



Strategic Plan for Volunteer Engagement 2023 - 2025

Executive Summary

The City of Fort Collins has a long history of engaging volunteers across the City's departments. In recent years, the City of Fort Collins has sought and achieved certification as a Service Enterprise, invested in infrastructure to support volunteer engagement, and developed a framework to facilitate volunteer leadership development and cross-departmental volunteer mobility. This plan is designed to ensure volunteer engagement is deployed as a critical strategy to achieve the City's priorities.

The vision for volunteer engagement success is to “Strengthen the Fort Collins community by activating volunteerism guided by stewardship, inclusion, and impact.” Fort Collins will achieve that vision by focusing on six key issues—processes, systems, and roles; recruitment; training of staff and volunteers; recognition and impact; resources and capacity; and volunteer culture.

For each issue, the plan articulates goals and objectives that will, together, convert the concepts to actions.

Overview of Planning Process

The City of Fort Collins embarked on the volunteer engagement strategic planning process in early 2021, partnering with VQ Volunteer Strategies to consolidate research on the state of the City's volunteer engagement including strengths and opportunities, and to facilitate the development of a plan to guide the City's engagement efforts.

The planning process included a full-day retreat with staff representing a broad range of programs, and management levels. At the retreat, participants reviewed the assessment report, drafted a vision for engagement, and began to identify issues, goals, and objectives.

Throughout summer and fall of 2022, City staff and VQ Volunteer Strategies partnered to finalize the plan, which was completed in December. The resulting strategic plan will serve as a roadmap to achieve the City's volunteer engagement vision and goals over the coming three years.

City Mission

Exceptional service for an exceptional community.

City Vision for Volunteer Engagement

Strengthen the Fort Collins community by activating volunteerism guided by stewardship, inclusion, and impact.

Values

The City is guided by six values, which also apply directly to volunteer engagement.

- **Collaboration:** Partnership between volunteers and employees drives value and impact.
- **Excellence:** We strive for quality in supporting volunteers with resources for success.
- **Integrity:** We honor volunteers and their contributions through honesty and respect.
- **Outstanding Service:** We provide volunteers exceptional support so they can have exceptional impact.
- **Safety and Wellbeing:** We prioritize the mental, physical, and emotional safety and wellness of our volunteer partners.
- **Stewardship:** We cultivate partnerships with volunteers and nurture that relationship ongoingly.

Critical Issues

Volunteer engagement in Fort Collins will be enhanced through a focus on these six critical issues in the coming years.

1. Processes, Systems, and Roles
2. Recruitment
3. Training of staff and volunteers
4. Recognition and Impact
5. Resources and Capacity
6. Volunteer Culture

Goals and Objectives

Critical Issue 1: Processes, Systems, and Roles

Goal 1: Create more consistent processes for engaging volunteers.

- Obj 1: Improve systems through enhanced technology.
- Obj 2: Map processes in Engage to improve training and utilization.
- Obj 3: Develop consistent processes for volunteer on-boarding from position design to recruitment and training.

Goal 2: Ensure the Volunteer Services team has a foundation to co-create departmental volunteer engagement.

- Obj. 1: Clearly define the role of Volunteer Services and Human Resources.

- Obj 2: Clearly define the Volunteer Services Core Team, its role, and individual member responsibilities.
- Obj 3: Develop formal staff mentorship and resources for creation of new volunteer programs.

Goal 3: Require consistent volunteer position design.

- Obj 1: Consistently use the Volunteer Engagement Framework to place volunteer positions in the appropriate families, categories, groups, and positions.
- Obj 2: Utilize the group and family structure in Engage to allow the search engine to function most effectively for prospective volunteers.
- Obj 3: Consider flexible position design and inclusive opportunities.

Critical Issue 2: Recruitment

Goal 1: Maintain sustainable numbers of volunteers.

- Obj 1: Map the cyclical nature of volunteer recruitment needs.
- Obj 2: Utilize the Volunteer Engagement Framework to share volunteers between departments.
- Obj 3: Offer shadowing/trainee role to allow volunteers to experience opportunities in other departments before committing to the position.

Goal 2: Centralize volunteer recruitment.

- Obj 1: Combine recruitment efforts to decrease redundancy.
- Obj. 2 Develop meaningful, sustained partnerships to enhance recruitment success and extend reach.
- Obj. 3: Create skills bank to leverage for future roles and needs.

Goal 3: Nurture a culture of inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.

- Obj 1: Conduct research to identify barriers to volunteering with the City (accessibility, literacy/language, economic, inclusion, commitment length, age).
- Obj 2: Identify groups that are being missed by current recruitment efforts.
- Obj 3: Provide inclusion support for different abilities and normalize this option in the recruitment process.

Critical Issue 3: Training

Goal 1: Develop and implement an onboarding and training plan for staff.

- Obj 1: Develop an overview document of volunteer coordinators and programs.
- Obj 2: Develop, expand, and consistently offer training on Engage and Volunteer Connect (platforms).
- Obj 3: Provide consistent mentoring opportunities for new Volunteer Managers and nurture a culture of collaboration.
- Obj 4: Incorporate volunteer engagement into employee orientations and onboarding so that all staff understand the expectations, processes, and culture around engaging volunteers (and include introduction to Volunteer Program Manager).
- Obj 5: Engage volunteers in offering feedback on staff interviews and performance reviews.

- Obj 6: Train staff on City-wide standard for recognition and volunteer appreciation.

Goal 2: Develop and implement a People Management Training Program for staff.

- Obj 1: Develop and implement training on volunteer program management including legal and risk management, such as COVID protocols, sexual harassment training, etc.
- Obj 2: Develop and implement episodic volunteer management training
- Obj 3: Evaluate and track impact of staff training on experience and impact
- Obj 4: Gather feedback on knowledge transfer and resource awareness through Pulse Survey for staff.

Goal 3: Elevate City volunteer managers through Volunteer Management Certification.

- Obj 1: Promote the Certified Volunteer Administrator credential.
- Obj 2: Assess the feasibility of creating an internal certification program for Volunteer Managers.
- Obj 3: Support Volunteer Manager development through resource allocation.

Goal 4: Provide volunteers with training for success and impact.

- Obj 1: Develop and implement a City-wide volunteer orientation.
- Obj 2: Provide consistent and on-going Engage training in multiple formats.
- Obj 3: Formalize a collaborative training library for staff and volunteers.
- Obj 4: Audit and assess training for accessibility.

Goal 5: Develop and implement role-based training for volunteers.

- Obj 1: Clearly define the credentials of staff supervising certain volunteer roles.
- Obj 2: Clearly define required training for each role (e.g., role-specific safety training).
- Obj 3: Review and refine training requirements specific to each volunteer role on a regular basis.

Goal 6 Build opportunities for volunteer growth and development.

- Obj 1: Pilot new short-term opportunities to allow volunteers to try out different roles.
- Obj 2: Educate volunteers and staff on growth opportunities for volunteers (i.e., leadership ladder).
- Obj 3: Create volunteer opportunities that focus on job-readiness skills.
- Obj 4: Design more clear and strategic volunteer position descriptions that allow for volunteer development.

Critical Issue 4: Recognition and Impact

Goal 1: Measure impact of volunteer involvement in meaningful ways.

- Obj 1: Continue to track standard data and report widely.
- Obj 2: Establish a plan for collecting qualitative and quantitative data that ties to the triple bottom line.
- Obj 3: Implement data collection plan consistently across departments.

Goal 2: Demonstrate and communicate the impact volunteers have on the community.

- Obj 1: Continue to create and share annual infographic with metrics. Allocate resources to wider distribution.
- Obj 2: Ensure City leadership regularly sees and fully understands the role, impact, and worth of engaging volunteers in the City's work.
- Obj 3: Communicate clearly and widely how much City programs rely on volunteers.

Goal 3: Meaningfully recognize volunteers and staff who engage them.

- Obj 1: Explore the possibility of creating a new job code for Volunteer Managers in the employee data management system.
- Obj 2: Continue to analyze volunteer satisfaction through annual survey.
- Obj 3: Develop and implement a City-wide recognition plan that allows for both consistent and personally meaningful recognition.

Critical Issue 5: Resources and Capacity

Goal 1: Nurture collaboration between departments.

- Obj.1: Collaborate on annual planning.
- Obj 2: Define and agree to use one central planning hub.
- Obj. 3: Evaluate capacity, roles, and current resources.

Goal 2: Ensure sufficient staff dedicated to volunteer engagement.

- Obj 1: Explore the idea of adding volunteer management to staff job descriptions.
- Obj 2: Explore the possibility of offering a stipend to staff on the Volunteer Engagement Leadership Team.
- Obj 3: Explore the feasibility of centralized volunteer administration.

Goal 3: Increase financial resources to support volunteer engagement.

- Obj 1: Identify and pursue new sources of funding.
- Obj 2: Create savings through shared resources across departments.
- Obj 3: Develop and implement a strategy for communicating resource needs to leadership.

Critical Issue 6: Volunteer Culture

Goal 1: Weave Diversity Equity Inclusion into all areas of volunteer engagement.

- Obj 1: Seek and consider community input and feedback wherever feasible in volunteer engagement efforts.
- Obj 2: Use inclusive language in all volunteer engagement efforts.
- Obj 3: Establish clear goals and metrics for fully integrating the volunteer engagement strategy into the City's DEI goals.

Goal 2: Nurture a culture of inclusion, accessibility, and belonging.

- Obj 1: Pilot volunteer roles, training, and supports to increase attractiveness and accessibility of volunteering.

- Obj. 2: Continue implementation of the Volunteer Framework initiative and evaluate results to inform future action.
- Obj. 3: Create and implement DEI training for all Volunteer Supervisors and appropriate Volunteers.
- Obj. 4: Nurture a culture of volunteer engagement, collaboration with staff and volunteers.