

THE VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT PROCESS...

Step 1: Planning and Organization

Planning for your volunteer program gives you the opportunity to work out the purpose of the program, the role of volunteers in the organization, the program's contribution to the organization's mission, and how the volunteer program fits into the structure of the organization. Planning is best done with input from those who will be affected by the volunteer program, particularly the leaders, the paid staff, and the clients of the organization. A thorough planning process will include the following elements:

Step 2: Policies and Procedures

Policies and procedures are the nuts and bolts of the volunteer program. A policy is a principle, plan, or course of action. Policies tell people what to do. A procedure is a series of steps that direct people how to do what they must do.

Step 3: Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteer recruitment means attracting and inviting people to consider involvement with your organization. Many new volunteer administrators make the mistake of beginning their recruiting before they have an idea of why they are recruiting and for what positions. The most important step for recruitment is planning and design. In order to do this, you must spend time learning about your organization from the inside as well as how the community and public at large perceive your organization.

Step 4: Screening, Interviewing and Placement

Matching potential volunteers to volunteer positions will be an important part of your program's success. Making the match involves using a series of screening techniques that allow the organization and the volunteer to get to know each other and decide whether and how to best work together. Volunteer program administrators may use the screening tools human resources officers use: applications, reference checks, interviews, background checks, training, and observation. Screening potential volunteers should be as sophisticated as necessary for the type of volunteer task under consideration. Volunteers for a community clean-up and volunteers for a one-to-one mentoring program, for example, would go through very different screening processes. The goal of screening is to get the right volunteer into the right position.

Step 5: Orientation and Training

Initial orientation and training prepares volunteers to perform their duties efficiently and effectively. The policies and procedures developed earlier form the basis for the orientation; the position description forms the basis for the training. Volunteers who understand what is expected of them do a better job and feel satisfied by performing their duties and serving your organization.

Step 6: Supervision

Volunteers need support to perform their duties. They should have a designated supervisor to whom they can turn for advice, guidance, encouragement, and feedback. The supervisor also needs to provide the materials, training, and direction to enable the volunteer to perform assigned tasks.

Step 7: Volunteer Performance Evaluation

Volunteers add value to an organization; evaluating their performance is one way to quantify their contributions toward achieving the mission of the organization. The volunteer program administrator and the volunteer's supervisor conduct periodic evaluations to give volunteers feedback on how they are performing assigned duties and tasks and meeting current objectives. These evaluations also give the administrator and the supervisor opportunities to set new goals for the volunteer, identify additional training needs the volunteer may have, and determine the effectiveness of the volunteer program procedures.

Step 8: Retention and Recognition

Understanding volunteers' motivations and remaining sensitive to their needs are essential to retaining volunteers. People's reasons for volunteering can differ dramatically. Regular and open communication will help determine the motivating element specific to each volunteer. Remember, also, that personal motivations can change over time.

Step 9: Measuring Volunteer Program Effectiveness

Agency and program leaders must make critical decisions regarding the distribution, use, and management of available resources. To help make these decisions, volunteer program managers need to document:

- (1) How financial, material, equipment, in-kind, and human resources have been, are being, and will be used by the agency to support agency efforts; and
- (2) What benefits these resources have brought to the clients and programs.