

Definitions

Volunteer - A person who performs a service or task willingly and without pay.

Volunteer Management - The process of recruiting, selecting, training, supervising and supporting volunteers to enhance an organization's performance and results.

References

Volunteer Management

http://www.ngoconnect.net/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=17776&folderId=38677&name=DLE-11947.pdf

Sample Volunteer Management Manual

http://www.ngoconnect.net/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=30549&folderId=38677&name=DLE-3423.pdf

Ashoka – How to Recruit and Train Volunteers

http://www.genv.net/en-us/grow_it/sustainability/volunteers

Idealist Volunteer Management Resource Center

<http://www.idealists.org/info/VolunteerMgmt>

Making the Most of Volunteers

<http://volunteer.org.in/MakingMostVolunteers.php>

Topic: Human Resources

Using Volunteers to Strengthen Your Organization

Q. How can volunteers support your organization?

A. Volunteers can be a major asset to an organization. By contributing time, energy and talents, volunteers can generate enthusiasm, provide new skills, increase community engagement, serve as bridges to target populations, augment fundraising efforts and complement the work of paid staff. They can be an especially vital resource for organizations straining to meet the needs of beneficiaries with limited staff and budgets.

To make the most of volunteers and ensure they have a positive volunteer experience, it is important to manage them effectively. That is what this issue of *NGOConnect eNews* is all about: how to recruit, select, train, supervise and appreciate volunteers.

Getting Started: Key Questions to Ask

The value of your volunteers will be determined by the degree to which they meet your organization's needs. To assess this, carefully consider where you need help, what resources you have in place and whether volunteers are the right solution. Here are some key questions to ask to determine whether you *should* and *can* engage volunteers:

- Do we have activities or tasks that are appropriate for non-staff to do?
- What kind of skills or knowledge does a person need to perform them?
- Are the activities or tasks specific and short-term? Or are they ongoing ones, which require a longer-term commitment?
- Will we need to train volunteers to ensure they are able to perform their duties and maintain the quality standards of our organization?
- Do we have enough paid staff to train and support volunteers?
- Do we have the supplies that volunteers need for their activities?
- How will we supervise and evaluate the work of volunteers?
- Once we have invested in training volunteers, how will we keep them committed to our program?
- How will we document time contributed by volunteers, either to meet our cost-share requirement and/or to demonstrate the community's support for our activities?

Recruit by Reaching Out to the Community

Once you determine that volunteers are right for your organization, and you know what you want them to do and what resources you need to support

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Five Common *Misconceptions* about Volunteer Management

1. Volunteers are free.

In fact, volunteers require investments of time and money to be effectively utilized.

2. Anyone can manage volunteers.

Volunteer management is as much a skill as staff management.

3. You do not need much time to manage volunteers.

Volunteers need both supervision and support—as you know, this takes time!

4. You do not need staff to manage volunteers (volunteers manage themselves, volunteers will just show up).

To maintain the quality of your programs, you must assign staff to oversee the work of your volunteers.

5. Volunteer management is a luxury we cannot afford.

Not true! Managing volunteers helps you make them an asset.

Adapted from Idealist.org, a website devoted to linking volunteers, job-seekers and nonprofit organizations

Recognizing the work, time and energy of volunteers... not only thanks people for their service, but it highlights the importance of their contributions and encourages them to continue their work.

them, the next step is finding them. In general, people become volunteers at an organization by 1) contacting an organization to offer their help or 2) responding to recruitment efforts.

For recruitment, think about the kinds of people you are hoping to attract to serve as volunteers, keeping in mind that people from within the local community are often the most invested and dedicated volunteers, because they have a personal interest in the work. Also consider finding volunteers from different gender, age and ethnic groups (if appropriate) to create a diverse team. Then develop a recruitment plan. This might include:

- *Enlisting staff, Board members and other personal contacts:* Many volunteers start doing community work because they are asked by a friend, family member or neighbor. People often respond positively if someone they know extends a personal invitation to them.
- *Going where the people are:* Instead of trying to get people to come to you, try going to them. To recruit volunteers, attend meetings of other groups and go to places and events where potential volunteers gather.
- *Getting the word out:* It is important to inform people that your NGO exists and welcomes volunteers. Post information at markets, schools and community centers, on websites, and in newsletters and other places potential volunteers might look.

Match the Volunteer to the Task or Activity

It is helpful to create an application for potential volunteers to fill out, so you can gather contact information, background, education level, skills, time available and any additional information that may be relevant.

Upon receiving applications, review applicants' qualifications and consider if their skills and abilities match the tasks and responsibilities you need them to do. You may want to invite selected applicants to your office for an interview, solicit and check references and verify any important background information.

If you have lots of volunteers at one time, create a chart that includes the potential volunteers' names, contact information, available days and hours, special skills and what they are willing and not willing to do. This will help you keep track and match volunteers to positions in which they will be interested.

You should clearly outline for applicants the roles and responsibilities of potential volunteers for your organization. This can take the form of a simple discussion or a written agreement. Items you may want to address are: time commitment required (short-term, long-term or ongoing), specific tasks to be performed and any training and supervision you will provide. By clarifying everyone's roles from the very beginning, you ensure that both the volunteers and your organization have a shared understanding of what you can expect of them and what they can expect of you. This will help to prevent confusion or disagreements in the future.

Orient Volunteers to Your Organization

Just like staff members, volunteers need someone to orient, train and manage them. You want to make new people feel welcome and explain your work, why you do it and why their help is important. Many people function better when they see the "big picture."

Delegate a staff member to provide volunteers with a comprehensive orientation, introducing them to your organization, its staff, vision and mission,

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Remember that, by virtue of their work with you, volunteers become ambassadors of your organization within the community.

For More information

For this or other issues of this eNewsletter, please visit www.NGOConnect.NET. The Web site is a dynamic and interactive portal dedicated to connecting and strengthening NGOs, networks and NGO support organizations worldwide.

Funding for this publication was provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development, under the Capable Partners Program (CAP). Its contents, managed by CAP, and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the U.S. Government.

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offices, activities and structures. Not only will this orientation help them understand and perform their duties, but it will also provide them with valuable information to share with friends, family and acquaintances. Remember that, by virtue of their work with you, volunteers become ambassadors of your organization within the community.

Training Volunteers Is Crucial to Success—Yours and Theirs

Often volunteers are ready and willing to work, but may not be technically skilled or understand your organization's systems and procedures. Do not assume that new people will just "figure things out." Consider creating a training binder that contains general information about your NGO and information specific to what the volunteer will be doing. Also, develop a volunteer manual with relevant policies and procedures that can be given to each volunteer at the beginning of his or her service.

If you have a large cohort of volunteers, you may want to do formal training sessions; if there are just a few volunteers doing different tasks across your organization, you may find it more efficient to use individualized mentorship and coaching to train volunteers.

Supervise as You Would Paid Staff

Overseeing the work of volunteers is just as vital as overseeing the performance of staff. Here are a few essentials:

- *Use peoples' time wisely:* Keep time demands reasonable and clear. People like to know in advance what time commitment is needed.
- *Supervise volunteers:* Every volunteer should be supervised by a specific staff member, either a central volunteer coordinator or another staff member with whom they work closely. The volunteer and supervisor should check in regularly to address any questions or concerns each may have. Frequent and open communication between supervisors and volunteers helps to improve performance, ensure volunteers feel supported and address any problems that may arise.
- *Monitor and evaluate volunteers:* Even though they are unpaid, volunteers represent your organization, and their work can affect your reputation in the community and among donors. You may want to develop some performance measures to track attendance and punctuality, participation in project activities and achievement of results.

Recognize Good Work and Reward It

Recognizing the work, time and energy of volunteers is a crucial part of effectively managing and maintaining them. It not only thanks people for their service, but it highlights the importance of their contributions and encourages them to continue their work. Some ways to demonstrate your appreciation include:

- Certificates of service;
- Volunteer profiles in reports and other publications;
- Volunteer appreciation events;
- Small gifts, such as t-shirts, hats or bags;
- Public acknowledgment during community events;
- Opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge through training and conferences; and
- Leadership opportunities among the cohort of volunteers.