

Working with Volunteers

By

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Volunteers are Valuable

- Approx. 63 million Americans or about 25% of all adults volunteered (2017)
 - 8 billion hours
 - Valued at \$193 billion
 - www.independentsector.org is the source for this information
- 2021- 382 Growing Together Volunteers
 - Contributed over 4,400 volunteer hours worth \$112,948
 - Personal stories can be even more powerful!

Volunteers bring:

- Past experiences
- Professional skills
- Maturity
- Wisdom
- Enthusiasm and passion
- Knowledge and expertise
- Availability
- Leadership
- Advocacy

Working with Volunteers: Key Concepts

- Defining volunteer needs and positions
- Recruiting, selecting, and screening volunteers
- Orientation and training
- Recognizing volunteers for their contributions
- Evaluating efforts
- Navigating Difficult Volunteer Situations

Defining Volunteer Needs and Positions

- Assess needs of the organization
- How many volunteers?
- What will they do?
- What are the goals?
- How long will they serve?
- What training will they need?

- What prior background or interests would be helpful?
- Timeline for recruitment, selection, screening, training, etc.?
- Resources needed?

Recruiting

- Know the purpose of your organization
- What makes volunteering for your organization special?
- What impact does your organization make?
- How will people benefit from volunteering?
- What is required to be a volunteer?
- Promotional plan and materials
- Prepare your “elevator speech”

Your “Elevator Speech”

Tips:

- 30-60 seconds in length
- Share significant accomplishments of the organization
- Be sincere
- Introduce yourself and the organization
- Include some requirements for being a volunteer but not too much
- Who’s your audience?
- Thank them for listening and for their interest.

Elevator Speech Example...

Hi, I am John Orick, State Coordinator with the Purdue Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Program. Purdue Extension Master Gardeners are volunteers trained to assist communities with needs for consumer horticulture education. They teach gardening classes, work in community and educational gardens, teach youth, and many other activities. Purdue EMG’s contributed over 134,000 volunteer hours in 2021 worth \$3.3 million! If you are interested in becoming a Purdue Extension Master Gardener, I can put in touch with your local Purdue Extension office. Thank you!

Selection and Screening

- Every organization should have a process/policy for selecting and screening volunteers.
- Application
 - Basic contact information
 - Background, skills, interests, etc.
- Consider interviewing potential volunteers
- Job description to communicate volunteer roles and responsibilities
- Screening?
 - Background check
 - References

Selection and Screening

Components of a job description:

- Title of position
- Purpose of position
- Responsibilities
- Expectations
- Time required for position
- Time frame
- Resources available
- Qualifications
- Contact person
- Name
- Email
- Phone
- Date
- Signature of volunteer

Orientation and Training

Orienting new volunteers:

- Purpose and history of organization
- Role and responsibilities
- Volunteer policy
- Training required
- Support person contact
- Assign a mentor
- Training
- Knowledge needed to fulfill role and responsibilities
- Skills or resources needed to be successful
- Provide on-going training to equip volunteers

Recognition

- Certificate of achievement
- Hand-written thank you cards
- Year-end banquet or fun event
- Phone call, email, or text
- Group photo to mark special accomplishments
- In-person encouragement
- Ask volunteers for advice
- Wall of fame
- Yard signs to acknowledge volunteers, etc.



Recognition idea – Hamilton County



Recognition idea – La Porte County

Evaluating Efforts

- Meet with volunteers to discuss what went well and what needs improvement
- Hold an annual retreat to discuss goals for the coming year
- Send a survey to volunteers to assess their needs
- Observe volunteers and give feedback
 - Encouragement
 - Suggested improvement

Volunteer Retreats

- Leadership Development
- Team building activities
- Goal-setting
- Plan activities for the year
- Orientation for new volunteers

Navigating Difficult Volunteer Situations

- Begins with clear communication
- Most conflict occurs due to miscommunication
- Communicate expectations, roles, and responsibilities
- Lack of volunteer performance?
 - Less motivated, why?
 - Think they are doing fine.
 - Communication issue
 - Doesn't understand role
 - Doesn't agree
 - Personal issues

Navigating Difficult Volunteer Situations

Tips on resolving Issues:

1. Communicate with volunteer
 - In person is best
 - Phone second best
 - Use email with caution, maybe as follow-up
2. Don't ignore issues
3. Look at all sides of an issue
4. Document: Who, What, Where, When, Why?
5. Confidentiality is important.
6. Address issues in a timely manner
7. Focus on issue not personality
8. Stay calm, ask questions
9. Follow up afterwards to restate and clarify