

Recruiting Volunteers

Broadcast volunteer opportunities

- Send out a volunteer survey or request with your newsletter
- Publicity: use statements and information that will catch the eyes of potential volunteers. Let people know about opportunities by using a variety of tactics: websites, local newspapers, flyers, schools, businesses, etc.
- Talk to friends, acquaintances, anyone visiting the library. Let everyone know the wonderful events, projects, and programs your Friends group organizes and/or runs.
- Let everyone know about rewards for participating. Let them know what they will gain from their experience with group.

Recruiting at an event or project.

- Show others how much fun you are having!
- Let others know your impact on the community. If someone notices how much you are helping your community, they may think your cause is a worthy one and want to help out.

Present Volunteering as an Opportunity

Some individuals who are thinking about volunteering are looking for job experience. If the

volunteer has done a good job, offer them a letter of reference, or your contact information for a reference. Students can use these to accompany their resume.

The Corporate Connection

Another way to enlist professionals as volunteers is to partner with a local business that has a workplace volunteer program as part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative. The focus on CSR is growing, and businesses -- from large multinational corporations to small local enterprises -- are establishing programs that encourage employees to volunteer through the workplace. Finding and partnering with a business that has, or is interested in developing, such a program is a smart strategic move that could provide your organization with volunteer support and possibly much more.

Ask, ask and ask again

Be specific about the task you have in mind for them to do.

Ask everyone you think would make a good volunteer; take advantage of every opportunity to recruit new volunteers.

Often the conversation starts with talking about what book someone is reading or might be interested in reading.

Know the skills your volunteers possess and how they can be used. Also, know what skills are lacking in your group so you know what you are looking for.

Communicate a Clear Commitment

Ensure tasks, responsibility, deadlines, assistance and time commitment are specific and clear (clear beginning and clear ending, if possible). If there are specific qualifications required, these should be communicated to the individual. Resources provided (human and/or financial reimbursements) should be clear.

After the Volunteer has made a Commitment

Training/Orientation

Ensure new volunteers are welcomed.

Training should be task specific. Make sure the volunteer knows how their contribution fits in to the big picture.

Have volunteers train other volunteers, especially for succession planning.

Including new volunteers in activities and events will empower them and make them feel more interested in the project.

Empower your volunteers

During training, tell the volunteer what your group is all about and what you hope to achieve. They will better understand how they can contribute, that their expertise is needed, and that their contribution will be important to the success of your group. Make sure everyone has a chance to contribute.

Communicate and Encourage Feedback

Sometimes the original volunteer task will need to be modified, broken down and redistributed among other volunteers.

If a volunteer seems to be getting bored with the same tasks, be willing to find out if there is some other task they would like to help out with; otherwise, they may decide to leave.

If the volunteer would be happier doing things differently, let them.

Utilize the Volunteer's Skills

Utilize the volunteer's skills. Ideally you should allow volunteers with career skills to spend more time utilizing those skills and less time performing mundane tasks. Volunteers who have a meaningful and satisfying experience will feel more committed.

Respect the Volunteer's Time

Donating time is more important than donating money!

Remember that everyone has other commitments. If you have a skilled volunteer who is still working, try to arrange volunteer scheduling to accommodate that person.

Thank the volunteer verbally often enough that they feel truly appreciated.

Avoiding Burn Out

Make sure tasks are manageable and that there are enough people to help out when required.

Help the volunteer acquire new skills so tasks can be accomplished more efficiently.