



# ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE SEARCH & RESCUE

*SAVING LIVES ON THE WATER*

## RECRUITMENT — BEST PRACTICES

November 2025





# CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION ..... 4
- KEY TAKEAWAYS ..... 5
- VOLUNTEER RESOURCE PLANNING ..... 7
- PLANNING ..... 8
  - Understanding Your Station Needs ..... 8
  - Developing an Effective Recruitment Strategy ..... 9
  - Who Are Your Ideal Candidates? ..... 10
- RECRUITMENT ..... 12
  - Creating Your Messaging ..... 12
  - How to Get Your Message Out ..... 12
  - Application and Screening Process ..... 13
  - Police Information Check ..... 14
  - Interviews ..... 14
- ONBOARDING & TRAINING ..... 15
  - Mentorship ..... 16
  - Volunteer Retention ..... 16
  - Evaluation..... 17
  - Evaluation Process ..... 17
  - Conducting the Evaluation ..... 18
  - Best Practices for Evaluation Meetings ..... 18
- VOLUNTEER RETENTION & ENGAGEMENT ..... 19
  - Volunteer Recognition ..... 19
  - Formal Awards Programs ..... 19
  - Special Events..... 20
  - Published Stories ..... 20
  - Succession Planning..... 20
- EVALUATING & IMPROVING RECRUITMENT EFFORTS ..... 21
  - Key Areas for Evaluation ..... 21
- CONCLUSION ..... 23
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... 24
- LIST OF APPENDICES ..... 25





# INTRODUCTION

Volunteering is changing, and so are the expectations of those who step forward to serve. Across Canada, fewer people are putting up their hands, and competition for committed volunteers has never been higher. As a Station Leader, you're on the front line of that challenge.

The good news is that effective volunteer recruitment isn't about doing more, it's about doing the right things in a clear, structured way that saves time and delivers stronger results. This guide was built to help you do just that.

Whether you're trying to fill a gap in your crew, build a more diverse and dynamic team, or plan for leadership transitions, this guide gives you practical tools to support your station's current and future needs, with an emphasis on fostering long-term engagement and retention – without needing to reinvent the wheel.

Included in this guide you will find:

- Clear planning tools to help you identify exactly who you need and why
- Messaging strategies that attract the right people for your station's needs

- Recruitment methods that go beyond Facebook posts and word of mouth
- Guidance on onboarding, mentorship, and retention that builds long-term commitment
- Tips for making recruitment a team effort, so that you're not doing it alone

This isn't a policy manual. It's a toolkit, built by people who understand the demands of SAR and the realities of volunteer organizations. It's here to help, not add more to your plate.

We recognize that every station is different, with its own unique needs, challenges, and priorities. Start with a plan that fits where you are, focus on the essentials, and build over time. Improvement is a journey, not a finish line and it doesn't all need to happen at once. Even small steps now will help set a steady course for your station's long-term success.

**Recruiting new crew members means more than filling positions – we are building the next generation of SAR leaders.**





# KEY TAKEAWAYS

By investing a little time now to put these practices in place, you'll spend less time searching for volunteers later – and more time leading dedicated, skilled, and reliable volunteers who align with RCMSAR's mission and values.

## 1. Volunteer Resource Planning

- Recruitment starts with understanding your current and future needs.
- Consider crew turnover, leadership succession, and demographic gaps.
- Planning for both operational (crew) and non-operational (shore crew) roles ensures resilience.
- Create clear, adaptable role descriptions; explore flexible or shareable roles.

## 2. Developing an Effective Recruitment Strategy

- Know your audience: motivations vary (community service, social, adventure, etc.).

- Design messaging that answers "what's in it for me?" and matches the ideal candidate's interests.
- Diversify outreach methods to reflect different audiences and leverage modern platforms (Instagram, LinkedIn, community events, etc.).

## 3. Recruitment

- Messaging should introduce RCMSAR, your local station, and how people can get involved.
- Combine channels: social media, events, referrals, and community partnerships for widest reach for your messaging.
- Encourage word-of-mouth and member referrals; they remain highly effective.

## 4. Application & Screening Process

- Screening protects the station and the public. Fair, thorough, and values-based processes are essential.



- Interviews are meant to be two-way conversations. Aim to uncover motivations and fit.
- Police Information Check: Criminal records are reviewed on a case by case basis with the Manager, Human Resources.

## 5. Onboarding & Training

- A structured orientation builds confidence and loyalty from day one.
- Mentorship is key, pair new recruits with seasoned members for skill transfer and relationship-building.
- A probationary period allows both sides to confirm the fit.

## 6. Volunteer Retention & Engagement

- Strong volunteer programs hinge on feedback, recognition, communication, and development.
- Recognition doesn't need to be formal, elaborate or complicated. Personal thank you's, recognizing milestones, and saying "good job" all go a long way.

- Community and camaraderie help retain volunteers even more than formal rewards.

## 7. Succession Planning

- Leadership transitions should never be reactive - prepare multiple people for key roles.
- Look beyond current leaders - develop skills in interested members through mentoring and opportunities.
- Regularly reassess station capacity and readiness for turnover or growth.

## 8. Evaluating & Improving Recruitment Efforts

- Measure what matters: application sources, time-to-onboard, retention rates.
- Use surveys and exit interviews to get honest feedback.
- Regular reviews help you adapt your message and methods to evolving community dynamics.





# VOLUNTEER RESOURCE PLANNING

Planning is foundational to all recruitment and retention efforts. Keep in mind that the majority of your potential candidates will be those who have little or no marine experience.

The volunteer management cycle includes:

- Planning
- Recruitment
- Orientation and Training
- Supervision and Evaluation
- Recognition and Appreciation
- Exit Interviews, Reviewing and Updating Practices to Improve Results

# PLANNING

## Understanding Your Station Needs

- Assess current and future volunteer needs.
  - It is recommended to have a minimum of 3 trained crews per vessel available for scheduling (see SOP 24-006 Crewing Standards)
  - The number of volunteers required may vary from station to station, as it will depend on both the vessel type and the number of vessels in operation.
  - Understand your turnover rates (average of 10-15% per year is reasonable).
  - Forecast retirements and emerging leadership gaps over the next 3-5 years.
  - Consider your station's capacity to onboard and train new members effectively.
- Identify key roles and skillsets required, such as station leadership, coxswain, active crew, shore crew (supporting roles), training, fundraising, and administration.
- Assess current volunteer demographics and identify opportunities to broaden representation and strengthen the overall team dynamic. Consider dimensions such as age, gender, cultural background, education, work/marine experience.

### Before beginning your recruitment and selection process, determine:

- Number of new members required for active crew and shore crew (support) roles.
- Is there a need for specialized roles (eg. training, recruitment, maintenance, fundraising, social media, administration, safety, education, community relations, media liaison).
- Leadership succession needs - do we have any existing members that are interested in being trained for advanced positions, including Station

Leaders, Deputy Station Leaders, Coxswains and Training Officers, or do we need to recruit for those specific positions?

**Note:** Have you taken the time to check in and ask them recently? What may have been true as a new member, or even a few years ago, may not be the same today.

- Develop role descriptions outlining expectations, required qualifications, and time commitment. Is it a job for just one person, or could the role be shared. Are there opportunities to look at the role differently and have a shore crew (support) member take on all or part of the role?

If your station is operating below the minimum crew levels, it is recommended that your station plan prioritizes a recruitment drive for new members. At the same time, ensure that you have the internal capacity to effectively onboard and train your new members to become active crew. Don't lose sight of retention efforts; continue to support your existing members through regular evaluation, recognition, training and succession planning.

### Shore Crew (Support / Non-Operational Roles)

With the growing demand for flexible work options in our society, it is important for the long term sustainability of our organization to consider opportunities to look at volunteering differently. Many people have the skills we are looking for to take the station to the next level, but may lack the time, desire, or physical ability to become full crew. Here are a few ideas for jobs that could be done remotely or with hours that fit their lifestyle and/or personal commitments:

- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Recruitment        | • Boating Safety Checks       |
| • Special Events     | • Data Entry / Administration |
| • Vessel Maintenance | • Inventory / Purchasing      |
| • Fundraising        | • Equipment Management        |
| • Social Media       | • Media / Community Liaison   |



# Developing an Effective Recruitment Strategy

Understand Volunteer Motivations: "What's in it for me?"

There are many reasons why people choose to volunteer. Tailoring your recruitment messaging to answer the question "what's in it for me?" and telling them what skills you are looking for will be key to a successful recruitment campaign. Some reasons that people choose to give their time are:

- Desire to help others and give back to the community.
- Improve mental and physical well-being and gain purpose.
- Building social connections – camaraderie and belonging.
- Supporting a cause they believe in or have needed in the past.

- To gain new skills, knowledge, and experience.
- Personal interest in boating, outdoor activities, and staying active.
- To improve job opportunities or fulfill educational requirements.

Bear in mind that when recruiting it's not "one size fits all". Recognizing that people are motivated differently will help you to design messages and use a variety of methods to reach different audiences that will be effective for diverse groups.

For example, you may decide that you want to target a younger audience with a message that highlights resume-building experiences, physical activity and adventure, while the message you use to recruit a seasoned boater might appeal to their sense of pride and identity by talking about how they can utilize their skills to give back to the community and emphasize the social opportunities that can come through volunteering.

# Who Are Your Ideal Candidates?

When planning where to focus your recruitment efforts, think about your ideal candidates. Make a list of who the ideal candidates would be by asking these questions:

- What skills are they required to have that are non-negotiable?
- Keep in mind that while a marine background may be preferred, this is not a requirement.
- What skills would be "nice to haves" to fill the gaps (present or future) within your team and/or society? (ie. marketing, social media, accounting, legal, teaching, medical, administrative, mechanical, safety, IT, media relations, communications)

- With that person in mind, ask yourself these questions:
  - What type of work experience or schooling would offer relevant and related skills?
  - Where would you find them in their spare time? (local hangouts, events)
  - What are their hobbies and interests? (boating, kayaking, outdoor clubs, volunteering, church, gym, sports stores, hiking trails, beaches, parks)
  - Which social media platforms would they be most likely to use? **Note:** In 2025, the majority of those under 40 are not on Facebook regularly for anything other than marketplace.
  - Where do people look for and/or hear about volunteering and employment opportunities locally? (VolunteerBC, Charity Village, LinkedIn, Indeed, social media, community newsletters, bulletin boards, local podcasts and influencers)
- **See also**, Creative Candidate Sourcing resource document, *Appendix A*







# RECRUITMENT

Once you have decided on your target audience, you will need to create the messaging for your recruitment campaign. For this, you will need to consider the different communication channels you can use to reach your target audience. Keep in mind that a successful campaign will generally include more than one channel to attract a wide variety of candidates with varied backgrounds and demographics.

## Creating Your Messaging

The first step is to develop a message that targets your intended audience and identifies:

- RCMSAR as an organization
- What we do and why it is important
- What we offer to volunteers that will meet their needs
- Contact information for your station
- Where to find more information on next steps in the application process

## How to Get Your Message Out

Word of mouth remains one of the most effective methods of recruiting, and for RCMSAR, one of the most successful. When current members share information with their personal and professional networks, it helps to amplify the message and can be a powerful way to reach individuals with similar values and interests.

As we work to expand our recruitment efforts to include candidates from a broader range of backgrounds and social circles, it is important to ensure our outreach is as inclusive and far-reaching as possible. Here are a few additional ways to get your message noticed:

- **Online and Social Media**
  - Websites: post the opportunity through your stations and HQ webpages
  - Utilize social media (ie. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc)
  - Volunteer recruitment platforms, such as Volunteer BC, can help you to amplify your recruitment messaging to a wider audience
- **Posters and Pamphlets:** To be distributed at community events and published online
- **Community Engagement:** Attend local events, career fairs, and host open houses
- **Referrals:** Encourage existing volunteers to refer suitable candidates
- **Collaborations:** Partner with organizations such as boating clubs, gyms, sporting goods stores, Ground SAR, and emergency response teams
- **Targeted Outreach:** Engage local community businesses, marine enthusiasts, first responders, those with common interests / hobbies, and students in relevant fields

**Note:** For ideas on where to post and sample post ideas, see *Appendix B for Job Posting Sample*, *Appendix H for Recruitment Posters* and the *Guide to Social Media for Recruitment* available on SMS.



# Application & Screening Process

RCMSAR has both an ethical and legal obligation to screen potential volunteers under a legal principle called “Duty of Care”. Failure to properly screen applicants could expose the organization to legal consequences. The screening process needs to be equitable and non-discriminatory, while also balancing safety with fairness and privacy rights.

Proper screening is also simply good practice. It helps protect our organization, its volunteers, and the public from harm. Additionally, it provides prospective candidates with an opportunity to assess whether RCMSAR is a good fit for them.

If an applicant does not meet the requirements during the screening process, then neither RCMSAR nor individual station leaders are obligated to accept them. However, if you decide not to accept an applicant, be sure to document the reason(s) for the decision. The reasons must be specific and justifiable.

A strong screening process will:

- Ensure all essential requirements are met.
- Include an interview that allows both the interviewer and the applicant to ask questions and discuss concerns. In-person interviews are always preferable.
- Require police checks, including a vulnerable sector search.

- Involve reference checks using preplanned questions. These should ideally include a minimum of one professional reference, preferably from someone they have reported to in either a work or volunteering capacity.

An effective screening process will result in:

- Station members having confidence in the selection of new members.
- New members understanding their rights, responsibilities, and expectations.
- RCMSAR and its stations meeting their ethical and legal obligations.
- A selection process that is fair, credible, and transparent.
- New volunteers who are committed to RCMSAR and its mission.
- Increased credibility with the public and our partners.

# Police Information Check

Anyone seeking to become an RCMSAR member must complete a Police Information Check, including a Vulnerable Sector Check, in accordance with RCMSAR policy *HR-108 Police Information Check*.

Having a criminal record does not automatically disqualify an individual from volunteering with RCMSAR. However, any such case must be reviewed by the Manager of Human Resources, and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

# Interviews

Whenever possible, it is best to conduct interviews in person or online (Teams, Zoom or Webex). While you may initially communicate by email or phone, a face-to-face meeting typically provides more meaningful insight into the candidate.

Screening interviews allow you to learn more about the candidate, including their interests, skills, experience, and expectations for volunteering. These interviews also help prevent future challenges by ensuring there is a clear understanding of the role, including responsibilities and time commitments. They also provide an opportunity to communicate relevant policies, procedures, and other organizational information.

Following the interview, you may determine that the individual is not a suitable fit for the station based on their responses, demeanor, or demonstrated level of commitment. This underscores the importance of asking thoughtful and targeted questions during the interview process. Aim to ask questions that reveal the candidate’s motivation, initiative, and judgment.

If you decide not to proceed with a candidate, ensure you can articulate specific, objective reasons for this decision. Examples may include concerns about physical fitness, distance from the station, or an inability to commit to the required training schedule. If you are uncertain about how to proceed with a candidate, please consult the Manager, Human Resources for guidance.

Sample application, phone screen, interview and reference check questions, and additional interview tips are available in *Appendices B to E*.





# ONBOARDING & TRAINING

A thorough orientation upon arrival is a critical step to help new recruits feel like part of the team from the start. It also provides an opportunity for stations to reinforce key expectations around duties and responsibilities previously discussed during the screening process. Equally important, it allows you to get to know the new volunteer on a more personal level.

- **Orientation:** Introduce new volunteers to RCMSAR's mission, values, and expectations.
- **Training Programs:** Provide initial and ongoing training in vessel operations, first aid, navigation, and other SAR skills.
- **Mentorship:** Pair new recruits with experienced volunteers for guidance and support.
- **Probationary Period:** Implement a trial period to assess fit and commitment. See RCMSAR Policy HR-107 Probation Period.

A well-executed orientation delivers long-term benefits, including:

- Creating a professional and positive first impression.
- Reducing feelings of isolation and anxiety often experienced during times of change.
- Accelerating the learning process.
- Clarifying the social, technical, and cultural dynamics of the team.
- Allowing for deeper discussions on hazards, policies, and critical procedures.
- Building rapport and fosters early engagement and commitment to the organization.
- Minimizing second-guessing about joining the team.
- Providing structured, consistent support and information.
- Reinforcing a strong culture of safety.

On the volunteer's first training day, ensure you dedicate time to walk them through the station, vessel(s) and equipment, explaining how things are organized. Early, direct engagement with the station

leader, and interaction with other team members, greatly supports a smooth transition into the team.

## Mentorship

Mentorship is valuable for all station members, whether advanced crew, coxswains, or station leaders, but it is especially important for new members. While we learn from being mentored, we also grow by teaching others.

Whether formal or informal, all mentorship programs include the following characteristics:

- A deliberate, voluntary, and conscious relationship.
- May or may not have a defined timeframe.
- Supported and endorsed by the station.
- Involves a more experienced person (mentor) and one or more less experienced individuals (new member), who are generally not in a direct chain of command.
- Aims to benefit all parties through personal growth, skills development, and goal achievement.
- Focused on support, guidance, knowledge-sharing, coaching, and role modelling.

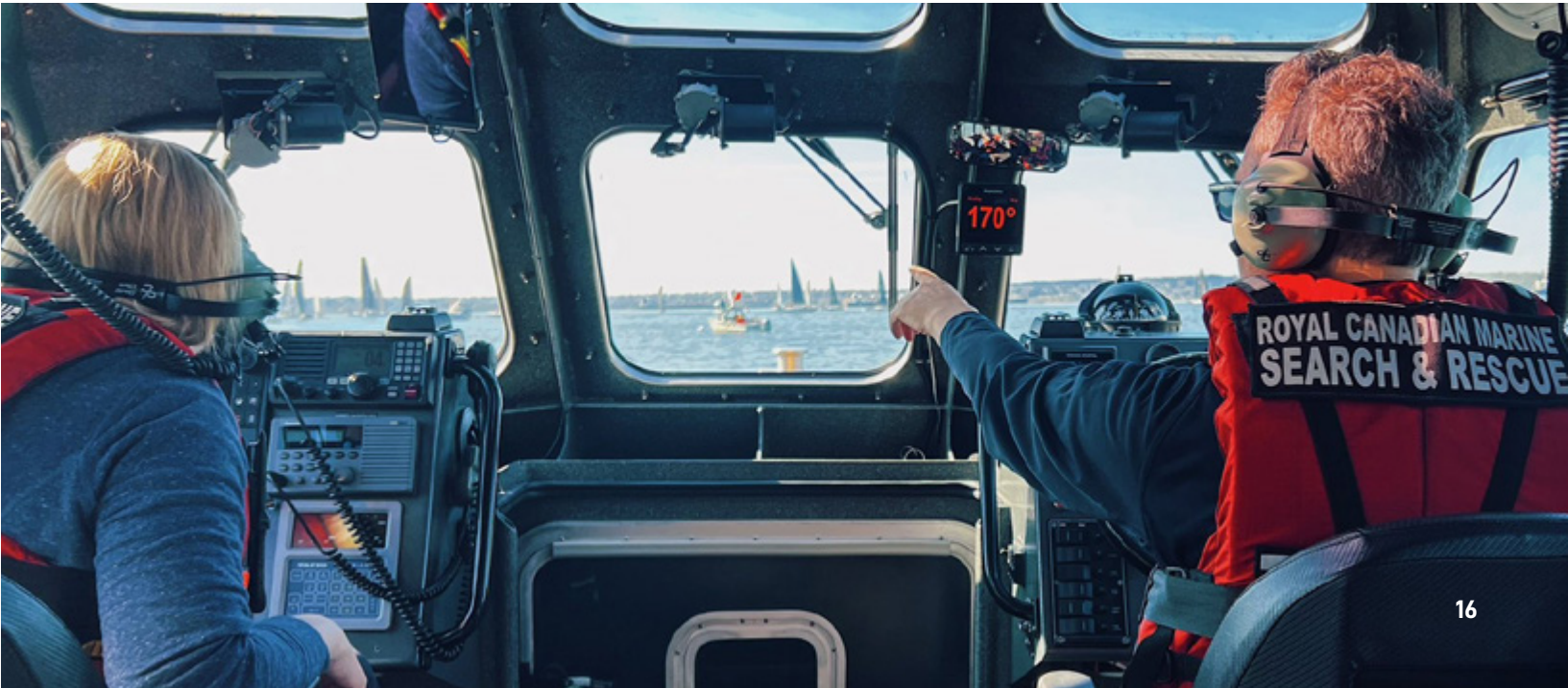
To establish a mentoring relationship, begin by identifying a senior member who has the time, experience, and personal qualities to support a new recruit. The mentor should be approachable, empathetic, and able to foster a sense of belonging

for the new member. Equally, the recruit should feel comfortable with their mentor. A successful mentorship depends on compatible communication and interpersonal styles, as well as being open to learning new ways of doing things and hearing another perspective. While the most obvious match may be a coxswain, other station members may have more time to dedicate to the relationship and will have great insights about being part of the crew. Additionally, this will give them an opportunity to step up in a leadership capacity.

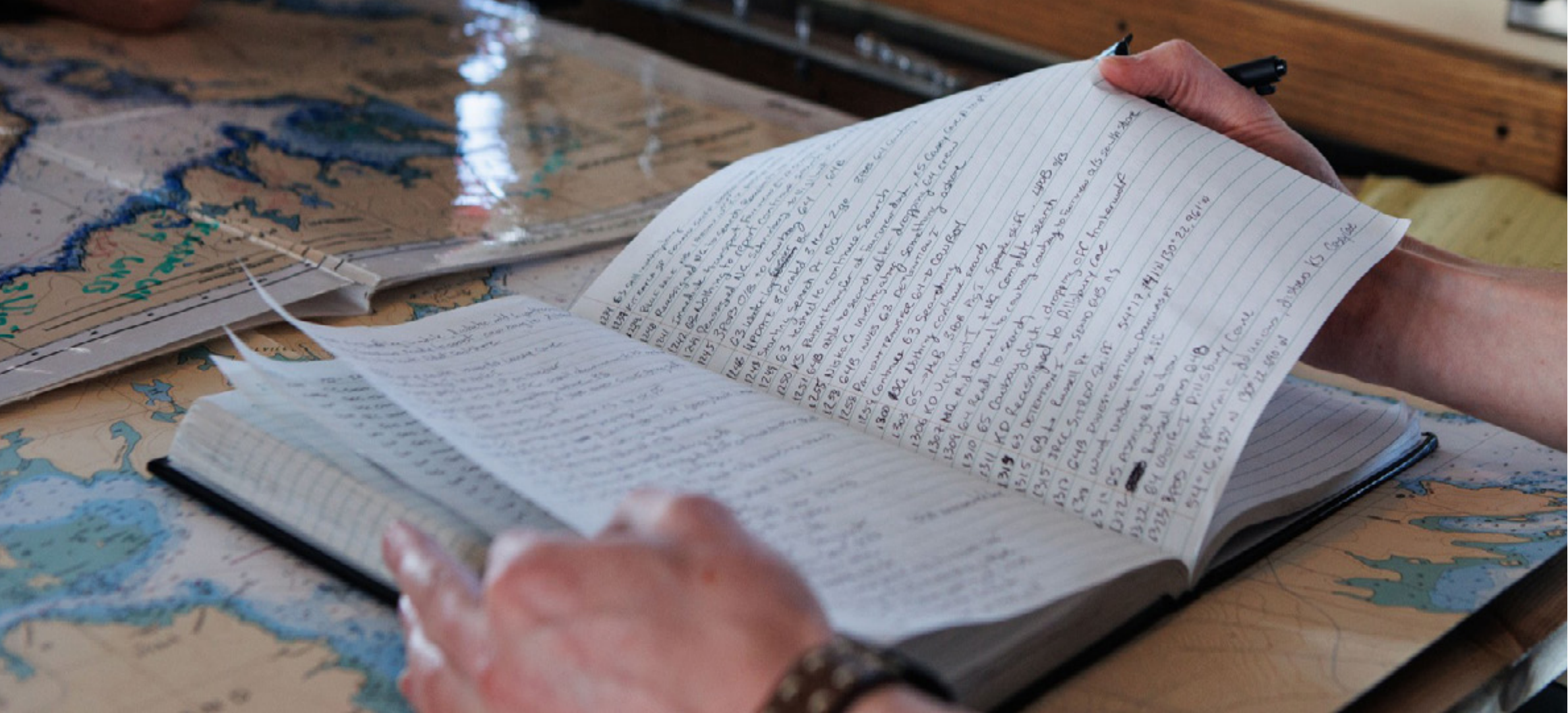
Once you've chosen an appropriate mentor for the recruit, invite them both to an initial meeting. This is an opportunity to outline the goals and expectations of the mentorship relationship. Regular check-ins with both mentor and recruit are important. These conversations will give you insight into the recruit's progress, engagement, and potential. It will also give you an opportunity to note any potential opportunities for improvement and feedback for the mentor.

## Volunteer Retention

High volunteer retention rates are directly tied to the overall effectiveness of your volunteer management practices. While many factors contribute to retention, several areas have particularly strong influence: evaluation, training, recognition, and succession planning.







## Best Practices for Evaluation Meetings

- Focus on conversation, not paperwork - use forms to document the session but don't let them dominate the discussion. Proper documentation is valuable for continuity, especially during leadership transitions.
- Start with the member's job description and performance standards. Use specific examples where possible.
- Stick to the basics: role proficiency, engagement, and working relationships.
- Actively listen – at least as much as you talk. Encourage the member to share feedback about their experience and invite suggestions for improving the program for them and others members.
- Treat the evaluation as a planning session, not just a review of past performance, but a roadmap for future development.

By taking a structured, thoughtful approach to evaluations, you create a supportive environment where volunteers feel valued, motivated, and empowered to grow.

## Evaluation

Performance evaluations are an essential component of effective volunteer management. Most volunteers want to know how they are doing and how they can improve so they can do the best job possible. Thoughtful feedback, delivered through regular performance assessments, helps volunteers understand their strengths and identify areas for growth.

Evaluations should be constructive and developmental in nature. While it can be challenging to provide feedback on areas needing improvement, evaluations are not disciplinary discussions. If you're uncertain whether an issue is performance-related or disciplinary, review policy *HR-115 Discipline of Members*, and consult with the Manager, Human Resources if needed. Even when performance issues do not meet the threshold for discipline, *HR-115* offers guidance for addressing concerns in a timely and constructive manner.

## Evaluation Process

A well-designed evaluation process is:

- **Strategic:** Reflects the station's strategic goals and operational priorities
- **Systematic:** All volunteers participate in the evaluation process
- **Scheduled:** Conducted at least once every two years; ideally twice during the first year of service
- **Standardized:** Using the same method and process for every evaluation to ensure fairness, transparency, and efficiency
- **Specific:** Evaluations are based on the expectations of their position and skill level
- **Self-directed:** Gives an opportunity for volunteers to assess their own performance

Volunteers should be evaluated not only on technical knowledge and competencies, but also on teamwork, communication, and other interpersonal skills that contribute to operational success.

## Conducting the Evaluation

Performance evaluations should be collaborative and two-way conversations. They provide an opportunity to discuss the volunteer's contributions, challenges, and future goals. It is also a chance to explore how the station can better support the member through additional training, new responsibilities, or opportunities for advancement.

A simple and effective framework for conducting evaluations is the **RAP** method:

### Review the past

Reflect on accomplishments and challenges

### Analyze the present

Discuss current performance, skills, and engagement

### Plan the future

Set goals, identify development opportunities, and map out next steps





# VOLUNTEER RETENTION & ENGAGEMENT

Recruiting volunteers is only the first step. Keeping them engaged and committed is where long-term impact is made. Retention hinges on creating a positive, inclusive environment where volunteers feel valued, supported, and connected to the mission. Thoughtful engagement strategies not only reduce turnover but also build a stronger, more resilient team. Below are key focus areas that help foster meaningful, lasting volunteer experiences.

- **Recognition:** Acknowledge contributions through awards, appreciation events, and public recognition.
- **Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication via meetings (station or individual check ins), feedback sessions, written

updates (group messaging, email updates, newsletters, etc).

- **Professional Development:** Offer advanced training and leadership opportunities.
- **Community Building:** Foster camaraderie through team-building activities and social gatherings.

## Volunteer Recognition

Recognizing volunteers is one of the most effective strategies for retaining them. When excellent performance is acknowledged, even through simple gestures, members feel appreciated and are more likely to continue donating their time and effort.

There is a strong link between motivation, recognition, and retention in volunteer management. Volunteers are drawn to service for a variety of reasons. Most thrive when they feel connected, valued as individuals, accepted for their individuality, and empowered to make a difference. However, recognition must be personalized, as not everyone responds in the same way.

Studies show that many volunteers prefer informal recognition methods. These can include expressing gratitude by saying thank you or good job, thank-you notes, phone calls, texts, emails, giving kudos during team meetings, or opportunities for additional training. Social gatherings also provide meaningful recognition by offering a chance to celebrate achievements as a group.

## Formal Awards Programs

RCMSAR HQ and many individual stations offer formal recognition through structured awards programs. At the organizational level, this is governed by Policy *HR 111 – Member Recognition and Awards*, and further detailed in the *RCMSAR Awards and Recognition Guide*, both of which can be found on SMS.

RCMSAR HQ awards are awarded annually with the presentation of honours at the Annual General Meeting, typically held in September. At the start of each year, HQ issues a "Call for Awards" email inviting nominations from all stations. Participation in this process is strongly encouraged to ensure outstanding contributions are acknowledged.

## Special Events

Hosting formal or informal appreciation events can significantly boost morale. While organizing these events can require planning and resources, the positive impact on volunteer engagement and team spirit is well worth the effort. Keep in mind that these events do not need to be anything complicated. It can be as simple as sending out an invite for everyone to meet up after training exercises or station meetings.

## Published Stories

Leveraging local media and social media platforms is another effective way to recognize volunteers. Sharing stories that highlight the contributions of your members not only acknowledges their efforts, but also raises awareness of your station's impact in the community.

Keep in mind that these stories must adhere to RCMSAR's *HR-100 Privacy policy, Crisis Communications Handbook and Media Guide*, all of which are available on SMS.

When done thoughtfully, media exposure can attract donors, inspire new volunteers, and enhance the public profile for your station and the organization as a whole. In the current climate where volunteer recruitment is increasingly competitive, that public exposure becomes particularly valuable.

To support these efforts, consider creating a media kit that includes:

- A news release or media advisory template.
- A fact sheet with station information, statistics, and details about RCMSAR.
- Highlights of key trends in SAR operations or boating safety.
- Biographies of members being recognized.
- A library of relevant photographs or videos of members in action that could relate to the news release or proposed features.
- A list of available spokespersons (ie. station leader, training officer, media relations officer).
- Up to date contact information.

## Succession Planning

Succession planning is essential to ensure continuity in key leadership and operational roles, such as Station Leader and Coxswain. Effective succession planning means that no critical role should rely on a single individual. Ideally, at least two members should be fully trained and capable of performing each essential function.

When someone steps down from a critical role, it often sets off a chain reaction. A proactive succession plan acknowledges that turnover is inevitable and prepares for it. It ensures that qualified individuals are ready to step into each role, minimizing disruption and maintaining operational stability. Furthermore, the plan should be reviewed and updated regularly, as needed.

Whenever possible, succession should involve mentoring and developing internal candidates. Volunteers who show potential – or who can develop the necessary competencies – should be supported and encouraged to take on greater responsibility.

Here is a suggested approach to implementing succession planning in your station:

1. Create a list of key roles within the station.
2. Develop an inventory of the skills and qualifications required for each role. Avoid simply replicating the skills of the person currently in the position. Take this as an opportunity to define what the role truly requires.
3. Assess current members for their potential and desire to assume these roles, either on a temporary or permanent basis.
4. Begin preparing the identified individuals through mentorship, training, and exposure to increased responsibilities.
5. If any internal gaps are identified, recruit with succession needs in mind.

A lack of succession planning can jeopardize the station's effectiveness and long-term viability. By planning ahead, you ensure that essential services and programs continue seamlessly, even as personnel change.





# EVALUATING & IMPROVING RECRUITMENT EFFORTS

Strong recruitment doesn't end once new volunteers walk through the door. To remain effective, stations need to continually evaluate and adapt their recruitment strategies. Regular review and data-driven adjustments help ensure that your efforts remain relevant, targeted, and impactful – especially in an environment of growing competition for volunteer time and attention.

## Key Areas for Evaluation

### Recruitment Data Collection

- **Application Sources:** Track where applicants heard about your station (eg. word of mouth, social media, community events, job boards).



- **Conversion Rates:** Monitor how many inquiries result in applications, and how many applicants become active members.
- **Time-to-Placement:** Assess the average time from first contact to active duty to identify any onboarding delays.

### Feedback Mechanisms

- **New Member Surveys:** Conduct brief surveys or informal check-ins with new recruits after their first 3 and 6 months to gather feedback on the application, screening, and onboarding process.
- **Exit Interviews:** When volunteers leave, ask why they are stepping away. Use this information to uncover potential areas for improvement such as engagement, support, or communication. Examples of an Volunteer Exit Interview Guide and Exit Survey are available in *Appendix G*.
- **Current Volunteer Insights:** Periodically ask current members how they found out about the organization, what keeps them engaged, and what could make volunteering more rewarding or accessible.

### Strategy Effectiveness

- **Assess Messaging Impact:** Review your recruitment messaging and campaign materials. Which posts or promotions generated the most inquiries? Did different messages resonate with different demographics?
- **Evaluate Recruitment Channels:** Identify which platforms (e.g., social media, community partnerships, local events) yield the most successful applicants and which have minimal return.
- **Volunteer Demographics:** Analyze whether your station is attracting a diverse range of volunteers in terms of age, gender, cultural background, education, work/marine experience, skills, and availability. If not, consider adapting your outreach or messaging strategies.



### Improving Recruitment Outcomes

Based on what you learn, consider the following improvement strategies:

- **Update Messaging:** Revise recruitment posts to better reflect what new volunteers want. Highlight flexible roles, skill development, community impact, etc.
- **Simplify the Process:** Ensure your recruitment and onboarding processes are clear, timely, and welcoming. Long delays or confusion early in the process can deter committed volunteers.
- **Enhance Visibility:** Strengthen your station's public profile through published stories, social media, and local engagement.
- **Boost Inclusivity:** Ensure your outreach speaks to a broad and diverse audience, avoiding language or imagery that may unintentionally exclude certain groups.

- **Celebrate Successes:** When you meet recruitment goals or bring in strong new members, share those wins with your team. Recognizing progress can boost morale and encourage continued involvement in recruitment efforts.

### Tracking Progress

Set specific, measurable recruitment goals. These might include:

- A set number of active crew applicants per year
- Improved diversity among applicants
- Reduced onboarding time
- Increased retention of new members after one year

Monitor these metrics over time and celebrate milestones. Progress may not always be linear, but regular evaluation keeps your recruitment strategy focused, intentional, and effective.



# CONCLUSION

Recruitment and retention of volunteers are not isolated tasks; they are integral to the overall success and sustainability of your station. Every phase of the volunteer lifecycle, from recruitment and onboarding to training, engagement, and succession planning, contributes to building a resilient, high-performing team.

In today's evolving volunteer landscape, success depends on strategic planning, consistent evaluation, and a willingness to adapt. Station Leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the experience of our members, creating an environment where people feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute.

By implementing the best practices outlined in this guide, you will be better equipped to attract the right people, foster long-term commitment, and maintain the operational readiness and professionalism that define RCMSAR.

Your leadership and proactive efforts are essential – not just in finding volunteers, but in helping them thrive.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Published by Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue, 2025.

Original design and layout by Vicki Dancău.

**Funding Acknowledgement:**

This Recruitment Best Practices Guide was developed with financial support from the Search and Rescue New Initiatives Fund (SARNIF).



**Photo Credits:**

Paula Keech Photography: cover, pages 17, 18 (top), 21

Vicki Dancău: pages 1, 3, 7, 22, 23

Hive Photography: page 4

Jan Vozenilek, Copper Sky Productions: page 15

Giga Khurtsilava: page 25

Unknown photographer: pages 5, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 17, 18 (bottom), 19 (bottom), 20, back cover

Every effort has been made to identify and credit all photographers. We apologize for any omissions. Please contact RCMSAR HQ if you have any information on missing photo credits.

**Disclaimer**

This guide is provided for informational and educational purposes only to support RCMSAR stations in developing recruitment practices. It does not constitute legal, human resources, or other professional advice, and should not be relied upon as such.

Each station is responsible for ensuring that its recruitment practices comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and organizational policies.

While reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the information contained herein, neither RCMSAR, nor any of the authors, shall be liable for any loss, damage, or consequences arising from its use or reliance.



# LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A | CREATIVE CANDIDATE SOURCING .....

APPENDIX B | JOB POSTING SAMPLE .....

APPENDIX C | RECRUITMENT APPLICATION FOR NEW CANDIDATES .....

APPENDIX D | PHONE SCREEN GUIDE .....

APPENDIX E | INTERVIEW GUIDE .....

APPENDIX F | REFERENCE CHECK .....

APPENDIX G | VOLUNTEER EXIT INTERVIEW GUIDE .....

APPENDIX H | RECRUITMENT POSTERS .....

26

32

33

35

36

37

38

40

**Note:** Electronic (PDF) copies of the appendices are available for download through SMS in the Volunteer Management section. For editable Word versions, please contact the Administrative Coordinator at Headquarters.

## APPENDIX A



# CREATIVE CANDIDATE SOURCING WITH BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEETS

To find creative sources for candidates in a hard-to-fill volunteer role, it helps to have the hiring team ask themselves a series of targeted, exploratory questions that uncover untapped potential in your community, networks, and existing systems. Here are some helpful questions to stimulate that thinking:

1. Who else might be interested in this role but hasn't been asked yet?
- Could retirees, students, or career changers find meaning or experience here?

• Are there people who are passionate about marine safety, community service, or emergency response?

• Have we looked at the diversity within our existing team?

◦ Is it representative of the community we serve?

◦ If not, how do we reach those that are not currently represented or under-represented?
2. What groups or communities align with our mission or values?
- Are there sailing, kayaking, or outdoor clubs that attract people with relevant skills?

• Could local veterans' organizations or first responder networks have aligned interests?

• Have we approached a variety of local places of worship to have our messaging included in their weekly bulletins or community bulletin boards?
3. What non-traditional channels could we use to reach potential volunteers?
- Can we post in community newsletters, Facebook groups, Reddit threads, or local podcasts?

• Are there bulletin boards at gyms, marine or outdoor equipment stores, colleges, local marinas or coffee shops we haven't used?
4. What barriers might be stopping people from volunteering and how can we address them?
- Do people know the role exists? Are they intimidated by the requirements?

• Can we break the role into smaller commitments or offer flexible scheduling?

• Are there opportunities for people to be Shore Crew (support roles) with tasks that can be done at odd hours or throughout the day in smaller chunks?
5. How can we reframe the role to make it more appealing?
- Are we clearly showing the impact and meaning of the work?

• Have we communicated the training we offer that could add value to their personal or professional goals?
6. Who already has the skills we need — just in a different context?
- Are there potential candidates with boating, radio, or first aid experience in different sectors (e.g., fisheries, ferry services, sea cadets, scouts)?

• Could amateur radio clubs or drone hobbyists be interested in SAR roles?



7. Which existing volunteers or stakeholders might refer someone if we asked them directly?

- Have we asked current volunteers to personally invite someone?
- Could we offer a small recognition incentive for referrals?

8. What educational institutions or programs are training people in related skills?

- Are there marine biology, emergency management, or criminology students looking for practicum hours or community involvement?

Tapping into groups where people already have or are developing relevant skills can unlock excellent volunteer candidates for marine search and rescue. Here’s a categorized list of **target groups** based on **career, education, volunteerism, and hobbies**, all of which align with SAR competencies such as navigation, communications, first aid, teamwork, and outdoor resilience.

Diversity Sources

- Local Indigenous Peoples, Nations, and Guardians
  - New Immigrants / Refugees
- Places of worship
  - Cultural / Religious Leaders

Professionally Aligned Groups (Active, Former, or Retired)

Maritime & Marine Industry Workers

- BC Ferries employees
- Tugboat or barge operators
- Commercial fishers
- Marine surveyors
- Port and harbor personnel
- Dock workers and stevedores
- Charter boat crew and eco-tourism guides
- Marina operators and staff

Other Industries with Transferrable Skills

- Utility and Infrastructure Workers: hydro, telecom, and pipeline workers

First Responders & Emergency Services

- Firefighters, police officers, paramedics, nurses, doctors, 911 operators
- Coast Guard personnel
- Emergency managers (municipal or provincial)
- Ground or Air SAR members

Forestry & Natural Resource Workers

- Forest rangers
- BC Wildfire Service
- Parks Canada and BC Parks staff
- Conservation officers

Community Outlets to Connect With

- College and university career centers or student unions
  - Local Facebook/Meetup groups
  - Volunteer BC local offices
- Club directories on sites like Meetup.com, RAC, or community center listings
  - Event spaces or notice boards at marinas, boat shows, paddling expos, etc.

Relevant Hobby & Sport Groups

Tech-Focused Hobby Groups

- Drone flying clubs
- Makerspaces focused on navigation, GPS, or radio tech
- Marine electronics enthusiasts

Health & Fitness Groups and Facilities

- Gyms, yoga studio, rec centre
- Martial arts, cross fit, extreme sports

Outdoor & Marine Enthusiasts

- Boating, kayaking, canoeing, and sailing club members and instructors
- SCUBA diving clubs or training programs
- Amateur (HAM) radio clubs
- Trail hiking/backcountry clubs
- Fishing or angling associations

Youth, Student or Academic Programs

Youth Programs

- Sea Cadets, Air Cadets, Jr Firefighters, Youth Search and Rescue
- Boating clubs
- Summer camps
- Career information and careers fairs for elementary, middle and high schools

Technical Training Programs

- First aid/EMR training students (e.g., Red Cross, St. John Ambulance)
- Boat operator certification courses (PCOC)
- HAM radio and communications training programs
- CanSail instructors
- Pilots (private or commercial)

Relevant Post Secondary Programs

- Marine engineering or navigation (e.g., BCIT Marine Campus)
- Oceanography, marine biology
- Environmental science or resource management
- Emergency and disaster management
- Criminology (students often pursue public safety roles)
- Outdoor recreation and adventure tourism

Volunteer Organizations

Public Service & Emergency Volunteer Groups

- Ground Search and Rescue
- Volunteer firefighters
- Auxiliary police programs
- Emergency Social Services (ESS) volunteers

Health & Safety Support Groups

- St. John Ambulance volunteers
- Canadian Red Cross disaster response volunteers
- Local emergency preparedness committees





# VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

**Purpose:** Use this worksheet to independently or collaboratively generate new candidate sources.

## SECTION 1: Understanding the Role

**What is the core mission or outcome of this volunteer role?**

Example: "Assist with marine search and rescue operations."

---

---

**What skills or characteristics are essential for success?**

Example: Comfortable on boats, strong communicator, calm under pressure.

---

---

## SECTION 2: Identify New Candidate Pools

**Who might be interested in this type of opportunity but hasn't been reached?**

- ☐ Retirees
- ☐ Career changers
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Outdoor or boating hobbyists
- ☐ Newcomers to the community
- ☐ Others: \_\_\_\_\_

**What other organizations attract people with similar skills or values?**

- ☐ Sailing/kayak clubs
- ☐ Veterans' associations
- ☐ Amateur radio groups
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Emergency response training programs

## SECTION 3: Expand Your Outreach Channels

**Where can we promote this role beyond the usual channels?**

- ☐ Facebook community groups
- ☐ Marine supply stores or outdoor retailers
- ☐ Reddit (e.g., r/VictoriaBC, r/volunteer)
- ☐ Universities/colleges career centers
- ☐ Local podcasts or newsletters
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

**Can we reframe the role to appeal to different motivations?**

- ☐ Add a focus on leadership development
- ☐ Offer training or certifications
- ☐ Emphasize community impact
- ☐ Highlight team camaraderie or adventure

## SECTION 4: Address Barriers

**What might stop someone from volunteering?**

- ☐ Time commitment
- ☐ Little to no representation of their identity at events or online
- ☐ Physical demands
- ☐ Not feeling welcome or like they would fit in
- ☐ Think they need boating experience
- ☐ Lack of experience

**How can we reduce those barriers?**

- ☐ Review job posting
- ☐ Create posts featuring crew diversity
- ☐ Break up tasks into smaller roles
- ☐ Increase Shore Crew (support) opportunities for people to work from home or at days/times that work for them
- ☐ Provide mentorship or shadow shifts
- ☐ Offer flexible scheduling

## SECTION 5: Tap Into Existing Networks

**Who can we encourage to refer potential volunteers?**

- ☐ Existing volunteers
- ☐ Alumni or retired volunteers
- ☐ Partner organizations
- ☐ Other local volunteer agencies
- ☐ Board or staff



PART 2

GROUP BRAINSTORMING  
SESSION GUIDE

**Objective:** Generate fresh ideas and action items for finding volunteer candidates for a difficult role.

SETUP:

- Participants:** Crew, station leadership, and possibly society members
- Duration:** 60–75 minutes
- Materials:** Printed worksheet above, sticky notes, whiteboard or flipchart

AGENDA:

- Opening (5 mins)**
  - Briefly define the volunteer role and why it's hard to fill
  - Share what's been tried so far
- Role Deep Dive (10 mins)**
  - Use Section 1 from the worksheet
  - Ask: "What's truly unique or meaningful about this role?"
- Candidate Pool Exploration (15 mins)**
  - Work in pairs on Section 2 of the worksheet
  - Share back and list all group suggestions on a flipchart
- Outreach Creativity (15 mins)**
  - Use Section 3 to brainstorm outreach ideas
  - Challenge: "What's one unconventional place we could advertise?"
- Barriers and Solutions (10 mins)**
  - As a group, complete Section 4
  - For each barrier named, ask: "What's one way we could reduce or remove this?"
- Referral Network Activation (10 mins)**
  - Use Section 5
  - Brainstorm who we already know and how to activate them
- Next Steps (5–10 mins)**
  - Prioritize 2–3 ideas to act on
  - Assign a lead and timeline for each



APPENDIX B

JOB POSTING SAMPLE

Marine Search & Rescue Volunteer – Join a Life-Saving Team!

What do a veterinarian, electrician, teacher, and a mill worker all have in common?

They are regular people doing extraordinary things as volunteers for Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue (RCMSAR). Now, we're looking for more dedicated individuals, like YOU, to join our crew!

Who We Are

At RCMSAR, our mission is simple: Saving lives on the water.

We operate over 30 rescue stations along B.C.'s coastal and inland waters, with over 900 trained volunteers on call 24/7 to respond to marine emergencies. We also work to prevent accidents through public education, safety checks, and programs like *Kids Don't Float*, which provides free life jackets for children.

Since our founding in 1978 as the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary – Pacific, we've proudly partnered with the Canadian Coast Guard to deliver marine search and rescue services across the region.

At RCMSAR, we foster a One Crew Culture, where every volunteer, regardless of background, is welcomed, valued, and empowered. We believe that inclusion and belonging are essential to achieving our shared mission of saving lives on the water.

What's Involved

While many of our volunteer crew members have a marine background, it is not required! Our professional training programs equip you with the skills needed to become a confident and highly skilled crew member, all within a supportive and team-focused environment.

As an RCMSAR volunteer crew member, you'll be expected to:

- Attend regular training sessions and meetings (typically evenings and weekends)
- Live or work near your station's boat launch



- Be on call and ready to respond to emergencies on short notice
- Support station operations in areas such as boating safety, vessel maintenance, fundraising, finance, administration, event coordination, marketing, social media, media liaison, training, recruitment, and more.

What We're Looking For

We need volunteers who are strong communicators, value teamwork, prioritize safety, and are able to follow direction, and be open to feedback and continually learning. We are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels they belong and are respected for their unique contributions.

To become an RCMSAR crew member, you must:

- Be 19 years or older
- Be in a moderate level of physical fitness, with the ability to pass a basic fitness test
- Submit a Police Information Check, including Vulnerable Sector with results satisfactory to Headquarters

You must also have, or be willing and able to obtain, the following certifications:

- Pleasure Craft Operators Certificate (PCOC)
- Restricted Operator Certificate – Marine
- Marine Basic First Aid (equivalent or higher) and CPR/AED Level C

**Note:** If you're under 19, reach out to your local RCMSAR station to learn more about our Junior Program.


How to Apply

Ready to make a difference? Visit our station website learn more about the role on any station specific requirements. Then follow the instructions to begin your journey! *[insert website link and/or QR code]*

For a list of stations near you and contact details, visit <https://rcmsar.com/where-we-are/>.



APPENDIX C



**ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE  
SEARCH & RESCUE**  
Saving Lives on the Water

### Recruitment Application

Station [#] – [Station Name]  
[Mailing address of station]  
[\[station website\]](#)  
For more information contact: [XXX]

#### Personal Information

First Name: [ ] Last Name: [ ]  
Address: [ ]  
Length of time at this address: [ ] Email: [ ]  
Contact: Home: [ ] Mobile: [ ] Work: [ ]  
Do you meet the list of pre-requisites on our website: ☐ Yes ☐ No [\[website link\]](#)  
Are there any considerations (physical, medical or otherwise) that we should be aware of to help support your full and comfortable participation and/or training? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please explain:  
[ ]  
Your comfort level with prolonged rigorous physical activity? ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ May need support  
Describe the activities you engage in regularly to maintain your fitness level:  
[ ]

#### Employment and Availability

Occupation: [ ]  
Employer: [ ] Since: [ ]  
Normal days/hours of work: [ ]  
Do you have access to a reliable vehicle available to you at all hours? ☐ Yes ☐ No  
Estimated travel time (minutes) to our rescue vessel based at [XXX]:  
1. From home: weekday: [ ] weekend: [ ] evenings: [ ]  
2. From work: weekday: [ ] weekend: [ ] evenings: [ ]  
Have you spoken to your employer about joining RCMSAR? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure  
If yes, do they support your decision? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure  
Are you able to leave work on short notice? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure  
Do you have any additional skills or experience that could support you in this role or benefit the station? (eg. accounting, administrative, community engagement, fundraising, IT, leadership, marketing, mechanical, social media, teaching, etc.):  
[ ]

#### Certifications, Qualifications and Skills (have or willing/able to obtain within XX months of joining)

1. Pleasure Craft Operator's Certificate (PCOC)  
☐ Yes ☐ No Card No: [ ] Date of issue: [ ]  
2. VHF Radio Operator Certification - Marine (ROC-M):  
☐ Yes ☐ No Card No: [ ] Date of issue: [ ]

3. First Aid: Level: [ ] Cert No: [ ] Expiry: [ ]  
4. Valid BC drivers licence: ☐ Yes ☐ No Class: [ ] Restriction(s): [ ]  
5. Boating experience and marine knowledge (local or elsewhere):  
[ ]  
Have you ever been a member of another SAR unit (marine or otherwise): ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, please provide location and dates: [ ]  
Do you belong to any other volunteer or community organizations: ☐ Yes ☐ No  
If yes, please provide details and dates: [ ]  
How did you learn about RCMSAR and why are you interested in joining?  
[ ]

#### Risks, Rewards and Commitment

Membership in the unit comes with **risks**, **rewards** and **commitment**:

**Risks:** Although personal safety of station members is our top priority, recognize that marine search and rescue activities on-the-water carry some physical and psychological safety risks.

**Rewards:** The rewards are significant including marine search and rescue knowledge and experience, and personal satisfaction, fulfillment and camaraderie of serving with other like-minded people.

**Commitment:** Consider how you will balance your work and family obligations with the time commitment to volunteer. The unit invests significant time and cost in training and equipping crew members. In return, we ask you to commit to making yourself available at meetings, training sessions and to be on-call for taskings. Please review the time commitments summarized on our website: [\[insert website link\]](#). As a new recruit I accept and consent:

- ☐ A minimum commitment of 2 years for continued training and on-call availability once accepted as crew
- ☐ To attend and participate regularly in meetings, and classroom and on-the-water training sessions
- ☐ To be on probation for 3 months without further obligation
- ☐ To undergo an RCMP Criminal Record Check (including Vulnerable Sector) with results that are satisfactory to RCMSAR Headquarters

#### Personal References

1. Name: [ ] Phone No: [ ]  
Relationship: [ ] How long: [ ]  
2. Name: [ ] Phone No: [ ]  
Relationship: [ ] How long: [ ]

#### Submission

Please complete and submit this application form: **1)** email: use submit button to sign and submit online. **2)** scan: download form at [\[website link\]](#) and complete manually, scan and email to [\[email address\]](#). **3)** hand in your completed form to the RCMSAR Station Leader. **4)** send completed form by mail to the postal address noted above.

By submitting this membership application, I confirm that all the Information provided is true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize RCMSAR to contact my references and verify any relevant information included in this application. I understand that providing false or misleading information may result in the rejection of my application or termination of my volunteer status. I also consent to RCMSAR collecting, using, and storing my personal information for purposes related to volunteer recruitment and coordination, in accordance with applicable privacy legislation.

Date: [ ] Signature: [ ] Submit: [\[INSERT BUTTON\]](#)



APPENDIX D

PHONE SCREEN GUIDE

NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT



Can you tell me a bit about yourself?	
How did you hear about us?	
Why are you interested in volunteering with us?	
Do you know where our station(s) is located? Have you had a chance to confirm your commute times from home/work.	
What do you know about RCMSAR?	
Did you have a chance to review our Volunteer Handbook online?	
What were your thoughts? (anything that stood out or questions)	
What is your understanding of what is involved in being a member of RCMSAR? (go over orientation, training, crew levels, time commitment for new members, general expectations)	
Are there any restrictions on your availability that we should be aware of? (any specific days/times that you are not available)	
Do you have any known time off needed in the next 6 months? (ie. vacation / other leave)	
How much time are you able to commit to volunteering per week?	
Have you talked to the people in your life about the time commitment involved?	
How do you plan to balance this with other work/life obligations?	
Do you have any plans to move out of the area?	
If selected, how soon would you be available to start?	
Do you have any questions for me?	
Go over next steps for the process and when they can expect to hear back from you.	

Selected for an interview:   ☐ Yes   ☐ No      Date: \_\_\_\_\_      Time: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT



Can you tell us about your background and experience?	
How do you feel your work and/or life experience has prepared you for a role in Search and Rescue?	
How would you rate your tolerance for discomfort (long days, rough waters, low/high temps, inclement weather, night time operations)	
When working in a team, what role do you usually find yourself in? (ie. leader, support person, peace keeper, quiet and keep to yourself)	
How do you handle stressful situations, both during and after?	
What do you do to make clear, effective decisions in the moment? How do you manage the emotional stress after the fact?	
How do you handle feedback or direction under pressure?	
Of your skills and traits, what do you believe will be most helpful if you join the team?	
<b>Situational:</b> You join our team and find yourself on a search. Your Coxswain believes the objective is one direction. You believe it is in a very different direction. How do you manage that disagreement?	
<b>Situational:</b> You're working with a partner agency to recover remains of a missing person. The family is on scene. Two members of the partner agency are joking about an unrelated matter loudly enough for the family to hear. How would you handle that situation?	
<b>Situational:</b> A couple of weeks after a complex search for a missing person, a teammate tells you that they're not sleeping well or drinking more than usual. How would you respond to that conversation and what factors would influence your response?	
Have you ever been in a situation where you needed to be rescued or where that could have been the outcome? (If yes) If you had to do that situation over again, is there anything that you would do differently?	
Do you have any future goals (personally or professionally) where training in SAR would benefit you?	
How do you see yourself contributing to our station, beyond being on crew?	
While not for everyone, there could be opportunities for additional leadership responsibility in the future. Is this something that would interest you?	
Go over next steps for the process and when they can expect to hear back from you.	





APPENDIX F

REFERENCE CHECK FORM

NEW MEMBERS

Candidate Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position Applied For: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction:** Hello, my name is [Your Name] from RCMSAR. I am conducting a reference check for [Candidate's Name]. They have applied to volunteer with our marine search and rescue organization. Is now a good time to have a quick conversation? This should only take 10-15 minutes. We would like to ask you a few questions to learn more about who they are and what they would bring to the team.

How long have you known [candidate] and in what capacity? (e.g. personal/professional, friend/co-worker/manager)	
Would you consider them to be dependable and reliable, even in situations with minimal supervision?	
Have you seen them respond in high-stress situations? How did they handle it?	
How do they manage their emotions and reactions in unpredictable or tense situations?	
Have you observed them in fast-paced or high-pressure situations? Can you describe how they respond in those situations? (e.g. behaviour, decision making)	
SAR work can include hours of searching without a known outcome or resolution. Do you believe that they are emotionally resilient enough for that kind of work? Why or why not?	
Would you say that they have a healthy way of managing stress or emotionally intense situations over time?	
How would you rate their judgement and ability to think clearly in chaotic or confusing circumstances?	
When faced with a decision or problem, how do they typically approach it? Do they tend to consider different options, or do they prefer to act quickly and intuitively?	
Have you ever seen them de-escalate conflict or support others during a stressful event? What role did they play in the situation?	
Can you think of a time when they had to adjust quickly to a sudden change or unexpected challenge? How did they respond?	
Given the emotional and physical demands of search and rescue, would you feel confident in recommending them for this type of volunteer role? Why or why not?	
Is there anything else that we haven't asked that would help us understand how they would perform in this kind of role?	
<b>Conclusion:</b> Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. If anything else comes to mind later, feel free to reach out. Have a great day.	



APPENDIX G

MEMBER LEAVING SURVEY

STATION EXIT CONVERSATION

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Station: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

**Introduction:** Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. We really appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and experiences. The purpose of this conversation is to gain insights into your time with us: what worked well, where we can improve, and how we can continue to grow as an organization. Your feedback is incredibly valuable, and it will be used constructively to help us enhance our practices and better support our team. This conversation is not an evaluation of your performance, but rather an opportunity for us to listen and learn. Please feel comfortable speaking openly, your responses will be treated with respect and kept confidential where appropriate.

What initially drew you to join our organization, and how has your experience matched your expectations?	
What aspects of your role did you find most rewarding, and which were most challenging?	
How would you describe the support and communication from your team and leadership?	
Do you feel you had the tools, training, and resources needed to succeed in your role?	
How would you describe the overall culture and working environment?	
Are there any processes, policies, or systems that made your work more difficult than it needed to be?	
What led to your decision to leave, and is there anything we could have done differently to support your continued involvement?	
Are there any benefits or programs that you feel are missing from the organization?	
Do you have any suggestions for improving the experience for future volunteers?	
Would you be interested in volunteering with RCMSAR again in the future?	
Would you recommend this position to others?	
Do you have any questions for me?	
Is there anything that I haven't asked that you would like to share?	
<b>Conclusion:</b> Take this opportunity to thank them for their feedback and everything they contributed in their time with the station. Let them know that the door will always be open should they choose to return and wish them all the best in the future.	



## Exit Interview Survey - Station

Completing this survey is *voluntary*. Your responses will be treated as confidential and used to help RCMSAR improve Member experience, training, and station operations. Any serious concerns that need to be addressed will be handled with care and discretion.

### Personal Information

(Optional – you may skip any question you prefer not to answer)

First Name:  Click or tap here to enter text. Last Name:  Click or tap here to enter text.  
Station:  Choose an item. Years of Service:  Click or tap here to enter text.

### Roles and Experience

- Positions held (check all that apply):  
☐ Station Leadership ☐ Coxswain ☐ Advanced Crew ☐ Crew ☐ Member-in-Training  
☐ Shore Crew (Society/Support) ☐ Other (please specify):  Click or tap here to enter text.
- How many years did you serve in that role?  Enter a number
- What initially motivated you to join RCMSAR?  
 Click or tap here to enter text.

### Training & Experience

- Do you feel you received sufficient training to safely & effectively carry out your role(s)?  
☐ Yes ☐ No If no, please explain:  Click or tap here to enter text.
- Did you enjoy your time with RCMSAR?  
☐ Yes ☐ No If no, what contributed to that?  Click or tap here to enter text.
- Would you recommend RCMSAR membership to others?  
☐ Yes ☐ No If no, please share your reasons:  Click or tap here to enter text.

### Exit Reflection

- What are your reasons for leaving RCMSAR?  
 Click or tap here to enter text.
- What could RCMSAR do to improve member retention?  
 Click or tap here to enter text.
- What is one change you would suggest at your station?  
 Click or tap here to enter text.
- Is there anything RCMSAR continues to do that you feel should be changed or discontinued?  
 Click or tap here to enter text.

### Final Comments (Optional)

Please share any other feedback or reflections:

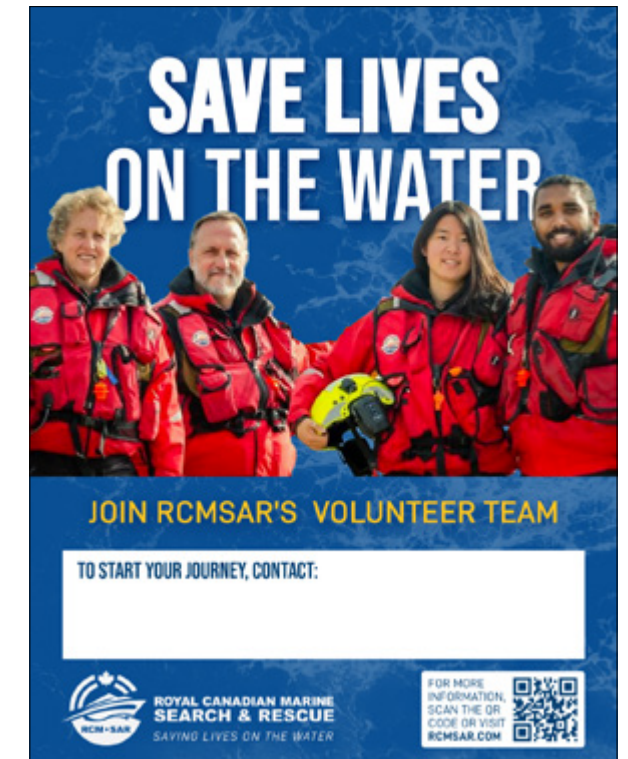
Click or tap here to enter text.

I am open to a follow-up conversation. Please contact me. Yes ☐ No ☐

Phone:  Click or tap here to enter text. Email:  Click or tap here to enter text.

## APPENDIX H

# RECRUITMENT POSTERS





## **WE ARE THE CHARITY THAT SAVES LIVES ON THE WATER**

Ready to respond to marine emergencies, our volunteer crews are on call 24 hours a day from Vancouver's busy harbour to the remote waters of the North Coast.



**ROYAL CANADIAN MARINE  
SEARCH & RESCUE**

*SAVING LIVES ON THE WATER*