
Canada Connects - 1 on 1 Conversation Practice Program Volunteer

Purpose

This program allows newcomers to Canada to practice English in an informal setting and with flexible timing. The 1 on 1 Conversation Practice Program Volunteer supports a newcomer in gaining confidence in communicating in English through informal conversation practice and community participation through one on one interaction.

Duties & Responsibilities

- Encourage conversation partner to speak and practice English through informal conversation
- Initiate conversations based on appropriate topics
- Demonstrate active listening during meetings with conversation partner
- Explain unfamiliar concepts and words when needed
- Maintain a warm and welcoming environment where the conversation partner is treated with dignity and respect
- Suggest low-cost or free activities to do and places to meet in the community
- Regularly and consistently track meetings, including date, time, duration, location and content of meeting using an online form, via email, over the telephone, or in person
- Plan meetings and gather resources to support the conversation partner's language needs
- Communicate any concerns or challenges to the program coordinator

Time Commitment

- Intake and matching is ongoing, year-round
- Once matched, volunteers must commit 2 hours per week for 12 weeks

Skills & Qualifications

- Strong command of the English language
- Clear, confident, accurate and fluent oral communication in English
- Knowledge of culture, customs, and life in Canada
- Experience working with adults in a learning environment
- Sensitivity to and/or understanding of the immigrant experience and challenges facing newcomers
- Commitment to equity and anti-oppressive practices
- Demonstrated ability to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds
- In order to provide a safe and comfortable environment for newcomer clients that is culturally sensitive, volunteers are matched with conversation partners of the same gender
- Warm and friendly demeanor and positive attitude
- Mature, Active listener
- Patient and punctual
- Self-initiative and enthusiasm
- Teaching experience an asset
- Application form, interview and 2 references required
- 18+ with a Police Record Check showing no violent offences or offences related to the Vulnerable Sector

Boundaries & Expectations

- Volunteers and participants are not to meet in private locations or private residences
- Strict maintenance of confidentiality
- Volunteers are not to offer any services privately and/or for a fee
- Volunteers must direct any questions, queries and concerns to ISGW staff
- Volunteers must decline gifts, favours, and payment from program participants
- Regular communication shall be maintained with program staff
- Volunteers are expected to adhere to our mission and values and choose activities and places to meet that are non-partisan, non-political, and non-religious
- Participation in the program as a volunteer shall not constitute the promotion of any sales or services for personal gain, nor is it an appropriate platform for recruitment of participants into groups or activities for personal gain (i.e.: groups with private membership, payment of fees, recruitment into religious orders/groups etc.)

Training

- Volunteers receive one on one training with program staff
- Introduction to resources available at Immigrant Services for volunteer use
- Training is ongoing and volunteers have access to a wide range of language resources for use in meetings with their conversation partner

Supervision

- There is no direct supervision by program staff as the meetings take place off-site.
- Supervision and follow up is provided through the tracking sheets submitted by program volunteers. They are expected to provide their volunteer hours through these sheets.
- The program volunteers report to the Volunteer Mobilizer.

Benefits

- Use your skills and experience to help those who are new to Canada
- Gain experience in adult education and immigrant settlement services
- Gain experience in intercultural communication
- Volunteer at a lively organization committed to diversity
- Meet people from all over the world

Location

- Public places in the community i.e.: coffee shops, library branches, Immigrant Services office, parks, community events etc.
- The choice of meeting location is decided by the volunteer and the program participant based on accessibility and mutual convenience and/or interest.

Risk: HIGH

- Contact with vulnerable clients
- Access to confidential information
- Unsupervised meetings offsite