

Attracting and Managing Volunteers

Description:

This tool provides an organizational checklist of best practices and the steps to attract and manage volunteers.

How it can be used:

Volunteers can be a valuable source of talent and experience. However, it can be challenging for community organizations to recruit and retain the right volunteers for the right positions.

Follow the steps and use the checklist of best practices to design a volunteer program that is right for your organization.

In order to effectively work with volunteers, your organization needs to follow four steps to ensure a fruitful and rewarding experience for all.

1. Planning

- a. Know your group's mission and mandate.
- b. Conduct a needs assessment to determine in which areas volunteers would be helpful.
- c. Ensure policies and procedures are in place.
- d. Create a screening process.

2. Recruitment, screening and selection

- a. Make sure your volunteers represent your community. Consider a cross-section (age, geography, interest) to ensure relevance.
- b. Match positions with skill sets.
- c. Appeal to potential volunteers' interests.
- d. Offer specific tasks initially, followed by opportunities with more responsibilities.
- e. Clearly define the tasks.
- f. Invite active volunteers to recruit new volunteers.
- g. Promote diversity by using different recruitment approaches.

3. Orientation and supervision

- a. Ensure roles and expectations are clear.
- b. Assign clearly defined tasks.
- c. Provide information, tools and resources.
- d. Ensure ongoing monitoring and support.
- e. Conduct performance assessments.
- f. Encourage volunteers to give feedback.

4. Recognition and motivation

- a. Publicly honour and thank your volunteers.
- b. Provide meaningful and varied experiences for volunteers.
- c. Keep volunteers informed and allow them input into planning and decision-making.

Why Screen Volunteers?

1. To maintain a safe environment for clients, volunteers, and staff.
2. To ensure the appropriate match is made between the volunteer-task-client.

What tools would help?

1. Well-designed position descriptions
2. A rigorous application process
3. Standardized recruitment methods
4. An interview process
5. Reference checks
6. Police checks
7. Observation of volunteers during orientation and probation

ORGANIZATION VOLUNTEER CHECKLIST

Policy/Practice/Standard	Y/N	Action to be taken
1. The Board of Directors and senior management acknowledge and support the vital role of volunteers in achieving our organization's mission.		
The Board of Directors adopts a statement declaring the vital role of volunteers in achieving the organization's mission.		
Our organization's planning process incorporates volunteer involvement.		
The Board has approved the overall goals and allocated a budget for volunteer involvement.		
Volunteer involvement is evaluated regularly.		
2. Policies and procedures provide a framework that defines and supports the involvement of volunteers within our organization.		
Governance and operational policies are in place and are reviewed regularly with input from Board, staff and volunteers.		
Policies and procedures are communicated to all staff and volunteers and are followed consistently and equitably.		
Policies and procedures are consistent with national/provincial codes and provincial employment standards legislation.		
3. A qualified person is designated to be responsible for the volunteer program.		
The designated person has an appropriate level of education and experience to manage the volunteers.		
The designated person works collaboratively with staff to encourage the effectiveness of the volunteer program.		
The performance of the designated person is reviewed regularly and includes feedback from staff and volunteers.		
4. A screening process is clearly communicated and consistently delivered.		
Screening is considered an essential process that continues throughout the volunteer's involvement with our organization.		
All volunteer assignments are assessed for level of risk.		
Screening measures are applied consistently and are used according to the level of risk of the assignment.		
All volunteers complete an application form and attend an interview.		
5. Volunteer assignments address the needs of our organization and involve volunteers in meaningful ways that reflect their various abilities, needs and backgrounds.		
Volunteer assignments have written descriptions that include duties, responsibilities, skills needed, time required and benefits.		
Volunteer assignments are developed to reflect both the needs of the organization and the needs of volunteers.		
Volunteer assignments are reviewed periodically with staff, volunteers to ensure relevance and value.		
Volunteers with special requirements or challenges can become involved with the organization.		
6. Diverse approaches are applied to recruit and select volunteers.		

Policy/Practice/Standard	Y/N	Action to be taken
Various techniques are used to recruit volunteers.		
Recruitment messages advise that screening procedures are in place.		
Genuine effort is made to recruit and select volunteers that represent the community served by our organization.		
Selection of volunteers is based on actual requirements and pre-determined screening measures.		
7. Volunteers receive an orientation to the organization and its policies and procedures, and receive training for their volunteer assignments.		
Volunteers receive information on the history, mission and structure of our organization.		
Volunteers receive information on the policies and procedures that relate to their assignment.		
Volunteers are given adequate training for performing their assignment without putting themselves or others at risk.		
Volunteers have ongoing training opportunities to upgrade their skills and to learn of changes in our organization.		
8. Volunteers receive appropriate levels of supervision according to their tasks, and are given regular opportunities to receive and give feedback.		
The complexity and risk of each assignment determines the level of supervision.		
Volunteers are assigned and introduced to their supervisors upon commencement of their assignment.		
The performance of volunteers is evaluated on a regular basis as well as through random spot checks.		
Volunteers are given and encouraged to use mechanisms for providing input to the organization.		
Records are kept for each volunteer using a confidential, secure system.		
Situations requiring reprimand and dismissal follow policies and procedures fairly and consistently while respecting the safety and dignity of all.		
9. Volunteers are treated as valuable and integral members of the organization's human resources.		
Input from volunteers is welcomed, and is solicited for the organization's planning and evaluation.		
Volunteers are included as equal members of the team and are encouraged to grow within the organization.		
10. Contributions of volunteers are regularly acknowledged with formal and informal recognition methods.		
Senior management publicly acknowledges the efforts of volunteers.		
Formal methods of recognition are delivered consistently.		
Informal methods of recognition are delivered in a timely and appropriate manner.		