CES-BCY 2015 EVALUATION CONFERENCE VOLUNTEER REPORT

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1.0 OVERVIEW

In total, 51 volunteers contributed to the organization and operation of the CES-BCY 2015 evaluation conference (not including conference presenters), including:

- 11 representatives of the CES-BCY and CES Executive Committees

- 6 organizing committee members:
    - Lead Conference Organizer
    - Liaison with CES-BCY Executive
    - Venue Coordinator
    - Program Chair
    - Student Engagement Coordinator
    - Volunteer Coordinator

- 4 program committee members

- 1 conference evaluation lead

- 1 marketing/communications liaison

- 3 technical support personnel (provided by JitsuTech)

- 25 support role volunteers, who were coordinated and supervised by the Volunteer Coordinator

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF VOLUNTEER SUPPORT ROLES

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	NUMBER
Registration Table	Greet attendees and distribute name tags and registration packages	4
Session Host	Provide introductions, time-keeping, facilitation and logistical support in sessions	11
On-Site Evaluation Assistant	Help administer the on-site evaluation survey between sessions	8
Resource Area	Gather and display resource information at the conference	2
Registration Package Prep	Help prepare registration packages	1

Note. Does not sum to 25 as one person volunteered both as a session host and at the registration table.

2.0 RECRUITMENT

2.1 RECRUITMENT PROCESS

- A call for volunteers was included in regular email announcements as well as word-of-mouth over several months preceding the conference. The call for volunteers was also posted on the conference website.

- Volunteers were directed to a sign-up sheet hosted on VolunteerSpot (https://www.volunteerspot.com/).

- Sign-ups were closed two days before the conference (November 18th) in order to finalize the volunteer list and room assignments for session hosts and evaluation assistants.

- All necessary volunteer roles were filled prior to the conference date.

- 5 individuals signed up to participate but were unable to. Three dropped out due to schedule conflicts or lack of funds to attend the conference, and two did not respond to follow-up emails asking them to sign up for specific sessions.

2.2 VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Volunteers were not asked to provide demographic information on the post-conference survey that was distributed to avoid the risk of indirect identification and violation of anonymity.

However, some information about the 25 volunteers who filled the support roles outlined above was readily available:

- **15 volunteers (60%) registered for the conference.** Another two (8%) were on the waitlist and unable to register and eight (32%) opted not to register. Those who were unable to register were asked only to attend sessions for which they were providing support and to provide their own lunch.

- **4 volunteers (16%) registered for the conference as students.** This number may be an underestimate because there was a lack of response to a direct inquiry about which volunteers were also students and because several of the volunteers were unregistered and therefore did not sign up at the student rate.

- **3 volunteers (12%) participated in the Buddy Program.**

- **3 volunteers (12%) were also presenters.**

- **1 volunteer (4%) took on multiple roles.** One volunteer was a session host as well as helped at the reception table.

3.0 VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR ROLE

The initial volunteer coordination duties, including creating the call for volunteers and generating the list of volunteer roles, were handled by the lead conference organizer.

Once a volunteer coordinator was identified, further tasks included:

- Maintaining and monitoring the volunteer sign-up list
- Communicating with volunteers (e.g., confirming participation, answering questions, distributing role descriptions)
- Reporting to the organizing committee on volunteer-related needs
- Creating session sign-up sheets for session hosts (on VolunteerSpot) and evaluation assistants (on GoogleDocs)
- Preparing orientation packages for session hosts and on-site evaluation volunteers, including:

    For session hosts and evaluation assistants:

    - Role descriptions (Appendices A & B respectively, pp. 11, 12)
    - Room assignment overview (Appendix C, p. 14; template only)

    For session hosts only:

    - 1- and 5-minute time card
    - Session details including room, presentation titles, and presenter names
- Distributing orientation packages electronically prior to the conference and as a hardcopy on the day of the conference
- Conducting (or arranging for) orientations for the on-site support volunteers (registration table, session hosts, evaluation assistants) and providing support during the conference
- Creating and distributing the post-conference volunteer survey, analyzing the feedback, and generating the summary report

One goal of the volunteer coordinator position, which was not realized due to time constraints, was comprehensive recognition of the volunteers' contribution through recognition certificates and/or small tokens of appreciation (e.g., CES-BCY USB keys). However, volunteers were thanked for their service during the conference introduction speech and in a follow-up email, and a list of volunteers was submitted for display on the resource area table during the conference.

4.0 POST-CONFERENCE SURVEY

4.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the survey was to collect feedback on the conference volunteer experience to inform future conference planning. This is the first year a volunteer survey has been conducted for the CES-BCY evaluation conference.

4.2 PARTICIPATION

Distribution of the survey was limited to the 25 support volunteers as the primary body of volunteers for whom the volunteer coordinator provided oversight and organization. The survey was programmed and uploaded on the JitsuTech survey platform by Michael Bhopal. Starting the day after the conference, volunteers were given two weeks as well as two reminder emails to fill out the survey. Out of 25 volunteers, 12 responded, for an overall response rate of 48%. Participation was anonymous and no potentially identifying questions were included.

4.3 SURVEY DESIGN & ANALYSIS

No previous volunteer experience survey had been implemented, so the present survey was modelled on the conference evaluation survey developed by Helen Lutz (Conference Evaluation Coordinator), with additional questions developed by the volunteer coordinator.

The survey consisted of 6 items, including one categorical question, two ordinal scales (one with 6 subscales), and three open-ended questions. The range of topics included:

- Where volunteers learned about the volunteer experience
- What their primary reason was for volunteering
- How they rated various aspects of the volunteer experience
- Their likelihood of volunteering again
- What challenges they encountered and suggestions for improvement
- What elements of the experience they enjoyed and recommend continuing.

To analyze the results, categorical responses were ranked by frequency, scale responses were converted to values from 1 to 5 from which averages were calculated, and qualitative responses were coded and grouped by theme (and by frequency where appropriate).

The survey is available in Appendix D (p. 15) and the complete data tables are available in Appendix E (p. 17).

4.4 RESULTS HIGHLIGHTS

For data tables with complete results, see Appendix E (p. 17).

1. Email blasts were the most common way for volunteers to **learn about the opportunity** to get involved.

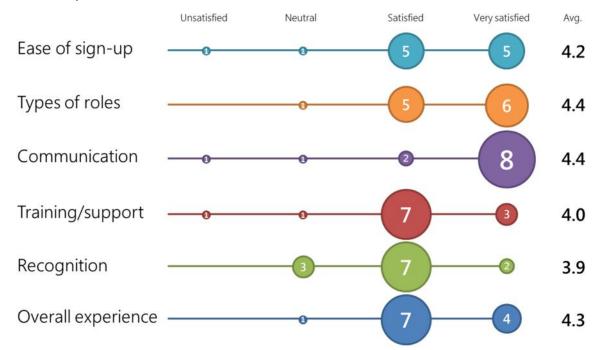| How did you learn about the opportunity to volunteer with the conference?		
Email from CES	8	67%
CES-BCY website	3	25%
CES website	2	17%
Event website	2	17%

Note. Multiple responses; will not sum to 100%.

2. Most wanted to **give back to the evaluation community** and/or to **network with other evaluators**.

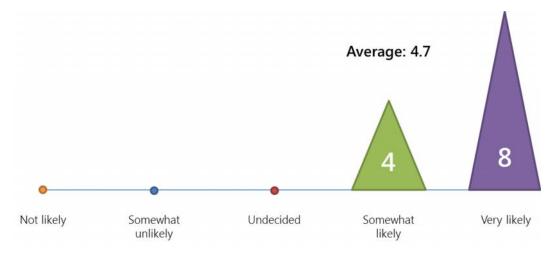| What was your primary reason for volunteering?		
Contributing/giving back	6	50%
Networking/meeting others	5	42%
Learning new skills/tools	1	8%
Learning about the conference	1	8%
Accessing the conference	1	8%

3. With some exceptions, there were **high rates of satisfaction** across all aspects of the volunteer experience.

Note. No one selected "Very unsatisfied" for any response.

One individual reported dissatisfaction with three aspects of the experience (ease of sign-up, communication, training/support), but did not provide responses to the qualitative questions on what went wrong and how it might be addressed.

5

4) 100% of respondents indicated being **"somewhat" or "very" likely to volunteer again** in the future.

Average: 4.7

Not likely | Somewhat unlikely | Undecided | Somewhat likely (4) | Very likely (8)

5) Respondents shared thoughts on **areas for improvement** in future events (some comments edited slightly for length; unedited comments available in Appendix E, p. 17). These have been organized by theme.

1. More communication and information sharing in general, especially around the sessions, WiFi, and technical support.

- "I would like to have tighter connection. If I could receive a reminder containing necessary information one week before the conference, I would appreciate."

- "Clearer communication with presenters about the various volunteer roles to ensure that everyone is on the same page"

- "Initially the Wifi password was incorrect ... but got that sorted out w Michael."

- "I wish that I can get more information about the conference to better perform my duty. For example, if I were told the wifi password, I can help others at the registration table."

- "The volunteer instruction sheet was comprehensive and helpful. However, it contained a number to call if encounter IT difficulties that was not helpful when time was of the essence. [...] Later I learned I could have dialled 11 on the wall phone in the room. This info would have been helpful, and would have saved time."

2. More training and preparation on the day of the conference.

- "I think a very brief orientation that outlines the day, the expectations, and some of the logistical stuff would be beneficial."

- "Would have been helpful to meet with the session host before the sessions started."

3. More recognition of volunteers and facilitation of engagement.

- "It might be a good idea to take a photo of all of the volunteers to put on the website!"
- "Would be nice to more formally meet the other volunteers."

4. More support for the session host role, especially in terms of being able to introduce and interact with speakers.

- "It would be nice to be provided with the assignments a few days before the conference so we can prepare a brief introduction for the speakers."
- "Might be help to get a brief CV to better introduce the speakers"
- "Wondering if a thank you card/ gift might be given to them [the speakers], just thoughts?"

5. More support for the evaluation assistant role, especially in terms of making the online session survey more accessible.

- "The wifi password seemed to be difficult for people to enter correctly, and so there seemed to be some frustration with accessing the session evaluation surveys."
- "I wished I had more ipads on hand, that had the survey loaded, to just hand out at the sessions."
- "The online session evaluation had some glitches such as using it more than once, that made the work of eval assistant a bit more technically challenged than expected. in future and if using same provider, perhaps an invite by email with a hyperlink would be easier to use than to ask people to manually enter the url address."

6) Respondents also shared thoughts on **what really worked** and should be continued in future events (some comments edited slightly for length; unedited comments available in Appendix E, p. 17). These have been organized by theme.

1. The level of communication was good, especially the written materials and the overall speed and ease of communication.

- "The materials for what to do were great (but could be printed double sided!)"
- "Outline of task sheet, and ease of communication support in advance."
- "Having all the info available in one envelope was helpful."
- "Easy communication with others."
- "I am very well impressed by the work the vol coordinators did at right away acknowledging my application to volunteer, they kept me always informed about expectations and how to communicate w them."

2. The conference itself was a positive experience.

- "The friendly, welcoming and collaborative atmosphere was great. It helped me to see what it would be like presenting at the conference, so I think that you could market the volunteering experience that way in the future (i.e., come out and volunteer in your first year at the conference and present the next year)."

- "I enjoyed meeting the other volunteers that i did meet."

- "Keep the buddy program. Keep the range of speakers, and encourage some students present as well."

3. The flexibility and ease of the overall volunteer experience was positive.

- "flexibility to choose which session to support and change your mind if need be"

- "I enjoyed it- it was not a huge amount of work and nice to be able to contribute with limited time available"

4. The number of people assigned to the registration table was appropriate.

- "Having 2-3 volunteers at the registration was great because when the influx of people begins you need more people to make the process as efficient as possible."

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback obtained through the volunteer survey as well as observations made by the volunteer coordinator, the following recommendations are offered:

5.1 BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

➢ Clarify that volunteering for the conference will not result in discounted or waived registration. Several volunteers were unable to register in time (or did not plan to register) due to anticipating a reduced or waived registration fee.

➢ In the marketing of the volunteer positions, emphasize the opportunities to give back to the evaluation community as well as the chance to meet other evaluators and network. Potentially reference the opportunity to gain experience with the conference.

➢ Continue to use email and website solicitations to advertise the volunteer opportunity.

➢ Distribute orientation packages sooner than the day before the conference, especially for session hosts, to allow them more time to prepare for their role. Decide the extent to which session hosts should be providing introductions (i.e., how in-depth/long) and communicate this expectation to them along with the necessary information (i.e., presenter bios, presentation abstracts). Also decide if gifts/cards are to be given to the presenters and provide session hosts with instructions to this effect.

➢ If possible, confirm the WiFi password in advance and provide it to volunteers in their written materials (especially if it contains easily-confused characters, such as "i" and ";"). Distribute the WiFi password to all volunteers instead of only evaluation assistants.

➢ Update the session host role description with accurate information for contacting IT services.

➢ Adjust either the session survey delivery method or the instructions to the evaluation assistants to address the technical challenges in using the surveys (e.g., emailing links rather than requiring people to type in the URL, more devices available, refreshing the survey for new respondents).

➢ Consider creating a "Session Tweeter" role where one person is assigned per session to post insights and quotes from the presentations to Twitter with the conference hashtag to facilitate more engagement online. All volunteers were encouraged to do this but there was minimal uptake, likely because the role was undefined.

➢ Inform volunteers ahead of time that they will be asked to participate in a survey after the conference in order to boost response rate.

5.2 DURING THE CONFERENCE

➢ Use a large visible sign to indicate where volunteers should meet for their orientation on the morning of the conference. Locate the orientation away from the busy registration table area (and possibly next to a Buddy Program station).

➢ Provide more consistent orientation on the day of the conference. Some volunteers received orientations but others did not. Be prepared to give the orientation on-demand as volunteers will arrived at staggered times.

➢ Be proactive in seeking out the volunteers to confirm that everything is running smoothly and to collect feedback. After the conference began, it became difficult to stay in touch with everyone and some volunteers were on their own. Arranging a dedicated and well-labelled check-in spot, such as the original orientation meeting location, between sessions may be helpful.

➢ Encourage presenters and sessions hosts to introduce themselves to each other prior to the session itself.

➢ Include more recognition and engagement of volunteers on the day. Possible options are providing thank-you cards and small tokens of appreciation (e.g., CES-BCY USB keys), recognition certificates, doing a group photo (lunch time would be best as some volunteers may leave after the morning or not arrive until the afternoon), and using the aforementioned check-in spot as an opportunity for volunteers to touch base with and meet each other.

5.3 AFTER THE CONFERENCE

➢ Continue to implement a survey to follow up with volunteers. Send out the survey invitation immediately after the conference ends and encourage responses within the first few weeks while recollection is strongest.

➢ Consider distributing a copy of the volunteer report to the volunteers to demonstrate their impact on future CES-BCY conference events.

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION ASSISTANT ROLE DESCRIPTION

CES-BCY 2015 Evaluation Conference

Collaboration, Contribution, and Collective Impact
November 20, 2015

On-Site Evaluation Assistant

Your role is to support the administration of the conference evaluation survey to the conference attendees. The survey is for each individual presentation attended (there will be a second overall conference survey sent out after the conference is over). On-site assistants will attend conference sessions to encourage and help attendees fill out the session surveys.

Survey link:

Tasks:

1. Meet at the registration table at 8:30am with the on-site evaluation volunteer coordinator (Carolyn). Receive information package with room assignment information.

2. Introduce yourself to the Session Host before the session begins and identify yourself to the audience when the Session Host introduces you.

3. Five minutes before the session timeslot ends, move to an accessible area in the room (preferably near the exit) where people can approach you for assistance.

4. Have the survey up on your iPad, tablet or smartphone device for people to fill out. The survey link will also be on a slide in the room for people to access on their own devices and a survey support table in the hall with extra devices.

    a. Some sessions will have more than one presentation. Audience members should fill out the survey once for each presentation in the session. The survey is a page long and for each time they fill it out, they can enter again to win a draw prize of a $100 Amazon gift card, increasing their odds of winning.

5. Help people fill out the survey. For questions you cannot answer, direct people to the survey support table in the hall or the on-site evaluation volunteer coordinator (Carolyn).

6. At the breaks and lunch and end of the conference, mingle and encourage people to complete the surveys.

APPENDIX B: SESSION HOST ROLE DESCRIPTION

CES-BCY 2015 Evaluation Conference

Collaboration, Contribution, and Collective Impact
November 20, 2015

Session Host

Your role is to help make sure the session runs smoothly, including:

- Checking that the room is prepared before the session begins (e.g., presenters accounted for, presentations loaded on the computer, water for presenters).
- Contacting IT services if there are any technical problems.
- Reminding attendees before and after to fill out the evaluation survey for each presentation in the session.
- Introducing the presenters and thanking them at the end.
- Time-keeping, including starting and ending the session on time, giving 5 and 1-minute warnings to presenters.

IT Services: Dial extension 11 on in-room phone.

SFU Security: (778) 782-5029
(if you require a room unlocked or locked)

Tasks:

7. Meet at the registration table at 8:30am with the session host coordinator (Beth Snow). Receive information package with room assignment information and time-keeping cards.

8. Go to the assigned room 10 minutes before the session begins to make sure the room is open and set up, AV working properly, water available for presenters, seating set up correctly with places for the presenters and yourself at the front.

9. Introduce yourself to the presenters before the session begins, check on the pronunciation of their name if you are unsure, help them load their presentations onto the computer and let them know that you will be providing time-keeping.

   a. Contact IT if you run into any technical problems or your session host coordinator (Beth) if you have any other difficulties.

b. Confirm with presenters beforehand how much time they require for their presentation and how much time for questions they prefer. Each session is 1 hour long and should be split evenly between presenters, with a question period after each presentation. (E.g., for a session with two presenters, the first presenter will get their 5-minute warning after 20 minutes at most, allowing 3-4 minutes at the end for questions and then time for the next presenter to get set up or to remind attendees to fill out the session surveys.) Presenters can moderate their own question periods unless they prefer the session host to do so.

> **NOTE:** Sessions with special formats (e.g., ignite sessions, roundtables, demonstrations, forum theatre) will have special instructions specific to those sessions.

10. The evaluation assistant assigned to the session should introduce themselves before the session starts. If they do not, ask them to identify themselves to the room during the introduction. Remind attendees that we are asking them to fill in a brief survey for each presentation they attend (there can be multiple presentations per session) and that for every survey they complete they will be given another chance to enter a draw for a $100 Amazon gift card.

11. Briefly introduce each presenter (name and title of presentation). Do not change the order of presentations as audience members may swap between sessions to catch a particular presentation. Give presenters a 5-minute and 1-minute warning, leaving at least 5 minutes for each presenter to answer questions as well as for the next presenter to get set up. Allow presenters to moderate their own question period unless they prefer for you to do it. Enforce time limits.

12. At the end of the session, after thanking the presenters, put up the slide with the survey link, direct the audience to the evaluation assistant, and remind them to fill out the survey once for every presentation that was part of the session.

APPENDIX C: ROOM ASSIGNMENT TEMPLATE

	Session	Session Host	Eval. Assistant	Room
10:00 AM				
11:10 AM				
1:10 PM				
2:20 PM				

APPENDIX D: VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE SURVEY

Survey Introduction

Please give us your feedback on the volunteer experience with the CES-BCY 2015 Evaluation Conference. Your contributions will be anonymous and confidential and will be used to help us improve the volunteer experience for future conferences.

1) How did you learn about the opportunity to volunteer with the conference? Check all that apply.

a) Colleagues at work
b) Canadian Evaluation Society Website
c) CES-BCY Website
d) Event Website
e) Email from CES
f) Internal communication (Eg: UBC listserv, workplace sharepoint, etc...)
g) Other (please specify)

2) What was your primary reason for volunteering with the conference?

[Open-ended]

3) Please rate your satisfaction with the following:

a) Ease of sign-up
b) Types of roles available
c) Communication about role and expectations
d) Training and support provided to fulfill role
e) Recognition of volunteer contributions
f) Overall satisfaction with volunteer experience

[with options for 'Very Unsatisfied', 'Unsatisfied', 'Neutral', 'Satisfied', 'Very Satisfied' and 'Not Applicable', similar to question 3 of the overall conference survey]

4) Please indicate your likelihood of volunteering again for a similar event in the future:

a) Not likely
b) Somewhat unlikely
c) Undecided
d) Somewhat likely
e) Very likely

5) What made the volunteering experience more difficult or what do you think should be done differently in the future?

[Open-ended]

6) What made the volunteering experience more positive or what do you think should be kept the same in the future?

[Open-ended]

APPENDIX E: VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE SURVEY RESULTS

1) How did you learn about the opportunity to volunteer with the conference? Check all that apply.

RESPONSE OPTION	FREQUENCY	% OF RESPONDENTS
Email from CES	8	67%
CES-BCY Website	3	25%
Canadian Evaluation Society Website	2	17%
Event Website	2	17%
Colleagues at work	0	0%
Internal communication	0	0%
Other	0	0%

2) What was your primary reason for volunteering with the conference?

CATEGORIES	FREQUENCY	% OF RESPONDENTS
Contributing/helping/giving back/supporting CES-BCY	6	50%
Networking/to meet other evaluators	5	42%
Learning new evaluation skills/tools/knowledge	1	8%
Learning about the conference	1	8%
Accessing the conference	1	8%

Uncoded responses:

- To meet other evaluators
- Give back
- learning new evaluation tools
- Meet people
- Networking, and volunteering as a way to support cesbcy
- Enjoy the connection with organizers and other volunteers.

- to get involved into the field of evaluation
- to contribute to a volunteer organization
- give back to community
- To be helpful and see how the conference is run.
- Help Diana
- Access to the conference

3) Please rate your satisfaction with the following:

	FREQUENCY OF RATINGS					
	VERY UNSATISFIED	UNSATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SATISFIED	VERY SATISFIED	AVERAGE
a) Ease of sign-up	0	1	1	5	5	4.2
b) Types of roles available	0	0	1	5	6	4.4
b) Communication about role and expectations	0	1	1	2	8	4.4
c) Training and support provided to fulfill role	0	1	1	7	3	4.0
d) Recognition of volunteer contributions	0	0	3	7	2	3.9
e) Overall satisfaction with volunteer experience	0	0	1	7	4	4.3

4) Please indicate your likelihood of volunteering again for a similar event in the future:

FREQUENCY OF RATINGS					
NOT LIKELY	SOMEWHAT UNLIKELY	UNDECIDED	SOMEWHAT LIKELY	VERY SATSIFIED	AVERAGE
0	0	0	4	8	4.2

5) What made the volunteering experience more difficult or what do you think should be done differently in the future?

- It would be nice to be provided with the assignments a few days before the conference so we can prepare a brief introduction for the speakers. It might be a good idea to take a photo of all of the volunteers to put on the website!
- Might be help to get a brief CV to better introduce the speakers, and wondering if a thank you card/ gift might be given to them, just thoughts?

- First, I would like to have tighter connection. If I could receive a reminder containing necessary information one week before the conference, I would appreciate. Second, I wish that I can get more information about the conference to better perform my duty. For example, if I were told the wifi password, I can help others at the registration table.
- The online session evaluation had some glitches such as using it more than once, that made the work of eval assistant a bit more technically challenged than expected.in future and if using same provider, perhaps an invite by email with a hyperlink would be easier to use than to ask people to manually enter the url address.
- It was well organized. Initially the Wifi password was incorrect … but got that sorted out w Michael. Other than that it was all good.
- I think a very brief orientation that outlines the day, the expectations, and some of the logistical stuff would be beneficial.
- The volunteer instruction sheet was comprehensive and helpful. However, it contained a number to call if encounter IT difficulties that was not helpful when time was of the essence. As a session host I called this number with about 10 mins before session started. The presenter was having technical difficulties. It was a general SFU IT services help desk number which directed me to leave a VM. I did so though did not receive a call back. Later I learned I could have dialled 11 on the wall phone in the room. This info would have been helpful, and would have saved time.
- Clearer communication with presenters about the various volunteer roles to ensure that everyone is on the same page
- The wifi password seemed to be difficult for people to enter correctly, and so there seemed to be some frustration with accessing the session evaluation surveys. I wished I had more ipads on hand, that had the survey loaded, to just hand out at the sessions.
- Would be nice to more formally meet the other volunteers. Also, would have been helpful to meet with the session host before the sessions started.

6) What made the volunteering experience more positive or what do you think should be kept the same in the future?

- The materials for what to do were great (but could be printed double sided!)
- Outline of task sheet, and ease of communication support in advance with Carolyn, thank you.
- Easy communication with others.
- I am very well impressed by the work the vol coordinators did at right away acknowledging my application to volunteer, they kept me always informed about expectations and how to communicate w them.

- Keep the buddy program. Keep the range of speakers, and encourage some students present as well.
- Having 2-3 volunteers at the registration was great because when the influx of people begins you need more people to make the process as efficient as possible.
- Having all the info available in one envelope was helpful.
- flexibility to choose which session to support and change your mind if need be
- The friendly, welcoming and collaborative atmosphere was great. It helped me to see what it would be like presenting at the conference, so I think that you could market the volunteering experience that way in the future (i.e., come out and volunteer in your first year at the conference and present the next year).
- I enjoyed it- it was not a huge amount of work and nice to be able to contribute with limited time available. I enjoyed meeting the other volunteers that i did meet.