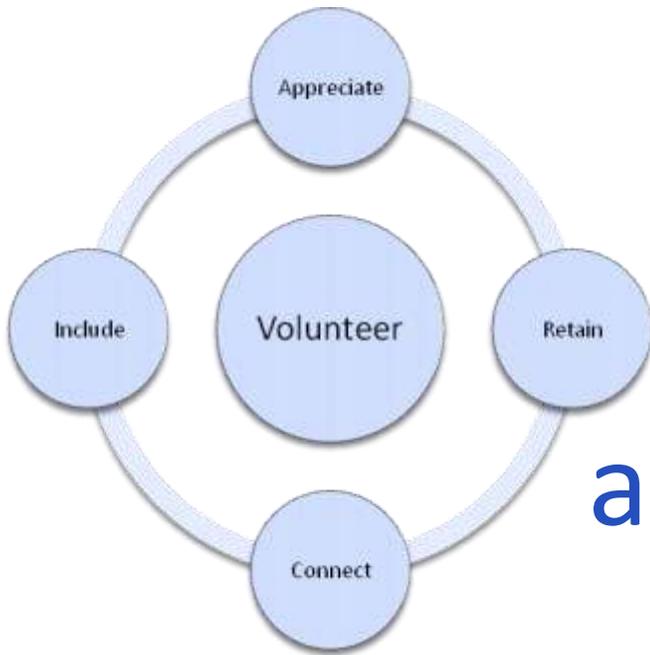


VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT COMPONENTS



Recognition and Retention

KEY POINTS *(Click here to go back to Table of Contents)*

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- Equip, respect and keep volunteers [47-48](#)
- Opportunities for development [49-50](#)
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ENSURING VOLUNTEERS FEEL VALUED

Match the volunteer with the appropriate recognition.

Keeping in mind McClelland's Social Motivators (see page [32](#)), the way you recognize volunteers can vary wildly. With a luncheon, a newspaper article, a college recommendation or just a smile, recognition is a vital and constant part of volunteer management (see [Recognition and a Retention Strategy](#): 101 ways Montanans can recognize volunteers, in the Appendix).

- Volunteers may be genuinely touched by offering to serve as a job reference, write letters of recommendation or if you nominate great volunteers for local, state and national awards.
- Don't hesitate to send a press release extoling the achievements and dedication of the volunteers who go the extra mile for your agency or the community at-large. Families or corporate volunteer groups appreciate the media attention as well, and makes for positive stories
- Recognize youth as a group, not individually. Many teens don't like the spotlight, and feel more comfortable in groups.
 - Alternative to the volunteer luncheon: Build/rent a float in the next community parade and invite them to ride with big banners announcing who they are (make sure it has loud, very loud music).
- Youth (and adults, too) may also appreciate time you invest in researching and assisting with scholarship applications. Maybe as a volunteer recognition, your agency could lead or host a scholarship workshop or seminar. Maybe ask representatives from the financial department of a community college, university or a guidance counselor to give up-to-date information on FAFSA, Work Study, Pell Grants, terminology and timelines.

EQUIP, RESPECT, AND KEEP VOLUNTEERS

Retention tips:

- Have light snacks and beverages on hand; it is inexpensive and may mean the difference between cranky and happy volunteers.
- If job responsibilities differ, even slightly each day, be sure to have someone on hand who can instruct the volunteer on where they are needed and what they will be doing; no one wants to wander around, looking for someone to tell them what to do.
- Give volunteers a “space” where they can always put their personal belongings when they come to your agency or just want to take a break from their task; this gives them a sense of ownership and belonging.
- Always be accessible; this may mean giving the volunteer in charge of a project a mobile phone number where you can be reached, or a back-up staff person who would be able to answer any questions they may have.
- Let staff and other volunteers know when a new volunteer will be arriving, what his/her name is, and what general tasks they will be performing; this way the new recruit will not feel “out of place” and intimidated by other staff members and (perhaps territorial) veteran volunteers.
- Check in with volunteers regularly; especially when tasked with something new, like taking on more responsibilities from a retiring volunteer, or dealing with a new fax machine or office software.

Retention tips (continued):

- Keep a record of volunteers' individual hours and calculate the "financial contribution" of volunteers to the agency. Take the number of hours and times it by *\$21.36 to get the dollar figure. (* Independent Sector: http://independentsector.org/volunteer_time) This number may be used as "in-kind" matches for some grants. Good for you in fundraising, good also as volunteer recognition. Volunteers feel pride in seeing the numbers.
- Volunteers deserve the assurance that what they are doing is important, needed, and valued; let them know that without their help the agency would never have been able to "insert appropriate sentiment."
- Get to know volunteers personally, inquire about their outside hobbies, and become a friend to them, whenever possible.
- Always create new challenges and responsibilities for volunteers; this will keep their motivation and interest levels high.
- Involve volunteers in the decision making process, even if access to policy making decisions is beyond your power to give. Let volunteers have input on anything you can, from what type of soda should be in the vending machine to what next month's newsletter should include.
- Work with volunteers knowing how valuable they can be as advocates for your agency in the community; each individual reaches a different and diverse group of friends, who may one day be in a position to make powerful decisions and contribute to non-profits (like yours) financially.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Provide professional and personal opportunities to develop through trainings your agency can provide.

Maybe you do not have “hiring a high profile speaker” as a line item in your volunteer budget. Don’t fret – ask around, and you can get a variety of local speakers from Public Safety, the business sector and from local schools to come offer volunteers access to training in a variety of topics (often helping those community agencies fulfill their own outreach requirements and paving the way for future collaborations).

It doesn’t have to be a formal lecture or certification. Offering First Time Home Buying, Becoming a Master Gardener, or How to Clog seminars or meetings are just as easily (and legitimately) arranged as providing access to disaster certifications, Resume Development Workshops, or Toastmaster training.

Providing new, optional chances to learn something different, as a change from the norm is a great way to recognize and retain loyal volunteers.

If you and/or your staff have the ability to train in a topic, even better! Maybe surveying staff – and volunteers – about what they could teach, and what they would like to learn, would be a rewarding exercise for everyone. These opportunities are a great way to deepen community awareness and get to know one another.

What if your project requires pre or ongoing training to provide the skills the volunteers need to succeed and complete the objectives? This can also be a retention tool, as it shows that you are willing to invest in and trust your volunteers with more responsibility and status.

Also, young volunteers can gain résumé building skills through volunteering.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

Here are some more formal guidelines for training volunteers.

1. Four steps in training volunteers

Step One: Identify Training Needs

Step Two: Design Training

Step Three: Deliver Training

Step Four: Assess and Refine Training

2. Identify and define 3 types of learning

- a. Knowledge information
- b. Skills ability to perform a set of tasks
- c. Attitudes the way a person feels about or sees a topic

3. Identify four principles of effective volunteer training design

Principle One: Build on participants' experience

Principle Two: Make training experience interactive

Principle Three: Communicate key lessons through visual, auditory and experiential modes

Principle Four: Apply learning

4. Ways to evaluate the effectiveness of training.

Written participant evaluation

Reflection exercise at the end of training

Participant check-in interviews

Participant performance in position

KEEP THEM BUSY

Protect volunteers from burnout, but keep them busy

1. **If a volunteer begins to stagnate, let them know that there are options.**
 - There is always more work to be done in your office, for your mission or in the community at-large. Let people rotate out of positions they no longer enjoy. Find out what they would like to do instead.
2. **Explain why or how the job they are doing is necessary and important.**
 - Always look to create interest and belief in what you have your volunteers doing. They are giving up their time, so make sure they know that what they are doing counts!
3. **Find or create opportunities that are fun or unexpected.**
 - For example, organize a community scavenger hunt for residents to raise awareness about local agencies and what they offer – and send teams of volunteers out to interview and tour a variety of not-for-profits in town, in preparation. Or do something spontaneous, like announce that there will be a group hike up a local mountain, and/or a BBQ, and ask volunteers to assist in the planning, marketing and logistics, as a break from their regular work. Ask volunteers to organize a food pantry drive for a local partner. Challenge and include volunteers to keep them vested and interested.
4. **Always, always, convey your respect and appreciation.**
 - Repeated many times in this toolkit, as a volunteer manager, it can't be stressed enough that retention comes down to you making certain that your volunteers feel satisfied, fulfilled, useful, and valued.