, we are talking about professionals here that are working in an organizational construct that requires them to, to blend and to have the whole vision of the organization in their programs. I don't want to pick on individuals, but is there anybody who would like to comment on the topic of how human resources are helping with the volunteer management programs that you're developing? Or providing, not just developing. Sometimes

they're already developed. Other times you have to start from scratch. So, is there anybody that would like to jump in on that topic? I know Ruth you've had a lot to say in the past, on our conversations. Can I start with you?

Ruth: Sure Dianne. At CNIB, we have basically one team, one team of staff and volunteers. So, it's unpaid and paid resources that go with that. So, when I think of the human resources or they're, they're creating policies and procedures that are used for not only staff, but also used for volunteers as well. And just making sure that our platforms and, and our systems are used for all of the, all of the human resources to make sure that we run all the programs that we do. I think it's changed a little bit over pandemic. And, it's like Heidi mentioned, there's a little bit more of checking on our training and that kind of stuff. And I think that that's been a little bit more added things that has happened, and that's been lots of support from the HR department. Just supporting those policies and those changes.

Dianne: How about you Sherry? At the library, I know it's, it's something that's a well-oiled machine. So, and you've been there for, if I could tell the audience, 30 years or more, you've seen a lot of changes. You are on mute and that is going to happen. That's okay.

Sherry: I, I work. I love the library. I love meeting people who want to support the library. But of course, I feel like over the years, we used to have volunteers that stayed for a long period of time and the training was done initially, and then they knew their, their role. But now, as, as people are busy and people are going back to work and COVID has changed people's lifestyles as well. And we bring new people on. I really feel that it's important that we really follow the processes that HR has put in place and that we're consistent with staff and volunteers and checking off those boxes to make sure that everyone is getting the same information. Everyone's getting the same health and safety information about how to be in our space. And everyone understands their role really well. So, I think that following HR practices is really what we're doing here.

Dianne: Anyone else want to jump in? Just let me know.

Jen: I wanted to-

Kevin: Just-sorry go ahead, Jen.

Dianne: Oh, I shouldn't do that. Okay.

Kevin: Alright, Jen.

Jen: I wanted to share a unique perspective that I have. Many years ago before. So, my name is Jen. I work at house of friendship here in Kitchener. Years ago I had, when I was leading the volunteer program, I, my role fell within the development team. So, I worked with the development team and worked very closely with the fundraising team. Now here at house of friendship. And that was great. However, here at house of friendship, my role falls within HR.

So, our volunteer practices are very much aligned with HR practices. So, what happens with our staff team generally our HR, our volunteer team is mirroring that. So, our policies are reflective in, in both spheres. And I'm seeing how, especially in these past few years, there's a really, really strong alignment and a really clear guide on how to do volunteer management really well because we are so well aligned with the, with the HR team. So, it's just a different perspective. And I know that sometimes this role falls within either program. But I'm seeing in these past few years why it's been critical that it has been aligned so closely to HR.

Dianne: Thanks, Jennifer. Go ahead, Kevin.

Kevin: Yeah, I was just going to kind of comment sort of on what everyone else has been saying. One thing that I've found really successful working at Langs and working in conjunction with our HR- with Anne. So, Anne is in charge of our HR. And so, we both kind of run our own programs but we collaborate a lot. And, and I think we, we kind of support one another in different ways. One particular thing that seems to really work well. We get a lot of student placements as well as volunteers. And, and when there's times where there's actual vacancies of employment and Anne will come to me and she'll ask, you know, is there a particular volunteer placement student that we have had, or currently have, that we feel would be a good employee. And so, a lot of times I've made recommendations for a lot of my volunteers and/or placement students who apply to certain positions that have become available. Because again, they've de- they've demonstrated, you know, their skillsets and their, their knowledge and, and, and passion for, for working for Langs. And so, it's, it's a great opportunity. It's a nice segue, right? To, to get them to, to advance their time with, with Langs. So, yeah.

Dianne: That's a good point, really. Thank you so much, Kevin. Debbie, did you have a final word on this particular topic?

Debbie: Yeah, we have a really strong volunteer engagement program at habitat waterloo region. And so, we have a volunteer engagement manager, which is myself. We have a volunteer engagement coordinator. So, we tend to do a lot of the HR pieces ourselves. Mind you, there are some overlaps where policies, like someone mentioned policies, that definitely we do in conjunction with the organization. I think things became really clear about that HR volunteer overlap piece with COVID and specifically the recent vaccination policy piece. We had to, we, we talked to our volunteers, we got feedback from our volunteers about how they felt about it. And then that information was taken back to the organization and the organization had to do their research about what worked for the staff, the organization as a whole, and then try and merge that all into one, one piece. And we are, it's interesting, we actually had one volunteer- a couple say that whatever the vaccination policy was, they just wanted to make sure that it was the same for staff and for volunteers because they didn't want to feel like second class citizens. So, there needed to be that really good collaboration between HR and the volunteer department.

Dianne: I think that it's, it's very evident to this group here, that those things work well together. And, and Heidi, you spoke about the corporate culture providing that welcoming

environment and engaging environment. So, do others also want to chip on that or do you want to talk about how your corporate culture has changed? I imagine that's obvious with COVID, it's changed quite a bit. But it seems that the HR piece is helping. Can you talk about how it, how it does help perhaps? With the, the changing world that we're experiencing here through post-COVID era, hopefully post-COVID. Heidi, do you have any changes in your envi- I know you're going through some and she can't even talk about it because it's that stressful. I know. That's the silent grin that I'm interpreting.

Heidi: I guess for us, obviously, most of us are working remotely. Pre-COVID, we were really trying to hammer in every new staff member that everyone is a volunteer coordinator, not just myself, the volunteers going to be interacting with a lot of different staff. So, you know, if you see a volunteer, make sure that you're welcoming. If you know, they're confused about where to go, making sure that you're definitely helping them. So, you know, at CSC, we definitely make sure that every new staff member that comes through the door knows that our volunteers are vital to our success and helping our clients. So, yeah. It's just, it starts with the staff, for sure.

Dianne: Anyone else want to chip in? Jennifer, go ahead.

Jen: I would, I would agree at house of friendship. The culture of volunteerism needs to be spread throughout the entire organization. It's everyone's job to recognize and thank and build and cultivate those relationships with our volunteers. For myself, as the volunteer manager, I'm responsible for organizational wide approach and kind of helping to set that vision, but for the most part, it's the frontline staff that are working with our volunteers day in, day out. And it is their responsibility and we really do empower them to be sure that our volunteers feel recognized and feel like they are making an impact and have a meaningful opportunity.

Kevin: At Langs, I know it's a, we have a strong culture and appreciation for volunteers. It starts again with the staff and staff are encouraged to, to identify some of our patients who are coming in for, you know, counseling or for coming in for healthcare. And, if they feel that part of their needs includes, you know, social supports or just a feeling of community connection, they can get that through volunteering. And so, I've had a lot of staff come to me to have one of their patients or clients, you know, look at volunteering as an option of meeting new people- especially for those that are new to the community and it's a chance for them to meet others. So, our, our, our staff are very welcoming. We also include our volunteers in a lot of different staff meetings. We also have some for new, some of our orientation for new staff. Also, I've opened it up to volunteers and placement students. So, again, it just fills the room and makes conversations really interesting because you're getting a lot of different aspects to the, to the questions and into the discussion. And also just, just in general. There's a lot of nice spaces in our, our building where people can sit. This is kind of pre-pandemic- sit together for lunch or for coffee that kind of thing. And so, it just, again, encourages that, staff to be with our volunteers. And yeah, just for them to find meaning and appreciation for, for what they're doing.

Dianne: It's, it's truly the culture that, that your organization has to help with for sure. And I think that that's evident through the HR.