Volunteers

as

Leaders

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Overview

An organization benefits from a robust volunteer infrastructure that sustains the activities of the organization. Essential to this sustainability are volunteer leaders, community members who are trained to recognize community needs and to lead other volunteers in service activities that will meet those needs.

A volunteer leader is a volunteer who:

- Takes charge of a project by coordinating it and taking accountability for its successful completion.
- Communicates the details of the project and serves as a resource for other volunteers.
- Organizes, leads and inspires a group of volunteers before, during and after the project.
- May initiate new projects.
- Represents your organization to other volunteers and to the community.

This guide is designed to help your organization establish the business processes needed for a solid volunteer leadership program. It is meant to be a user-friendly resource, but it does not prescribe how your programs should be structured. It does, however, provide pointers and resources you can adapt to meet your local leadership needs.

The content in this guide is organized into action-oriented sections that can help you:

- Develop your volunteer leadership program framework.
- Recruit volunteer leaders for your service opportunities.
- Equip leaders with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.
- Support leaders in their service efforts.

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So that you are familiar commonly used words within this text, we will utilize the following terms:

Term	Definition
"Volunteer Leaders"	People who take on formal leadership roles with your organization and the local community—sometimes referred to as "project coordinators," "project leaders" or "task leaders"
"You" or "Your Program" or "Your Organization"	You, the organization you represent, its staff and/or board members
"Projects"	The activities your organization and volunteer leaders manage, including service projects, civic or issues education courses, workshops, or other events
"Organization" or "Project Partners" or "Community Partners"	The schools, nonprofits, corporations and other community organizations you partner with on projects

Developing a Program Framework

An important step in establishing a solid volunteer leadership program is determining how volunteers can best support your organization's mission and, in turn, help your organization meet the needs of the broader community. Before you can begin utilizing volunteers as leaders, you first need to develop the framework for how they will fit into your organization. This includes determining your needs, the roles they will fill, and goals and objectives. This section will help you create a methodology for building a volunteer leadership program.

Making a Commitment to Volunteer Leadership

Before beginning a volunteer leadership effort, you must have an organizational commitment to volunteer leadership. Be clear about your reasons for building this initiative.

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Consider these things:

- Your community is full of potential leaders.
- Volunteer leaders can expand your program's capacity.
- You can create a community of committed leaders who care about and understand your work.

Make sure that staff at all levels of the organization are prepared to support volunteer leaders, from recruitment and training to placement and recognition.

- Prepare staff to respond knowledgeably to volunteers interested in serving as leaders.
- Ensure that policies and procedures are in place to effectively manage a volunteer leadership program.
- Make an organizational commitment to expanding volunteers' capacity.

Assessing Leadership Needs

Once you have made a commitment to volunteer leadership, you need to develop a framework for how the leaders will fit into your organization. The first step of developing this framework is to determine your program needs. As you define your volunteer engagement goals and objectives, consider your current program, how you want to expand your work and how you can utilize volunteers in leadership positions.

Take time to think about these questions:

- What are the goals of our program?
- Are we able to meet those goals with our current staff capacity? Why or why not?
- How do we want to expand the work we do in the community?
- What types of volunteer projects do we want to undertake?
- How can volunteer leaders help us enhance our current work, take on new projects and accomplish our goals?
- What specific needs do we have that volunteer leaders can fulfill?

Volunteer Leader Needs Assessment Worksheet

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It is important to define clear goals and objectives for your volunteer leadership program. Equally important, your organization must have the capacity (i.e., supervision, space) to support volunteer leaders. Conducting a needs analysis will help you determine where leaders can be used productively.

Outline specific program needs, the tasks involved and the support needed. Once you have identified the major needs, answer these questions:

Volunteer Position Description Worksheet

- Is the need genuine or contrived?
- Can we give the volunteer leader ownership of this project?
- Can we provide the essential support?
- Will the benefits be worth the investment of training and supporting the volunteer leader?
- Would a volunteer leader want to perform these tasks?

You may choose to catalogue your leadership opportunities according to the needs within the organization.
Here are a few examples:

Short Term	Volunteers lead short-term or one-time projects, such as a serve-a-thon.
Long Term	Volunteers lead long-term or ongoing projects, such as tutoring or senior support.
Skill Based	Volunteers lead projects requiring special skills, such as construction or computer repair.
Education and Outreach	Volunteers assist the organization with recruitment, marketing, resource development or orientation events.

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Defining Meaningful Roles

Once you know your program's needs in terms of volunteer leaders, you should clearly outline what volunteers will do as leaders, what skills are required and the support/benefits they will receive. You may choose to develop a *volunteer position description* to define the role of the volunteer leader. A volunteer position description outlines responsibilities, support and benefits of specific volunteer opportunities.

Volunteer Position Descriptions
Title: Provide a descriptive title that gives the volunteer a sense of identity. This will also help program staff and other volunteers understand the assigned role.
Purpose/objective: Use no more than two sentences to describe the specific purpose of the position. If possible, state the purpose in relation to the nonprofit's mission and goals.
Location: Describe where the person will be working.
Key responsibilities: List the position's major responsibilities. Clearly define what the volunteer is expected to do.
Qualifications: Clearly list education, experience, knowledge, skills, and age requirements. Also note if the opportunity is accessible to people with disabilities. If a background check is required, it should be indicated here.
Time commitment: Note the length of the assignment, hours per week, and/or other special requirements.
Training/support provided: Define nature and length of all general and position-specific training required for the assignment. Also list resources and other support available to the volunteer.
Benefits: Describe benefits available to volunteer, such as lunch, T-shirt, development opportunities.
Volunteer supervisor and contact information: List the name and contact information of the staff person or another volunteer leader who will be working most directly with the volunteer.

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Remember that a volunteer leadership role is one that involves broader responsibility and ownership in addition to specific tasks. The position description should reflect the depth of a volunteer leader's role.

These position descriptions can be the basis of the organization's recruitment materials and any agreements outlining the responsibilities of the organization, its volunteers and community partners.

Finalizing the Program Elements

Once you have identified your organization's needs for volunteer leaders and outlined meaningful position descriptions, it's time to put the final touches on your preparations for working with volunteer leaders.

Develop *agreements* that clearly outline the responsibilities of your organization and what is expected of the volunteer leaders. Develop corresponding agreements for volunteer leaders and each project partner. Be sure the agreements are consistent with any volunteer leader position descriptions.

Create a *project database* that catalogues the specific leadership roles you have available. It can be a simple spreadsheet.

Here's an example:

Project	Leadership Type	Special Skills	Date	Time
Soup Kitchen	Long Term	Food Preparation	Weekly (Sat.)	9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Youth Tutoring	Long Term	None	Daily (Mon.–Fri.)	3 p.m.–6 p.m.

You may also want to include other details that will let you organize and sort projects by city, time commitment or other factors. The database will help you manage the opportunities and the volunteer leaders assigned to each. Be prepared to keep the database flexible, as volunteer leaders may have ideas for different service opportunities.

Develop a volunteer leader application to capture important information about volunteers' interests, availability and skills.

Volunteer Leader Application

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This application should contain the following components:

- **Personal profile:** Gather the applicant's contact information. Keep this information on file to advise the applicant of upcoming volunteer opportunities even if he or she isn't selected as a volunteer leader at this time.
- **Volunteer history:** Capture information about applicant's history with your organization, as well as other volunteer experiences. This will give you an idea of his or her knowledge, skills and interests.
- **Interest survey:** Find out what the applicant is interested in doing with your organization. You can list specific projects or a variety of options such as projects with children, projects on the weekends or one-time projects. Be sure to ask why the applicant is interested in being a volunteer leader with your program and what time commitment he or she is willing to make.
- **Optional:** You may choose to ask for references, conduct background checks, or require other information on the application. Be prepared to explain to potential volunteers how this information will be used.

Make sure that your program has a privacy policy in effect to protect volunteers' personal information to the same degree as that of staff members. All staff should understand this policy and be able to explain it to volunteers if asked.

Recruiting Volunteer Leaders

Volunteer leaders need to understand how their service and leadership can impact the organization and the broader community. By offering meaningful leadership opportunities and utilizing an effective messaging strategy, you can recruit talented and dedicated volunteers to serve as volunteer leaders with your organization.

Recruiting Leaders

Recruiting volunteer leaders is very similar to recruiting other volunteers. Before you start recruiting individuals, develop a recruitment strategy.

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First, examine the volunteer leader positions to be filled. Ask yourself these questions:

- Who will be qualified for and interested in this position?
- Who will be able to meet the time commitments?
- Where will you find these people?
- What motivates them to serve?
- What is the best way to approach them?

Volunteer Leader Recruitment Worksheet

Then, think about how to target these potential volunteer leaders. Different messages will appeal to different audiences, so you will want to use a variety of recruitment methods. You can use targeted recruitment that is focused and addressed to a specific audience where people will have the skills, interests and availability needed to fill your positions. Since these volunteer positions involve greater responsibility and ownership, you will need to consider how to market the leadership opportunities and recruit people with the necessary leadership potential.

Here are just a few ways to recruit volunteers:

- The personal "ask" is always the most compelling!
- Post your volunteer opportunity on the web.
- Strategically post flyers or brochures in the community.
- Partner with volunteers from a school, corporation, community center, faith-based group or other nonprofit.
- Use local media (e.g., newspapers and radio) to spread the word about your volunteer opportunities.
- Network with community groups and leaders.
- Use online forums and/or blogs to spread the word.
- Host information booths at job fairs, colleges, churches, stores, restaurants or other gathering spots.
- Post your leadership opportunities on the web sites of local businesses and community organizations.
- Announce your opportunities in local "alternative" communications, such as independent newspapers or trade magazines.
- Advertise leadership positions on local public access television stations.

Best Practice

Remember that almost anyone can be a volunteer leader. People vary by age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, and income. Not all volunteers are the same and not all types of leadership will appeal to all people, so have diverse opportunities available and target recruitment in ways that will appeal to diverse individuals.

- Try "snowball" tactics. Challenge existing volunteer leaders to recruit three leaders to join the team!
- Develop a "perks" package, such as free meals, workouts or other goodies for outstanding leaders.

Tap into your own networks to help recruit volunteer leaders. Ask people you know—current volunteers, community partners, relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers. You can also use e-mail, letters and phone calls to build awareness among existing contacts.

If you are already actively recruiting volunteers, examine your current recruitment strategy, including printed and web-based recruitment materials.

- Do your current communications truly help people understand your leadership needs?
- Would the communications inspire you to get involved?
- Are the communications consistently attracting people to be more involved as volunteer leaders?

No matter which recruitment method you're using, use clear, fresh and engaging messages. Use a recruitment message that shows the need, how the volunteer can help and the impact that individuals can have on the issue. Keep the message short but meaningful, and don't be afraid to appeal to people's emotions and the things that motivate them to volunteer.

Selecting Leaders

Because volunteer leaders will have greater responsibility for planning and implementing the project, as well as managing other volunteers, it is important to place the right volunteer in the leadership position. You can use a volunteer leader application, as previously discussed, to capture important information about volunteers' interests, availability and skills.

Take time to screen the applications and then interview potential leaders if necessary. Get to know the volunteers so that you understand their skills and interests and can match them with the best project.

After screening applications and/or interviewing potential leaders, match volunteers with existing projects or work with them to develop new projects. Matching volunteers includes determining the interests and abilities of the potential leaders, determining their suitability for

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particular positions, and assessing their "rightness" for your organization and/or the agency where they will serve, its style of operation, and its mission. Matching volunteers is the process of matching the needs and interests of the volunteer with the needs and interests of the program.

During this process, make sure to fully discuss the responsibilities of the roles leaders will undertake. It is a good idea to have volunteer leaders sign an agreement to indicate their understanding and commitment.

During the screening and interviewing process, you may determine that some applicants aren't yet qualified to be volunteer leaders. However, you shouldn't turn them away. Keep them involved as volunteers and pair them with more experienced leaders until they have gained the skills necessary to serve as a volunteer leader.

Equipping
Volunteers to Lead

Once you have recruited and selected volunteer leaders, build on their interest and skills by further orienting them to your organization and leadership goals. Orientation doesn't always happen in a formal setting. Connecting people to the program's efforts can happen any time and place!

Volunteers may already possess strong leadership and project management skills. However, you should always make available additional training to help volunteer leaders develop these essential skills and meet the goals of the organization and project.

Preparing for Orientation and Training

Orientation and training for volunteer leaders should be more intensive than for other volunteers. Begin planning your orientation and training process by defining the desired outcomes. What should volunteer leaders know and be able to do after the orientation and training?

You can use a variety of training methods (e.g., informal gatherings, one-on-one meetings, formal classes, web-based training, printed manuals) and tie the method to the outcomes you seek. Whatever method you use, remember some basic principles of adult learning.

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There are three types of learning. *Knowledge* learning includes acquiring information or data. *Skill* learning is acquiring abilities to perform tasks. *Behavioral* learning is acquiring information that influences one's values or emotional responses.

Training leads to learning when it:

- **Is self-directed:** People are more motivated when they share responsibility for defining their needs.
- **Fills an immediate need:** Motivation to learn is highest when it meets the immediate needs of the learner.
- **Is experiential:** Participation in the learning process is active, not passive. The most effective learning is from shared experience.
- **Is reflective:** Maximum learning occurs when a person takes the time to reflect back upon an experience, draw conclusions and derive principles for application to similar experiences in the future.
- **Acknowledges and builds upon the learner's prior experiences and skills:** A person who feels confident about what he already knows will be more open to new learning as well.

People generally remember:
10 percent of what they hear
30 percent of what they see
50 percent of what they hear and see
70 percent of what they say or write
90 percent of what they say as they do something
Adapted from Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience.

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People generally are able to apply in practice:
10 percent of what was presented to them
10 percent of what was modeled for them
15 percent of what they had the opportunity to practice with feedback
80 percent of what they are receiving on-going training to do
Adapted from the work of Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers.

Orienting and Training Volunteers

Whether you are facilitating classes for several volunteer leaders, developing online training or meeting with leaders one on one, your orientation and training should include these basic components:

1. Help volunteers better understand your organization and/or the organization where they will be serving. Some areas to highlight during orientations may include:
   a. **Mission:** Overall purpose of the organization
   b. **Vision:** How the organization carries out its operations
   c. **Values:** The organization's core priorities or beliefs—why its mission and vision are important
2. Highlight the basic ingredients of your civic engagement philosophy. Here is one example:
   a. **Starting points:** We make it simple for people to get involved, make a difference and become effective volunteers. Our projects meet a variety of volunteer interests, skills and availabilities.
   b. **Leadership development:** We equip volunteers to lead others, creating enormous capacity and unleashing powerful civic change.
   c. **Meaningful experiences:** We partner with local organizations and schools to create service projects that are fun, well managed and produce tangible benefits in communities.
   d. **Joining together:** We inspire people to come together to address community needs, creating camaraderie and momentum for continued action.

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e. **Paths to greater participation:** We help people transform their direct service into sustained civic action. For example, volunteers who tutor children will be introduced to other ways they can impact their communities, such as attending school meetings or running for an elected position.
3. Discuss ways volunteers can impact the community, as well as the benefits to the volunteers.
4. Ensure leaders understand the importance of their roles in developing and managing projects. Consider developing a project checklist or timeline to help them clearly understand and manage their roles. Some of the tasks might include the following:

Before the Project

- Making site visits and building relationships with the agency or other project partners
- Identifying project tasks
- Identifying service learning opportunities, such as orientation by project partners, ways for volunteers to get involved beyond the project, etc.
- Developing safety and contingency plans
- Creating project supply lists
- Recruiting volunteers, ensuring that any specialized tasks are covered
- Responding to inquiries from volunteers and project partners
- Securing tools, materials, refreshments and other supplies

Day of the Project

- Orienting volunteers
- Assigning volunteers to project tasks
- Managing volunteers and tasks
- Facilitating service learning during project

After the Project

- Evaluating impact
- Overseeing project site clean up
- Returning tools and materials
- Following up with volunteers and project partners

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5. Depending on the volunteer leader's responsibilities and the nature of their projects (whether their projects are new or ongoing), you may also want to provide a document for conducting site visits/developing work plans. This can help them prepare for their projects, develop appropriate tasks and build relationships with agency and project partners.
6. If your organization has any reporting requirements related to volunteer engagement and projects, ensure volunteer leaders understand the procedures and their role in reporting.

Training to Develop and Lead Projects

Depending on the leadership roles and the volunteers' experience, you may want to dedicate significant time to training related to planning and leading service projects.

- Reinforce the importance of careful and thorough planning.
    o Assess community needs, and work with community partners to identify potential projects.
    o Select the project that best matches the organization's and volunteers' interests and capacity.
    o Consider what you want to accomplish and the tasks needed; then, create a comprehensive list of the assignments and the number of volunteers needed for each task. Prioritize tasks if needed.
    o Identify the materials, supplies and other resources needed for each task.
    o Finalize the project plan, ensuring that you've taken care of the small details that can make or break a project, such as food and beverage, project signage, trash containers and restroom facilities.

- Encourage volunteer leaders to prepare for the worst, reminding them that unexpected circumstances can befall even the best-planned projects.

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As you challenge volunteer leaders to consider the worst, have them develop a list of things that could go wrong and brainstorm potential solutions:

What happens if . . .	
There aren't enough volunteers.	Prioritize tasks, reassign volunteers.
There aren't enough materials.	Prioritize tasks, make a "supply run" to purchase more.
Time's up, but tasks aren't completed.	Recruit people to stay, find a stopping point, schedule another service day.
It rains during an outdoor project.	Reschedule the project, identify indoor tasks at the same location.
Volunteers finish early.	Send them home, assign them to additional tasks.
Youth volunteers show up.	Get parental consent (waivers) and assign them to age-appropriate tasks.
The agency partner doesn't show up.	Determine if the project can/should still happen and continue or reschedule.

- Explain the basics of service learning. Reinforce that it:
  o Is a teaching strategy that helps volunteers learn, serve and impact social issues.
  o Provides structured time to think, talk and/or write about service and the issues being impacted.
  o Emphasizes tangible "next steps" or ways to further impact social issues.

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- Help volunteer leaders identify specific opportunities for service learning during their projects:

Project Orientation	• Specific tasks to be accomplished • Project's impact on the issue(s) being addressed • Unique circumstances—past successes, challenges, impacts, etc.
Issue Education	• Description or background of the issue • Basic facts and figures—community data, local/national statistics, etc.
Organization (Service Site) Orientation	• Profile of the organization and other partners—missions, values, etc. • Impact of the volunteer on the organization

- Highlight some ways to facilitate service learning during the project. Some examples include:
  - **Break-time learning:** Learning and dialogue during lunch or other project breaks
  - **Information stations:** Facts and figures posted throughout the project site (walls, tables, etc.)
  - **Reflection boards:** Poster boards with a reflective question that volunteers can answer throughout the project and that can be discussed during breaks or the project's wrap up
- Review what should happen during the project.
  - Arrive early enough to do a "run through" with the agency or project partner
  - Register volunteers, obtain waiver forms
  - Orient volunteers and assign them to specific tasks
  - Manage and make any needed adjustments.
  - Keep volunteers motivated and engaged
  - Facilitate service learning throughout the project
  - Track impact by collecting stories and photographs, document incidents, etc.
  - Complete project tasks (or find a good stopping point) and clean up
  - Gather volunteers for recognition, reflection and evaluation
  - Distribute and collect project evaluation forms
  - Remind volunteer leaders not to do everything; the goal is to engage others to lead tasks!

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- Review how volunteer leaders should evaluate their projects (collect surveys, photos, stories, etc.).
- Highlight the importance of keeping volunteers motivated to stay involved with the organization. Encourage volunteer leaders to adopt some ways to celebrate the efforts of other volunteers:
  - Give "shout outs" to outstanding volunteers during the actual project.
  - Send thank-you e-mails, cards or letters; consider including "before" and "after" photos.
  - Invite volunteers to future projects.
  - Invite volunteers to become volunteer leaders.
  - Nominate outstanding volunteers for recognition through other programs.
  - Submit volunteer stories and pictures for the organization's newsletters and local newspapers.
  - Give volunteers small tokens of appreciation.
  - Create memory books with photos, stories and reflections.

Training to Develop Project Resources

Volunteer leaders may also be tasked to develop the resources needed for their projects. These resources may include tools and materials, skilled volunteer help, or funding.

1. Explain that resource mapping (or asset mapping) is a process of identifying what's valuable in the community and mobilizing those resources to support projects.

2. Highlight the types of resources that exist in every community:

Individuals	People and their time and energy are vital resources. By working with others, you can benefit from a multitude of relationships, experience, resources and skills. Examples: Relatives, friends, neighborhoods, coworkers, associates, etc.
Associations	Associations are groups of people who share common interests and come together to solve problems. Associations are often less formal, are less dependent on paid staff and have less structure (and bureaucracy). Examples: Neighborhood associations, walking clubs, mediation groups, professional organizations, fraternities or sororities, etc.
Institutions	Institutions are formal organizations of people who are usually paid for their work. Institutions often have more structure and bureaucracy, but are often the most visible and formal parts of a community. Examples: Schools, businesses, government agencies, nonprofits, news stations, newspapers, etc.
Corporations	Corporations often fund, host, sponsor and/or provide volunteers for service throughout nearby communities.
Money/ In-kind Donations	There are several foundations, charitable organizations, corporations, governmental entities, individuals and nonprofit organizations that provide financial support, products or services for community-based projects.
Physical Space	Land, buildings and other spaces are also important resources that can support projects and programs. Examples: Parks, shopping malls, corner stores, libraries, etc.

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3. Explain that tapping into these resources is an important step toward developing a good project. Highlight some specific benefits of resource mapping:
    a. **Focus on strengths:** Be less concerned about "problems" and more focused on what's positive and productive in the community.
    b. **Focus on solutions:** Be less concerned about "needs" and more focused on what's working and helpful in the community.
    c. **Focus on collaboration:** Be less concerned about people working "in their own little corners" and more focused on connecting and sharing ideas, skills, goods, services and other resources.
    d. **Focus on civic growth:** Be less concerned about "serving clients" and more focused on building community awareness, participation, responsibility and commitment.
4. Review the steps involved in developing resources to support projects:
    a. **Spell out what's needed:** What materials, skills, funding or other things are needed?
    b. **Identify where the resources exist:** What people, associations, etc., have what's needed?
    c. **Spell out "the ask":** How will those people, associations, etc., be approached? Why should they help?
    d. **Make the ask; respond accordingly:** How will positive responses (and rejections) be handled?

Training to Recruit and Lead Other Volunteers

Volunteer leaders may also be responsible for recruiting and leading other volunteers to support their projects.

- Develop a template to help volunteer leaders easily draft project listings. Be sure to include:
    o **Heading:** Include the project name, date, time and location.
    o **Pitch (message):** Include a brief, catchy call for support.
    o **Description:** Briefly describe the tasks volunteers will complete.
    o **Special skills:** Describe any leadership or special skills needed.
    o **Registration:** Describe how volunteers should enroll for the project.
    o **Schedule:** Include a brief timeline for key project activities.

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- o **Notes:** Describe what clothing is appropriate, bad weather plans and instructions for youth volunteers.
- o **Directions:** Include directions to the project from key routes.
- o **Background:** Include details about the organization, its mission and contact information. Depending on whom you're trying to reach, you might also include background on the missions of your organization and its project partners. This may not be necessary if potential volunteers are already familiar with your work.
- Once project listings have been drafted, encourage volunteer leaders to circulate them through their networks and other local communications channels.
- Coach volunteer leaders to use the same protocols you used to recruit them:
  - o Encourage them to help volunteers better understand the organization's mission, vision and values.
  - o Have them highlight the basic ingredients of your organization and its civic engagement philosophy (i.e., starting points, leadership development, meaningful experiences, joining together and paths to greater participation).
  - o Ask them to highlight ways volunteers can use their service and leadership to impact the community.
- Instruct volunteers on how to enroll other volunteers, equipping them with any necessary waiver forms.

Leaders may benefit from these basic points of volunteer management:

Volunteer Recruitment

- Understand what motivates volunteers to serve. Many people serve simply because they are asked!
- Understand your program's history, culture and cause.
- Determine your volunteer needs.
- Create volunteer position descriptions.
- Design a recruitment strategy, including your target audience and methods for reaching and recruiting them.
- Work with volunteers' schedules, and offer a variety of projects to appeal to volunteers' interests and availability.

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Volunteer Retention

- Motivate volunteers before the project by maintaining good communication, discussing the issue and keeping commitments.
- Engage volunteers during the project with orientation and training, making sure everyone has a task to do, and balancing different personalities.
- Use reflection activities to help volunteers understand their service, what they learned from it, and next steps they can take.

Volunteer Recognition

- Recognize volunteers so they will feel their contribution is valued and appreciated.
- Use a variety of recognition methods and tailor recognition to individual volunteers.
- Utilize a combination of formal and informal recognition.
- Remember some simple rules of recognition, including:
  o Give it frequently.
  o Give it honestly.
  o Give it to the person, not the work.
  o Give it appropriately to the achievement.
  o Give it on a timely basis.

Supporting Volunteer Leaders

In addition to thorough orientation and training, you will want to support your volunteer leaders as they plan and implement projects in the community. You can help leaders cultivate their skills, tackle problems, manage project details, and understand the impact of their efforts. By working in partnership with your staff, volunteer leaders are much more likely to achieve the project goals. This section will provide practical ideas for mentoring, working with, and recognizing volunteer leaders.

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Coaching and Mentoring Leaders

It is important to maintain a personal connection with volunteer leaders. After orientation and training, you will still want to coach and mentor the leaders to help individuals grow their thinking and capacity to lead.

Your goal is to help leaders develop their thinking and capacity. Provide clear guidelines, due dates, reminders and clarification of requirements.

More importantly, know your leaders' strengths, as well as the areas that need more development, so that you can better help them develop their skills. Make sure they *own* the project. If you foster their development as you do for staff, your program is more likely to retain a strong and growing body of committed, qualified volunteer leaders.

Decide if you want to support volunteer leaders formally or informally. Formal support can include regular, scheduled meetings; task-specific training; or volunteer committees. Informal support occurs as it is needed rather than at scheduled times and can include calls or e-mails to check in with leaders and see how their projects are progressing. Provide opportunities for volunteer leaders to share best practices and learn from each other, such as casual gatherings at a coffee house or online discussion groups.

Coaching

Coaching is the informal support that happens through ongoing conversation and collaboration. Coaching can happen before a challenging event, in the midst of action, after a triumph or defeat, or during a pause between assignments.

The key elements of successful coaching include the following:

- A trusting, honest, respectful relationship between the coach and coachee.
- Time for preparation and reflection.
- Clearly defined roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Effective listening skills.
- Strategic questions that promote thinking.
- Data collection and thoughtful feedback.

Active listening is an important part of coaching. To be an active listener, remember these tips:

- Be calm and patient.

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- Don't assume you understand what the speaker thinks and feels.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Summarize or paraphrase what you are hearing.
- Don't be designing what you're going to say while the other person is talking.
- Don't try to be a great problem-solver by advising.

Coaching questions are used to help people clarify and develop their thinking. Below are some examples of helpful coaching questions:

- What do you hope to accomplish?
- How did it go?
- What happened?
- What did you think?
- What worked?
- Why?
- How do you know?
- What would you like to do differently next time?

Leadership Diversity Activity

Delegating to Leaders

Through orientation and continuing support, you are preparing volunteer leaders to take greater responsibility and truly own their projects. However, you should continue to work *with* the leader to accomplish the project goals. Delegating tasks to volunteers requires careful preparation. When delegating tasks, consider the following:

- Give assignments in terms of results, not just activities or tasks.
    o To accomplish something, volunteer leaders need a sense of what they are trying to achieve. Therefore, define jobs as something to accomplish (e.g., raise $500), rather than as something to do (e.g., write a grant proposal).
    o Explain as precisely as possible what they are to do.
    o Explain the importance of the particular task.
    o Show them you have confidence in their abilities to carry out the task. Be more interested in results than in how it is done.
    o Be certain that the people you choose are capable of doing the assignment and have the necessary knowledge and training to do it.
- Define the level of control. Tell volunteer leaders how much authority they have in making decisions.

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- o Let people know before they start who will be responsible for making decisions.
- o When appropriate, delegate authority to make decisions along with the responsibility for carrying out the task.
- Communicate any guidelines and parameters that must shape their decisions.
  - o Be specific about deadlines.
  - o Help set priorities.
- Make resources available and offer the assistance necessary to accomplish the task.
  - o Be aware of the types of support leaders might need and the type of support you can provide.
  - o Make sure there is proper access to tools and resources to get the job done.
- Determine criteria for success and agree on how results will be judged.
  - o To be satisfied about their work, volunteer leaders need to get feedback that indicates the degree of success they are having. Before the project, determine criteria for success and how it will be evaluated.
- Establish reporting points along the way.
  - o Setting times to check in with volunteer leaders provides the opportunity to meet and discuss progress and helps you avoid those meetings that occur only when things aren't going well.
  - o Giving leaders your undivided attention at regularly scheduled meetings lets them know that you care about the work they're doing and how it is accomplished.

Recognizing Leaders

Recognition makes volunteers feel appreciated and valued. If volunteer leaders don't feel like their contributions are valuable or necessary, they won't return. Volunteer recognition can take many forms, from a simple thank-you card to a large annual event. An ideal recognition system makes use of many different procedures, to have something for every volunteer and to keep it personal and meaningful.

Informal Versus Formal Recognition

Informal, day-to-day recognition is the most effective because it is much more frequent than a once-a-year banquet, and helps to establish

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good working relationships. See below for ideas on everyday ways to recognize volunteers.

Formal recognition includes awards, certificates, plaques, pins and recognition dinners or receptions to honor volunteer achievements. They satisfy the needs of the volunteer who seeks community approval, but have little impact (or occasionally a negative impact) on volunteers whose primary focus is helping the clientele. These volunteers may feel more motivated and honored by a system that recognizes the achievements of their clients and the contribution the volunteer has made toward this achievement.

When determining whether to establish a formal recognition, consider the following:

- Is this being done to honor the volunteer, or so the staff can feel involved and that they have shown appreciation for volunteers?
- Is it real and not stale or mechanical?
- Does it fit? Would the volunteers feel better if you spent the money on the clients rather than on an obligatory luncheon?
- Can you make it a sense of celebration and builder of team identity?

Volunteer recognition does not have to cost a lot, and there are many alternatives to the annual recognition banquet. Use your imagination and think outside the box to come up with fun, inexpensive ideas that are fun for volunteers.

Recognition Ideas

Here are some easy, everyday ways to recognize volunteers:

- Send thank you letters/messages via e-mail.
- Send postcards or thank-you cards to volunteers after they attend a project.
- Send birthday cards.
- Submit pictures of volunteers for your organization's newsletter.
- Post pictures of volunteers on a bulletin board at your organization.
- Give volunteers organizational goodies—hats, shirts, pins, magnets, water bottles, etc.
- Invite them for coffee or lunch.

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Volunteers as Leaders

Below are some more involved, intermediate recognition ideas:

- Nominate a volunteer "Star of the Month." Award the recipient with a certificate, letter or small gift.
- Sponsor happy hours and social events. Encourage volunteers to meet each other.
- Recognize volunteers on local radio or television stations.
- Invite volunteers to serve as volunteer leaders or committee members.
- Give gift certificates to museums, movies, restaurants, etc. Solicit your community for donations!
- Nominate volunteers for local or national volunteerism awards.
- Write articles about them in newsletters or newspapers.
- Write a letter to their employers, highlighting the accomplishments of the volunteers. Be sure to find out if the volunteer would appreciate this before writing the letter!
- Celebrate major accomplishments.
- Recognize anniversaries with your organization.
- Sponsor their attendance at trainings, workshops, seminars, etc.
- Give them additional responsibilities.
- Create a photo collage or slide show of volunteer activities.

Try these large-scale means of recognition:

- Hold annual recognition events: a dinner, a breakfast, an awards ceremony/celebration, a picnic/potluck, theme party, etc.
- Recognize long-term volunteers with service awards: plaques, trophies, certificates, etc.
- Give additional responsibilities and new titles.
- Put up a banner celebrating major accomplishments.
- Enlist them in training staff and other volunteers.
- Involve them in the annual planning process.
- Make a donation to the organization of a volunteer's choice in his or her name.
- Organize an outing at a zoo, amusement park, sporting event, etc., where volunteers get in for free.

Volunteer Leader Needs Assessment Worksheet

Developing a volunteer leadership framework begins by identifying your program needs. As you define your volunteer engagement goals and objectives, consider your current program, how you want to expand your work, and how you can utilize volunteers in leadership positions. Take a few minutes to think about these questions:

What are the goals of our organization/program?

Are we able to meet these goals with our current staff capacity? Why or why not?

How do we want to expand the work we do currently?

What types of volunteer projects do we want to undertake?

How can volunteer leaders help us enhance our current work, take on new projects, and accomplish our goals?

What specific needs do we have that volunteer leaders can fulfill?

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Volunteers as Leaders

It is important to define clear goals and objectives for your volunteer leadership program. Equally important, your organization must have the capacity (i.e., supervision, space) to support volunteer leaders. Conducting a needs analysis will help you determine where leaders can be used productively.

Organizational Need	Tasks	Support Needed

Volunteers as Leaders

Once you have identified your major needs, answer these questions. Explain the reasoning behind your responses as much as possible.

Is the need genuine or contrived?

_____

_____

Can we give the volunteer leader ownership of the project?

_____

_____

Can we provide the essential support?

_____

_____

Will the benefits be worth the work of training and supporting the volunteer leader?

_____

_____

Would a volunteer want to perform the task(s)?

_____

_____

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Volunteer Position Description Worksheet

Use this worksheet to outline responsibilities, support, and benefits of specific volunteer opportunities. Remember to be as detailed as possible and use clear language – no jargon or acronyms that new volunteers may not understand.

Title: _____

Purpose/objective: _____

_____

Location: _____

Key
responsibilities: _____

_____

_____

_____

Qualifications: _____

_____

_____

Time commitment: _____

Training/support
provided: _____

_____

_____

Benefits: _____

_____

_____

Supervisor: _____

Phone: _____

e-mail: _____

Program website: _____

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Volunteer Leader Application

A volunteer leader is a volunteer who:
- Takes charge of a project by coordinating it and taking accountability for its successful completion
- Communicates the details of the project and serves as a resource for other volunteers
- Organizes, leads, and inspires a group of volunteers before, during, and after the project
- May initiate new projects
- Represents our program to other volunteers and to the community

If you are interested in becoming a project leader with our program, please complete this application and return it to:

Personal Profile

Name:

Address

Daytime Phone: Evening Phone:

e-mail

Volunteer History

Have you volunteered with our organization before? If so, please give a brief description of your involvement. Be sure to include leadership experience, if any.

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Briefly describe volunteer experiences you have had with other organizations.

_____

_____

On average, how many hours a week do
you volunteer?

_____

Interest Survey

Why are you interested in being a volunteer leader with our program?

_____

_____

What types of volunteer activities interest you?

_____

_____

What skills do you have to offer as a volunteer leader?

_____

_____

What time commitment are you able and willing to make for this position?

_____

_____

Volunteer Leader Recruitment Worksheet

Use this worksheet to help you plan your strategy for recruiting volunteers for your leadership opportunities.

Describe one need for volunteer leaders in your organization/program:

_____

_____

Give a detailed description of the ideal person to fill this position (e.g., age, expert in a specific field, experienced volunteer leader, proficient in sign language, etc.):

_____

_____

List 5 staff members or current volunteers in your organization who might serve as volunteer leaders, who could give you leads on sources for volunteer leaders, or who could provide recommendations about strong candidates for this position.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

List 5 individuals in your community who can give you additional leads, sources for volunteer leaders, or recommendations about strong candidates for this position.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

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5. _____

List 5 possible sources for locating these volunteer leaders.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Why <u>would</u> someone want to be a volunteer leader for this project?

_____

_____

Why <u>wouldn't</u> someone want to be a volunteer leader for this project?

_____

_____

How can you make this position more attractive or feasible?

_____

_____

What incentives are being provided to volunteer leaders by other organizations in your area?

_____

_____

Why would someone want to volunteer with your organization rather than another organization in your area?

_____

_____

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Who, besides you, would be effective in asking people to serve as volunteer leaders with your organization?

_____

_____

What specific methods can you use to recruit volunteers for this leadership role?

_____

_____

Leadership Diversity Activity

Each volunteer leader needs individualized support, mentoring, and coaching. Listed below are some examples of ways your organization might engage volunteer leaders. Consider the support that volunteer leaders in these situations might require. How can you support these leaders?

Long-term Projects	Short-term Projects

Family-friendly Projects	Projects Serving Youth

Projects Serving the Elderly	Large-scale Days of Service

Now, think about the unique skills, knowledge, and abilities that each volunteer leader brings to your program. Listed below are a few examples of people who might serve as volunteer leaders. Brainstorm ways to build capacity and foster the skills that each leader brings.

Youth	Seniors

College Students	People Living with Disabilities

Stay-at-home Parents	First-time Volunteer Leaders

Corporate Volunteers	Virtual Volunteers