

Volunteer Tips and Strategies

Topic 1: Planning for Volunteers: Clarifying Roles



Planning for Volunteers

Instituting a new volunteer program or reenergizing an existing one involves a process that covers a range of management functions – from needs assessment, volunteer position development and recruitment, to supervision, evaluation and recognition.

Together, these interdependent processes create a synergy that will enliven your volunteer program. Once instituted, an effective approach to volunteer management will perpetuate itself.

Planning a volunteer program within an organization means changing standard practices and routines. Funds must be acquired and budgeted, relationships must be formed to link the volunteer program into the organization, job descriptions and working relationships must be modified, and policies must be created and approved.

Questions to Ask:

1. What is your organizational vision and mission?
2. What are you trying to accomplish in your community? What is the program's purpose?
3. How do volunteers fit into the program's mission, strategies and goals?
4. How could volunteers best meet the program's needs to serve more people

and make a greater difference in the community?

5. How can volunteers help meet program goals?
6. Who will take primary responsibility for recruiting, training and managing volunteers?
7. What systems do you need to track and communicate with volunteers?

Tips and Food for Thought:

- Make a list of the benefits that can be created for your organization, its mission and the people it serves by involving volunteers in specific ways.
- Determine who can help build or rebuild the volunteer program.
- Draft project descriptions with clearly stated goals and objectives and engage volunteers in designing the implementation strategy.
- Design project-based volunteer opportunities that reflect the long-term volunteer involvement your organization desires.
- Consider what short-term, high-impact projects you can create that will make use of the skills volunteers can provide.
- Explore volunteer position sharing and team volunteering options when developing projects.
- Think creatively about projects that could be done by groups of volunteers at

various times throughout the year.

- Design and frame volunteer projects as if you were engaging consultants or project managers. Let volunteers play an active role in setting project goals, procedures and timelines to increase their commitment.

Types of Volunteers

“Extra-pair-of-hands” or general volunteering is a common practice - volunteers give their time, sometimes as manual labor, to assist with projects and programs, often helping nonprofits serve more people or complete work that would otherwise not happen. Much volunteering falls under this category and includes such activities as building houses for low-income families, after-school tutoring, trash pickup, painting schools, etc.

As crucial as these tasks are, many businesses, for example, are opting to leverage the specialized skills and talents of their employees through pro bono service. Pro bono is the donation of professional services that are included in an employees' job description and for which the recipient nonprofit would otherwise have to pay. Pro bono, traditionally associated with the legal field, has taken on a wider definition as more companies and individuals are volunteering professional skills to assist nonprofit organizations in creating or improving their business practices.



Volunteer Position Descriptions

The volunteer position description is a very useful tool. It outlines responsibilities, support, and benefits of specific volunteer opportunities. It also strengthens your recruitment efforts because it defines the assignment, skills, abilities, and interests necessary to perform the task successfully.

A volunteer position description should include the following components:

Title - Provide a descriptive title that gives the volunteer a sense of identity. This also helps program staff and other volunteers understand the assigned role.

Purpose/objective - Use no more than two sentences to describe the specific purpose of the position. If possible, state the purpose in relation to the nonprofit's mission and goals.

Location - Describe where the person will be volunteering.

Key responsibilities - List the position's major responsibilities. Clearly define what the volunteer is expected to do as part of this assignment.

Qualifications - Clearly list education, experience, knowledge, skills, and age requirements. Also note if the opportunity is accessible to people with disabilities. If a background check is required, it should be indicated here.

Time commitment - Note the length of the assignment, hours per week, and/or other special requirements.

Training/support provided - Define nature and length of all general and position-specific training required for the

assignment. Also list resources and other support available to the volunteer.

Benefits - Describe benefits available to volunteer, such as a lunch, T-shirt, development opportunities

Volunteer supervisor and contact information - List the staff person or volunteer leader who will be working most directly with the volunteer and his/her contact information.

(Adapted from: Take Root: Volunteer Management Handbook developed by Hands On network for CNCS.)

Best Practices/Notes:

Useful Websites:

Kansas Volunteer Commission

www.KanServe.org

Hands On Network

<http://www.handsonnetwork.org/nonprofitgov/toptools>

National Service Resource Center

<http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/>

Volunteer Match

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/resources/>

Volunteering in America

<http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/>