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Keep America Beautiful 2023 Volunteer Guide



KEEP AMERICA
BEAUTIFUL

INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our work. Inspiring, recruiting, and managing volunteers effectively builds a friend, donor, and champion for our mission and for the future. This guide will help you provide a pleasant and satisfying experience that will keep your volunteers engaged and eager to donate time to your organization for years to come.

Special efforts should be made to be as inclusive as possible and ensure that the volunteer pool reflects the diversity of the community being served.

Volunteer recruitment for Keep America Beautiful is led by our guiding principles.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Keep America Beautiful (KAB) and its network of affiliates and KAB Grantees will strive, to the extent possible, to ensure a Keep America Beautiful volunteer experience where an individual:

1. Will be welcomed to participate regardless of life experiences and abilities, learning and working style, personality type, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, or cultural, political, or religious affiliation as long as that affiliation is inclusive as described in this paragraph
2. Will be greeted and introduced to staff and fellow volunteers
3. Receives specific instructions, training, and resources needed to complete assigned task(s) including safety training, if necessary
4. Will be treated with respect
5. Will be kept safe from harm, including any form of harassment from staff, fellow volunteers, or contractors
6. Has an opportunity to work with a diverse and inclusive group of staff and volunteers
7. Has their opinions heard, respected, and valued
8. Receives timely communications, including:
 - a. Notice of volunteer opportunities
 - b. Confirmation of pledge and commitment to volunteer
 - c. Advanced notice of location, time, and what to bring/wear and any updates
 - d. Information about the volunteer event's goals, tasks, working conditions, and time commitment
 - e. A thank you for their service and a report of the event's impact
9. Knows that their personal information will NOT be shared outside of the Keep America Beautiful network and will not be used for any purpose without consent
10. Will be part of a fun, rewarding experience that benefits their community

TYPES OF RECRUITMENT

General Volunteer Recruitment

General volunteer recruitment is the first type of recruitment process. It is when you are trying to recruit for a volunteer position that can be done by most people, either because no specific skills are required or because most can be taught the necessary skills in a limited amount of time.

General volunteer recruitment consists of spreading the message about the potential volunteer position to as broad an audience as possible. The idea is that somewhere among this audience will be those who find this position interesting. The primary methods used are:

- Social media and digital advertising
- Public service announcements on television or radio, or advertisements in local papers
- Speaking to community groups.

This method only has one disadvantage: it works. This may seem strange, but the difficulty lies in that it will effectively recruit people if you distribute enough information, but it will do so in a way that gives the volunteer manager control over neither quantity nor quality. This type of campaign will bring in potential volunteers, but you will not be able to predict their numbers or their capabilities. It will be your job to make things fit well together, sort through the possible volunteers and, potentially, run the campaign several times.

Word-of-Mouth Recruitment

Word-of-mouth recruitment works off the simple theory that those people already connected to you and your organization are the best targets for a recruitment campaign.

For word-of-mouth recruitment, attempt to locate a volunteer for the position by starting with the population groups who are already connected to you, and then work outward. You can capitalize on the fact that most volunteers are recruited by people they know. Because word-of-mouth recruitment involves a familiar face-to-face contact, its strength is the personal testimony of the asking volunteer.

Although a lot of effective person-to-person recruiting just happens, we can make much more of it happen by systematically encouraging it. Everyone involved in the organization should understand what their recruitment responsibilities are within the framework of the plan.

Target Recruitment

Targeted outreach for recruitment is one of the hardest skills to master. However, it is incredibly effective at obtaining volunteers for projects and dialing up impact for projects. Targeting allows you to better reach interested parties who are more likely to respond to a volunteer callout or invitation. Just asking everyone you know to plant a tree will prove inefficient and not to turn out project volunteers. Targeting allows you to conduct research on people more likely to want to participate, and then create a message for them that speaks to their personal interests.

When you conduct research on contacts prior to sending an email or making a phone call regarding a project and weed out low-priority or uninterested contacts, this is targeting. Targeting can be done by several metrics:

- Proximity to the project
- Past involvement with similar projects
- Membership/involvement with a related organization
- Likelihood of needing to complete volunteer hours for school, work, or court

RECRUITMENT MESSAGING

Writing Persuasive Volunteer Recruitment Appeals

In the past, most volunteer recruitment efforts were held at face-to-face meetings in which you had a bit of time and space to fully describe why volunteering was a good idea. Nowadays, you are probably limited to a quick explanation, most often through social media or a website, where the space is at a premium and you need to make a good impression, fast.

Catch Attention with a Good Opening

The opening of the message must be compelling enough to entice the potential volunteer to continue reading or listening. The body of the message must be appealing enough to interest potential volunteers to consider volunteer opportunities, or at least contact the organization to get more information.

Present a Complete Picture

The body of the message should present information in an order that psychologically matches how people will think about the offer:

1. **Need:** Is there a problem?
2. **Solution:** Can this job help solve it?
3. **Fears:** Am I capable of helping?
4. **Benefits:** What is in it for me?
5. **Contact:** How do I get involved?

As a rule, spend more space on need than on logistics. People will first decide if you're worth volunteering for and then whether they can fit you into their schedule. The need you stress may be yours, your clientele, or a perceived need/benefit of the volunteer.

Sometimes you cannot cover the entire picture, so you selectively choose what you think your strengths might be. These may simply be different interests that a potential volunteer might have. In general, there are four different types of "selling points" that might be used:

1. The Cause or Community Served
2. The Solution or Accomplishment
3. The Type of Work
4. The Setting

Avoid Misunderstanding

Recruitment messages must be easily understood. Don't include anything that is not necessary; simple is good. Messages should be checked for ease of understanding by someone other than the author of the message.

EVENTS

Attractor Events and Positions

An attractor event is designed to engage the attention and short-term involvement of larger numbers of volunteers. This can be a clean-up event, a fundraiser, or any other activity which meets the following requirements:

- Involves large numbers of people in a variety of volunteer tasks and projects
- Volunteer positions don't require any substantial training or preparation
- The work is fun and exciting and allows people to engage with and meet other volunteer
- The activity is photogenic, thus attracting attention

The event itself should allow all those involved (volunteers and the general public) to get an introduction to the cause, clientele, and operation of your organization, while highlighting the contributions made by the volunteers.

Event Run-of-Show To-Dos

Before the Event

- Manager: assign public projects to coordinators
- At the four-week mark, the project is posted to a project calendar
 - Recruitment commences in the following formats:
 - Flyer canvassing
 - Recruitment email(s) to existing volunteer connections
 - Social media posts
 - Forming new potential volunteer connections, likely in the same area as the project
 - Tabling (typically seasonal)
 - Make sure project managers are aware of recruitment numbers and have made accommodations to promote a diverse volunteer pool
 - Address safety, traffic control, first aid, refreshments, emergency contacts, community/environmental awareness, etc.
 - Make sure that liability and photo releases are available

Day Before the Event

- Volunteers have expressed positive feedback about getting personal emails from the team (in addition to the automated emails) prior to a project. If time allows, especially if there

- have been project updates, taking the time to send an email prior to the project with a recap of what to expect and where to meet goes a long way
- Ensure volunteers know to start arriving up to 30 minutes before the scheduled start
- Prepare snacks and check-in materials
- Ensure all releases have been signed

Day Of the Event

- Arrive at project site early
- Set up table(s), snacks, and all check-in materials
- Introduction that includes the mission of organization, project description, the impact the project will have, role volunteers are playing, project partner recognition, etc.
- Project Manager does volunteer safety and assignment orientation: suggested topics include how to report issues, first aid, refreshments, etc.

During the Event

- Check in with volunteers (e.g., if they need water, bathroom, shade, snacks, etc.)
- Take pictures to share in real time or later
- Thank your volunteers

After the Event

- Thank your volunteers again
- Follow-up with pictures and next steps/how to stay involved
- Encourage feedback/survey completion
- Consider a certificate of appreciation that includes project results and volunteer hours worked
- Celebrate the work by rewarding volunteers, e.g., t-shirt, mug, volunteer of the year award, etc.

Parking for Projects

In ideal situations, the location for any project has a public parking lot on-site or a parking lot that you have been given access to use. If parking is a challenge, the important thing to remember is to respect the community's space. Most prefer to avoid residential street parking when possible, as many people rely on the street for their personal parking. Make sure you get the right permissions from community partners before using their space, and keep in mind that responses from community partners for parking requests have a low success rate (via phone and email inquiries).

Restrooms

Restrooms are even less available than parking lots (and they're often linked). Ideally, both the parking and restrooms are in the same location.

When in doubt, and time is crunching towards the project, rent a portable restroom (or as many needed based on project size). Access to a restroom is vital for projects, and the less volunteers have to drive to a separate restroom location, the better. Do this two to three weeks before the project.

Other Notes

- Spread out and interact with as many volunteers as possible
- Acknowledging that the task at hand is messy/dirty helps volunteers. If they know you understand how much they help by supporting a particular project, it goes a long way.
- Add to your introductions and in your one-offs during the project the importance of taking breaks and staying hydrated

VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Nurturing Process

It's vital to make your volunteers feel appreciated. Please thank them often and let them know how much their work means to the organization. A thank you goes a long way and, hopefully, will inspire them to volunteer for future projects, as well.

If the event is a recurring one, involvement can be increased by offering additional opportunities within the context of the event. This might include asking them to provide feedback about the event, offering them a promotion within the activity or group with whom they served in the past year, or asking them to participate in helping organize and operate the event. This invitation should be offered by the person who has developed a personal relationship with the newcomer, and it should be based on being impressed with the quality of the work done by the volunteer. The offer should be phrased as a continuation of the work that has already been done, rather than as a new task or activity.

- People are more likely to “test the waters” if offered small commitments
- People will proceed at their own speed through the levels of involvement; some will stop along the way
- Cultivate broadly to make sure the diversity of the community is represented

Scout for the More Engaged

During the event, current volunteers or staff should be assigned to work with groups of newcomers. These volunteers are in addition to those mentioned above who will also tell their stories. These “scout” volunteers should be recruited and one of them may provide oversight for several teams. Part of their assignment is to help manage the work to be done during the event, but another part of their assignment involves “scouting” those who are attending, looking for those who show the most interest and potential.

These scouts should be encouraged to do the following:

- Establish personal contact with each of the volunteers with whom they are working
- Give the newcomers a sense of “welcome” and appreciation
- Get the names and addresses of those attending so that they can be thanked afterward

Elements to look for in volunteers with a potential for further development are:

- People having a lot of fun



- People who seem to like organizing others
- People who indicate an interest in the cause
- People who seem to have some personal connection to the cause

Potential Dangers

As in any process, there are some easy mistakes to make. Here are some things to avoid:

- Getting too greedy, too fast. Offering the volunteer more than they seem to want to do can be a dealbreaker. The trick, as in fishing, is to make the volunteer want to take the bait, not to force it upon him or her. Remember that, unlike fishing, the volunteer can always get off the hook.
- The early steps of this process can only succeed if the initial jobs offered to the volunteer are short-term and productive. If a volunteer thinks at any stage that their time is being wasted, they will lose interest.

All the assignments must be meaningful ones, and the volunteer must be able to stop at any point in the process and feel good about the work they are doing!

SUMMARY

Volunteers are out there and the right opportunity, presented in the right way, awaits them. To capture this audience requires strategy, planning, and foresight on the part of the organization. While no single method guarantees success, the plan laid out in these pages increases the chances of building your group and promoting the mission of your organization.