

Tips for Nonprofits on Using Volunteers

- Assess your commitment to utilizing volunteers
 - *Have you invested in a volunteer coordinator?*
 - When organizations invest in a volunteer coordinator, they build their capacity to effectively utilize volunteers and improve their ability to retain volunteers.
 - *Have you considered different activities that volunteers can perform within your organization?*
 - Developing “volunteer position descriptions” is one of the best practices for volunteer management. These descriptions can help you recruit the right volunteers for your organization. When organizations provide a variety of opportunities that allow volunteers to utilize existing skills and develop new ones, they are more likely to engage individuals in rewarding volunteer experiences.
 - *Do you have buy-in from your staff for incorporating volunteers into different aspects of your organization?*
 - Does everyone understand that volunteers can be used not only for mailings but also for IT resources, public relations, strategic planning, or any number of skilled tasks?
- Evaluate your recruitment strategies
 - *Are you conducting outreach into your community?*
 - The major reason people volunteer is because someone asked them to help. Make sure you are talking with individuals, groups, and businesses about volunteer opportunities at your organization.
 - Your current volunteers are a valuable resource for making connections with potential volunteers. Ask them if they know others who might be interested in volunteering with your organization.
 - *From where are you recruiting your volunteers?*
 - In addition to the “personal ask,” a variety of resources are available to your organization, including local volunteer centers

and online volunteer referral services. These services can help you to develop your recruitment strategies and identify different populations in your community.

- *Is your volunteer pool as diverse as your community?*
 - Communities are composed of diverse individuals with unique needs, including, for example, persons with disabilities or senior citizens looking to be more involved. Be open to the resources that each individual can bring to your agency.
- Utilize best practices in volunteer management to increase effectiveness and improve volunteer retention
 - *Have you developed volunteer position descriptions?*
 - *Do you have procedures for meeting with potential volunteers to match their skills and interests with your volunteer needs?*
 - *Do you provide training and professional development for the volunteers so that they can grow with your organization?*
 - *Do you offer recognition to the volunteers for their contributions to your organization?*
 - *Do you have a volunteer coordinator who can oversee the implementation of these best practices and communicate with volunteers?*
- Consider the costs and benefits of recruiting and managing volunteers
 - *What are the costs associated with volunteers?*
 - Yes, volunteering comes at a price to your organization. You may need to supervise their service, provide them with resources to get the job done, or maybe even sponsor a recognition event. Realize that you are investing in human resources, and make sure that you are appropriating the right amount of money.
 - *What are the benefits associated with volunteers?*
 - While it is easy for nonprofits to quantify the benefits of investing in fundraising, it is more difficult to measure the benefits of volunteers. Yet, in addition to the work that volunteers accomplish for your organization, they may also provide more intangible benefits, including building connections to the local community and enhancing your organization's mission. Consider how volunteers contribute to the activities of your organization and how they might further your organization's mission and strategic plan.