Dianne: Hi, welcome to section- module number seven, virtual volunteering. We're really happy to have this wonderful panel of volunteer managers join us for a conversation to help talk about some of the things that were brought forward in Kevin Noseworthy's presentation. I just want to share the screen so that you can all see who the panel consists of today. And we might not have a chance to get to know everybody as well as we want to. We're trying to keep it brief for your, your entertainment and for everyone to give a little bit of their insights. These organizations all have volunteer managers that are paid professionals, so they do have resources to run the volunteer programs. Not to say that it's always easy. So, Kevin, did you want to give us a little highlight on, on the work that you put forward? The, the module that you put together on virtual volunteering and tell us where you were volunteer manager for at the time?

Kevin: Thanks, Dianne. Yeah. So, my name's Kevin Noseworthy. I'm the volunteer and special events coordinator with Langs community health center. So, during the time with Langs, I learned a lot, especially specifically with the pandemic. We all did. And virtual volunteering became a norm. Previous to the pandemic, it was talked about, but not as much as it was implemented during the pandemic. I learned a lot through my venture, you know, creating new volunteer positions that were virtual. So, it was just a, basically a new way of volunteering. But, you know, a lot of people struggled with the concept of it. And someone told me just basically convert, just think of it as a virtual kind of concept to begin with. So, anything really could become virtual- any, most volunteer roles. Like we have had a programs converted virtually. And so, even though a yoga person might have, teacher, did it in person well now they're doing it on, on screen kind of thing. So, a lot of times it's, it's a very easy concept. There were times though, through my presentation, we talked about developing new policies and procedures, new screening, training, orientation. Some of it actually was a lot easier. As Heidi had attested to and, and streamlined things too. So, through virtual volunteering and through, the presentation that I created, it just demonstrates there's a lot of pros. There were some cons of course, that we had to kind of over, overcome, but for the most part, it's a good experience. And it was actually well received by many of our volunteers. Because they still wanted to continue volunteering even if it was remotely or virtually in this case. So, yeah, I, I talked at length about that and did a lot of research. And the numbers show like how initially people were a little bit fearful of virtual volunteering, but over time they come to accept it. And a lot of times groups themselves. So, we have a lot of corporate groups, families, school groups- all kinds of groups coming together to work together and to get to know one another too especially with employees. Some employees that might not have worked with, together in the past, various departments came together to work together on a certain project virtually. So, there's a lot of positives that came out of virtual volunteering. So, I'd like to hear from some of my peers as to some of the examples that they might have as well as to how they utilize virtual volunteering, so?

Dianne: Heidi, I think has had the most experience. So, you can go for it from community support connections, meals on wheels. So, obviously some of your programs still continued to provide meals to seniors, but you use virtual volunteering for another reason.

Heidi: Meals on wheels obviously had to be in person still, but we had a friendly visitor program where we would match a client who is very isolated at home. No commun- like no connections with family or friends. We match them with volunteer and pre-pandemic they were visiting in person in their home. Post-pandemic, or during the pandemic, we converted that program to virtual. So, if it had to be a phone call, it had to be a phone call, but some of our volunteers and clients were able to Skype or use Zoom. That was really successful. Before the pandemic, we had up to two-year waitlist of clients waiting to be matched with someone because we had this spotlight on our organization. People wanting to help to kind of do anything to help their neighbour. We were able to eliminate the waitlist, which was amazing. We're back to a bit of a weightless now as we've kind of loosened those restrictions or the credentials that a client would need to get on that list as people are still isolated at home. But, we've definitely been able to match people a lot easier because they are just doing it virtually. They're just doing like a check-in call kind of thing. So, that program continues to be a tele-visiting or a virtual program, but we do have some clients and volunteers who are now meeting in-person distanced with masks. So, it's kind of a hybrid program at this point.

Dianne: Oh, the transitioning we've been doing. Jen, do you had something to add?

Jen: We've also had a really successful tutoring program that we have, have continued throughout this time. It has grown significantly over this past few years and more kids have been able to access tutoring support through volunteer, a volunteer led tutor. So, it has helped to increase the number of kids off, being offered support. It has also allowed different volunteers to engage with our program. So, we have volunteers that maybe don't live in Kitchener-Waterloo that can support the program. So, we've been able to expand our reach. Many of them do have a connection here. Is they, they heard about us through the region. Many of them are, you know, University of Waterloo students that may be living in a different area, different area right now. So, we're able to decrease that barrier for some volunteers in volunteering. And we were able to expand the program offerings that we were able to support kids with.

Dianne: It seems all good, Deb. What do you think? Is everything better? Virtual volunteering changed your life over there at habitat for humanity.

Deb: Yeah, it's really difficult to build homes virtually, and it's really difficult to sell items out of a, out of a restore virtually. So, for us, we didn't have quite the same experience. We really, our program really relies on people being there in-person. But one of the things we did do was our orientation. We converted that to virtual. And so, we thought we could- and now we're carrying on with that, which has been actually a bit of, a bit of a pro. One of the cons with it is that not everybody is technologically advanced and some people really struggle with that. And so, we've had to meet one-on-one with those individuals and help, help them work through it.

Dianne: Thanks, I picked on you, sorry. Sherry, I know that the library has done so much with the programming too.

Sherry: I guess I just have two things. One is we- I, I, I feel like my approach to volunteering has always been to be as flexible as possible. And where traditionally volunteering might have- you might have to come in to the, to the building and connect with staff, for a lot of our roles staff would come up with an idea. For example, we found a lot of soldier cards in our local history room, and this is about 10 years ago. And we talked about wouldn't it be great if we could put that on a database that the community could access to, to do local history searches. And instead of it being something that people had to come into the library to do, we said, does it have to happen in our building? And it became a virtual volunteer opportunity. And so, we scan the soldier cards. We send them out to volunteers by email and they fill in a, in a database that we can then upload to our library database. And we've done that with a number of roles, including those for youth. So, we have youth who want to provide reviews on books or movies that we have in our collection. We gather those reviews. We have a volunteer who edits them virtually, and then we put them up on our website. So, not every volunteer opportunity needs to be, needs to be in-person. And so, if there's a way to look at making it virtual, that's a wonderful way to do it. And obviously COVID has made us look that way at our roles a little bit more. And I guess I just want to say too, that not everyone has access to the internet or even filling out an online application form is a challenge. So, I think that we do have to be aware of those who maybe want to give back, but maybe don't have the access virtually. And making sure that we still have something for, for- to be accessible to everybody in our community.

Dianne: Good point. And maybe that's what we need to add, Module 13 is, you know, how to address the non-tech folks because I think that's a program, you're also offering at the library is to help some people with their technology. Is that not right? So, that's a new emerging program too, isn't it?

Sherry: We have a huge demand and we've set it up. It's our first volunteer opportunity to come back in-person and we've set up two computers that have hooked up to each other with a divider of plexiglass so that the volunteer can see what the client, the customer has on their computer. But you're right. I think tech, tech literacy in general is something that there's still a big demand for.

Dianne: We're not done. We're never done. Ruth, final word? Did you want to chip in?

Ruth: I mean, virtual volunteering existed for a long time. I've sat on national boards and regional boards. And, as past president of the volunteer management association, we've only probably met once in-person as a board. So, I think, think about virtual volunteering. It has opened up a lot of opportunities for people who may want to look at other things. Okay. You can do some micro volunteering. You can do advocacy volunteering to almost any cause in the world. So, I think that that's really important for people to recognize that in their organizations, that there could be lots of other opportunities for, for new roles that we never would have thought about before.

Dianne: It's, it is the, the opportunities are endless, which does make us feel like we're not accomplishing all that we're supposed to, but just to know that this conversation hopefully

enlightens our, our listeners and each other to, to hear what you're all doing every day. IT seems impossible to ever be finished. So, don't ever feel like you're, you're going to finish because it's a work in progress this life. And volunteer managers are gold. I don't mean to stand on my soap box, but you certainly have made an impact and you need to know that. So, be sure to pat yourselves on the back as well. Is there anyone who wants to add anything to this module? Before we wrap-up with virtual volunteering, module seven. Kevin, did you want to say anything else before we go?

Kevin: No, I think, you know, I think there was a lot of really good discussion and, you know, no I'm kind of stumped for once. But no, I think there was some really well, good discussion points. You know, but just virtual volunteering would also have different types of recognition as well, different types of communication, different apps, you know. For some volunteers that are virtual volunteers, they might utilize more technology- not necessarily, it's not for everyone of course as we've already heard, but there is, for those people that really liked those kinds of technology, things that can really showcase that and, and support organizations, right? So, some organization staff may rely on volunteers that are more techie to help them with getting online and doing zoom calls and what have you. So, I think really giving a lot more attention and empower those virtual volunteers because they might be able to offer more than what you're asking for. So, just listening to them and having that conversation and seeing really what they, what they're capable of doing so.

Dianne: The cup is, is full and I know your lives are full so I'm going to let you get back to those but thank you so much. Virtual or not, I know you're real people and we all have real lives and you're impacting lives in your own is also. So, keep the balance. I know we've talked about a lot of positive things, and we did offline talk about. There's lots of challenges too and keeping our course and helping each other through. That's what this project is all about too, so that we can gain the awareness that we need around the valid and valuable role that volunteer managers play. And essential in an HR structure. So, I think we've covered it all. We will talk again and hopefully we'll meet some of the participants of this course. So, you can say, I remember doing that. Thank you so much, everyone.