



Why Use this Resource?

Project and event based volunteering is just one way that volunteers are making a vital contribution to community organisations. This information sheet provides an overview of this type of volunteering and some tips for recruiting project and event volunteers.

Links to National Standards for Involving Volunteers - No. 8 Continuous Improvement]



Recruiting for Projects and Events

Project and event volunteering is becoming popular as volunteers are looking for opportunities with flexibility for their busy lifestyles. If you are aiming to recruit volunteers for projects or events, then keep the following in mind.

There are basically 3 approaches for recruiting volunteers for projects and events.

1. Warm Body Recruitment When you need a large number of volunteers for a short period time and the qualifications of the task are minimal, you might engage in "warm body recruitment." This involves a broad dissemination of information, including: Distribution of brochures; posters; speaking to groups; notices in appropriate media (ex: community newsletters, monthly magazines); word of mouth.

2. Targeted Recruitment The targeted campaign requires a carefully planned approach to a small audience. Use this method when you are trying to recruit volunteers that need to have specific skills or not commonly found characteristics. A targeted campaign requires, at the outset, that you answer several questions:

- What do we need?
- Who could provide this?
- How can we communicate with them?
- What would motivate them?

Working through such questions will help you identify and locate the volunteers that you need. Once you locate a source of such volunteers, simply take your recruitment message directly to them.

3. Concentric Circles Recruitment This type of recruitment requires you to identify populations who are already in direct or indirect contact with your organisation and then to contact them with your recruiting message. Such populations include:

- Your clients, their families and relatives.
- Alumni of your program/s.
- Friends of your current volunteers and staff.
- People in your organisation's neighbourhood.
- People who have been affected by the problem you are attempting to solve.

Concentric Circles recruitment involves people who are already familiar with your agency or the problem you address, or who are connected through friends or staff members. It is more likely that you will succeed in persuading them to volunteer than complete strangers. In sales terms, there is a big difference between a "cold" call to a stranger than a "warm" call to an acquaintance or a friend.

Asking

Be sure to directly ask people to volunteer. The most effective way to do this is to have your staff or volunteers ask their friends and acquaintances to volunteer. Be sure to provide them with the information they need to make an effective "ask."



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What Needs to be Done Before Recruiting Volunteers?

Make the match between culture and volunteer

Your organisation's culture will determine the type of volunteer you recruit. If your office is hierarchical, you may want to find people who are comfortable following procedures and policies. If it is loosely organised or entrepreneurial, you will want to look for individuals who are self-starters and who enjoy working with less structure and direction.

- Analyse your workplace (in this case-the event you are planning for) before you recruit volunteers so you will be able to make a better match between volunteers and organisation.
- Make sure your organisation is prepared for volunteers.
- Are the staff prepared and willing to help with interviewing, orientation, training, and supervising volunteers?
- Have volunteer placements been thought out and defined? Are there volunteer position descriptions in place?
- Have you prepared recruitment materials such as brochures, flyers, and a volunteer handbook?
- Is there a place for volunteers to work with necessary supplies and available equipment?
- Are there policies, procedures and record keeping systems in place?

Prepare the staff

Are staff members ready to respond to the inquiries of potential volunteers and can they speak knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the mission and work of the organisation?

Even when no specific recruiting has been done, your organisation may receive inquiries from potential volunteers. Make sure that everyone in the office who receives calls from people expressing an interest in volunteering knows who is in charge of volunteer management and is prepared to transfer the call or forward a message. Never ask a volunteer to call back!

Educate staff to recruit volunteers

Many of your organisation's employees are in contact with potential volunteers every day. Do they know about the range of service opportunities available in your organisation and where to refer individuals who express an interest in volunteering?

Once you understand your organisational culture and have all of your systems in place, it is time to get on with your recruitment plans.



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Tips on how to Write a Volunteers Position Description

Create a volunteer position description that explains the project, event, skills, abilities and interests necessary to perform the volunteer task successfully. Some tips are:

- 1. Position Title** A specific, descriptive title provides the volunteer with a sense of identity and ensures that salaried staff and other volunteers understand this particular role.
- 2. Work Location** Where will the individual be working? Can the work be done at home or only on site, or at a particular site? Make sure that there is public transportation near your work site/s so you can recruit people who might not have their own transportation.
- 3. Purpose of the Position** How will the volunteer's work affect the project or event's outcome? It is important to identify how this event or project fits in with the organisations' mission so that volunteers will understand how important their work is.
- 4. Responsibilities and Duties** Specifically identify the volunteer position's responsibilities and duties. Define what is expected from the volunteer.
- 5. Qualifications** It pays to be very clear and concrete in listing qualifications for any volunteer position. Include education, personal characteristics, skills, abilities and/or experience required.
- 6. Commitment Expected** What do you expect of the volunteer? Include: length of service, hours per week, or hours per day. Include any special requirements such as weekend work.
- 7. Training** List what training the volunteer will receive for this project or event. Will the training requirements be aligned to the vole role? It is a waste of time to have lengthy training for a short event.

Recruiting volunteers for projects and events requires a different approach to recruiting volunteers for long term, regular volunteering opportunities. Be sure to modify your approach to cater for individuals' specific skills, interests and availability.

(Photos by **Ray Lockett**)

See also: *Project Volunteering Tool*



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