

Handouts

Strategies for Cities on Successful Volunteer Engagement

**Points of Light 2016 Conference
Presented by Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA)**

Handout 1: Designing Volunteer Roles

Handout 2: Targeted Volunteer Recruitment Worksheet

Handout 3: Volunteer Recognition Ideas from Minnesota Colleague

Handout 4: Cutting Edge Strategies for Engaging Volunteers

**Handout 5: Tips for Cities on How to Start or Strengthen a
Volunteer Program**

Handout 6: What Value does Volunteer Engagement Add to a City?

Handout 7: Ideas for Roles for Volunteers

Handout 8: Tips for Cities on Involving Diverse Communities as Volunteers

Thank you to the Bush Foundation for grant support for this initiative

**See www.mavanetwork.org for more resources and to join MAVA for access to
member resources**

Sample volunteer engagement documents for cities at <http://mavanetwork.org/cities>

Handout 1

Designing Volunteer Roles

Identify new roles for volunteers at your organization

Exercise to do at your city. Ask main volunteers and staff:

1. Identify tasks now doing that they would like to give to someone else so they would have more time to do priority work.
2. Envision what volunteers could do that would help the city more fully meet the mission and/or accomplish the strategic goals.
3. From this list, what are possible volunteer positions?

Format for position descriptions

- Position title
- Position overview
- Key responsibility
- Impact of assignment
- Training provided/needed
- Support
- Commitment (time, duration and location)
- Skills and qualifications
- Benefits to the volunteer

Handout 2

Targeted Volunteer Recruitment Worksheet

Volunteer job description (summary):

Skills and qualities needed to perform this job:

What types of people are most apt to have these qualities? (age, gender, educational level, experiences - what types of people have made the best volunteers in this position previously?)

What are the best sources for finding my needed volunteer(s)? (service clubs, corporations, colleges, youth clubs, etc.)

What techniques or methods would be most appropriate to gain access to them? (friend or colleague to personally ask, speak to Rotary, talk to classes at the local college, PSA on teen radio station, etc.)

What benefits will these volunteers receive by doing this job? (i.e., what exchange are we offering them: work experience, networking opportunities, making a difference)

Who is the best person to do the recruitment and why?

Hand Out 3

Volunteer Recognition Ideas from Minnesota Colleague

Thank yous

- Keep a log of when you hear a volunteer has done something especially good. Then, call, e-mail or send a note to the volunteer to commend them.
- Send personal handwritten cards
- “Thank You” said daily – often

Small gifts

- Give out candy with a note related to candy such as a mint - “You are worth a mint”
- Pictures, certificates, personal achievements

Recognition when volunteering

- Have ribbons for the volunteers to wear at work to draw attention to them
- Communicate birthday/accomplishment to other staff and volunteers so that they are aware to offer congratulations

Personal attention

- Send birthday cards
- Pick a nice e-card, then send it out to all the volunteers on their birthdays
- Get well/sympathy cards
- Seek personal moments
- Anniversary card (when they started)
- At anniversary, call and talk about how their volunteering is going

Public attention

- Do public acknowledgement
- Have a “Volunteer Hall of Fame”
- Take a picture and post for all to see
- Highlight volunteers in newsletter
- Nominate volunteers for awards

Extra responsibility

- Ask volunteers who do an especially nice job to mentor newer volunteers
- Move up – promote to more challenging tasks

Social opportunities

- Offer opportunities for group interaction
- Provide lunch and a chance to visit with other volunteers

Learning

- Offer training
- Send to a conference

Nice working conditions

- Providing a welcoming atmosphere - Coffee, cookies, etc.
- Provide them with their own work space – comfortable environment
- Access to equipment, and technology needed and the training required
- Name tags
- Introduce to all
- Provide treats daily

Share organizational success

- Send e-mails when organization is in the media to look for it
- Let know about organizational successes, as it is their success also

For a project

- Include results in a thank you card and in a newsletter
- Make sure paid staff are aware of the results of the project
- Present them with a special specific recognition based on that project
- Project intervals – separate rewards – completion of project goals
- Team incentive/friendly competition

When other staff are the direct supervisor

- Make up a chart for supervisor of times to check in with volunteers (45 days after start, six months and anniversary)

To learn what would like

- Use “Survey Monkey” to ask volunteers what they would like for recognition
- Ask in initial interview

Handout 4
Cutting Edge Strategies for Engaging Volunteers
Developed by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration

1. Design volunteer roles to involve volunteers in a wide variety of roles, including higher responsibility roles and shorter term assignments. Closely align volunteer roles with the city's priorities.
2. Assess volunteer recruitment needs and activate recruitment efforts as needed.
3. Update recognition for today's volunteers.
4. Standardize the volunteer program. Develop a volunteer handbook and consistent policies for volunteers. Standardize volunteer recruitment and orientation.
5. Maximize use of technology in the volunteer program.
6. Measure impact through volunteers.
7. Act on volunteers' ideas and put volunteers in positions to identify needs and solutions.
8. Have a well defined organizational structure including roles for volunteers.
9. Develop a positive organizational culture focused on impact through volunteers.

Handout 5

Tips for Cities on How to Start or Strengthen a Volunteer Program

Developed by Lori Brandl, Volunteer Coordinator for the City of Red Wing and the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration

1. Assess needs and interest in developing a volunteer program. Identify where volunteers are already involved and what they need. Gather together key leaders to identify what the city hopes to accomplish through volunteer involvement. Develop a case statement for the volunteer program.
2. Talk with other cities of similar sizes that engage volunteers to learn about what the volunteers do and how the volunteer program is structured.
3. Obtain support from the key decision maker or governing body (Mayor, City Administrator, City Council, etc.) for starting or expanding a volunteer program. Be prepared to talk about the positive benefits and impact of a volunteer program such as: enhance the connection of the city with residents and the engagement of residents with the city; contribute to important outcomes for the city such as beautification, youth support and improved schools; save taxpayer money; expand what the city can offer; and bring valuable expertise.
4. Determine who will be responsible for the volunteer program. Seek training in volunteer management for that person(s).
5. Network internally in the city to build relationships with key individuals and departments for the volunteer program. Learn who has expertise and resources that would be important for the volunteer program. Find out who is the most interested.
6. Set up an advisory committee for the volunteer program. Include key staff who are interested in volunteers, staff from departments that have potential for engaging volunteers, current lead volunteers, etc.
7. Design the volunteer program structure.
 - Involve key leaders to brainstorm volunteer positions and develop position descriptions.
 - Assess any risk, liability and legal concerns and develop a risk management plan.
 - Determine if there are any potential union concerns and how to avoid them.
 - Develop ideas for recognizing volunteers.
 - Plan the volunteer data that you want to keep and explore databases for record keeping.
 - Develop volunteer policies and a volunteer handbook (asking other cities for examples).
 - Create ideas for volunteer recruitment and awareness about the volunteer opportunities.
8. Identify key external partnerships for the volunteer program such as civic clubs to partner for volunteer recruitment, potential partners for events and other organizations that could help get the community involved or bring key expertise you need.
9. Develop a strategic plan for starting or expanding the volunteer program. Detail what will be done by when, who is responsible, who needs to be involved and other accountabilities. Be prepared to address items such as: costs, policies that need to be developed and any barriers to address.
10. Recruit volunteers through word of mouth, posting volunteer openings on the city website, posting positions at local volunteer center (if available) or volunteermatch.com and ask city partners to assist in recruiting volunteers.
11. Evaluate the volunteer program and decide the next steps. Keep up with the trends on who is volunteering to continually update the volunteer program.

Handout 6

What Value does Volunteer Engagement Add to a City?

The Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) conducted a survey of cities in July 2015. The survey was sent to contacts at 49 cities that were in the MAVA contact list or found online as cities that listed volunteer opportunities, primarily in the metro area. Responses were received back from 26 cities, including 4 cities from Greater MN and 22 cities in the Twin Cities Metro Area.

When asked the question **“What value has your city found through involving volunteers?”** respondents selected the following values:

- Needed work gets done (86% of respondents)
- Build community and relationships amongst residents (86%)
- Connection to residents (77%)
- Gain positive impression & support from residents for the city (77%)
- Civic Pride (73%)
- Additional services are able to be offered to the community (59%)

Survey respondents were also asked: what was the most important value offered by volunteers for their city? Here are a few responses:

“Creating Community Ownership - especially with the youth”

“For Natural Resources, we deeply value the community relationships that we build as well as facilitating the volunteers' feelings of ownership over their own park land.”

“Connection to the community. The residents take pride in their space when they help out.”

“Willingness to give of themselves for others.”

“Citizen engagement is democracy in action”

“Recruiting for boards and commissions positions”

“Use residents talents to get work done.”

“Volunteers who have had positive experiences are excellent ambassadors and advocates for the city.”

“Builds community relationships while getting needed work done/providing additional services to the community. “

“Animals are better cared for because of volunteers”

Handout 7

Ideas for Roles for Volunteers, Continued

If you are looking for ideas on how other cities are involving volunteers, this is the list for you. It was developed by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) to share information learned from cities around Minnesota.

Administrative Support & Clerical Work

- Finance Volunteer
- Archiver
- Data Entry
- General Office Support
- Document Imaging Assistant/Scanner
- Interpreter/Translator
- Clerical Aide
- Customer Service Volunteer
- Document Imaging
- Scheduling Assistant
- Front desk Volunteer
- Display Case Designer

Marketing/Outreach

- Public speaking
- Writing
- Photography
- Donation procurement
- Poster/flyer hanging

Committees, Boards & Commissions

- Planning Commissioners
- Charter Commissioners
- Festival in the Park Committee
- Economic Development Commission
- Streets and Utilities Committee
- Parks Recreation and Forestry Commission
- Measurement Team member
- Core Planning Team member
- Welcome Wagon Committee
- Parade Planning Committee

Public Works & Inspections

- Zoning Enforcement
- Fire Hydrant Painting
- Public Works Volunteer
- Property Maintenance/Code Enforcement Administration
- Storm Drain Stenciling
- Storm drain monitor

Volunteer Administration

- On-call/special projects
- Out-going phone calls to volunteers

Youth/Teen Volunteer Engagement

- Summer Teen Volunteer Program
- Teen Advisory Group (TAG)
- Mayor's Youth Task Force

Handout 7: Ideas for Roles for Volunteers, Continued

Parks & Recreation

Recreation Roles

- Outdoor ice rink volunteers
- Coaches: T-Ball, Youth Baseball, Softball, Adaptive Softball, Soccer
- Junior Golf League Leader
- Adaptive Softball Volunteers
- Golf Course Volunteer
- Hockey ticket-taker
- Hiking club van driver
- Card group leaders

Events & Educational Volunteer Roles

- Brochure spotlights
- Junior Counselors
- Day Camp Assistant
- Arts and Crafts
- Aquatic Asst.
- Public Educator (Interpreter)
- Special Events Assistant/Volunteers
- Visitor Greeter
- Nature Center Volunteers
- Recreation Center Booster Club
- Activity leaders
- Club leaders

Park & Nature-Oriented Roles

- Natural Resources Volunteer (general)
- Blue Bird Nest Monitor
- Breeding Bird Survey Routes
- Endangered Species Volunteer
- Park Pet Patrol
- Citizen Park Patrol
- Invasive Plant/Tree Removal, Buckthorn Removal
- Weed-Be-Goners
- Emerald Ash Borer: tree census project
- Parks Pick-A-Project
- Natural Resource Restoration Steward
- Habitat restoration
- Restoration Supervisors
- Wetland Health Evaluation Program
- Litter-Free Team
- Clean and Green Project
- Spring/Fall Cleanup
- Beach Clean-up
- Park Clean-Up Volunteers
- Garbage Pick Up
- Park Beautification/Gardening
- Garden/Landscaping Assistance
- Gardener Aide
- Garden Stewards
- EcoStewards
- Park Stewards

Adopt a...

- Neighborhood
- Hydrant
- Park
- Trail
- Disc Golf Course
- Planter Box
- Flower Basket
- Rain Garden
- Street

Handout 7: Ideas for Roles for Volunteers, Continued

Animal Control

- Dog Walkers
- Cat Cuddlers
- Photographers
- Paw Patrol (events)
- Admin Team

Public Safety

Fire Department

- Fire Department Community Education & Outreach
- Fire Department Educator
- Fire Dept. Analyst
- Fire Dept. Operations Team
- Fire Prevention Assistant
- Fire Chaplains

Police

- Police Reserves
- Police Explorers
- Police Chaplains
- Police Department Assistant Volunteer
- Citizen Park Patrol
- Traffic Control
- Police Records
- Police Property Room Volunteer
- Checking homes of residents on vacation
- Parking enforcement
- Monitoring handicap parking spaces and fire lanes
- Conducting traffic and other studies

Public Safety: Committees, Events & Panels

- Restorative Justice panels
- Juvenile Diversion Program Leader
- Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)
- Team Restart
- Mobile Volunteer Network (MVN)
- MN Night to Unite volunteer
- Neighborhood Watch

Other Volunteer Roles

- Special Events Assistance
- Facility/Maintenance Volunteer
- Senior Initiative
- Senior Computer Instructors
- Homebound Volunteers
- Library: Adopt-A-Shelf
- Community Television: Event Volunteer; Studio Administrative Volunteer
- Cemeteries
- Theater; Usher
- City Facilities guide/greeter/docent

This information is from a survey conducted by the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) conducted a survey of cities in July 2015 as part of an initiative on city volunteer engagement. Responses were received back from 26 cities, including 4 cities from Greater MN and 22 cities in the Twin Cities Metro Area. Thank you to Rush Foundation for

Handout 8 Tip Sheet for Cities Involving Diverse Communities as Volunteers From the Volunteer Perspective

Cities across Minnesota are taking a new look at involving volunteers to assist the city. One of the opportunities facing many cities in doing this, is how to engage the diversity of the city in volunteering. This would offers potential advantages to the city of valuable to connection to the communities and volunteers for city programs. To provide resources for cities on this topic, the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) interviewed 12 volunteers who had immigrated to the United States to gain their insights on volunteering. This was done as part of the MAVA initiative on city volunteer engagement. From these interviews we gained insights on why people who moved here from another country might be interested in volunteering for a city, what makes for a good volunteer experience and suggestions for cities on involving new Americans as volunteers. Here are ten tips from the volunteer perspective.

1. **Build authentic relationships with the immigrant communities in your city.** Take time to reach out and talk with people. Volunteers suggested that this could start with stopping at a neighborhood ethnic grocery and asking who it would be good to talk with, or going to a community cultural event or to a meeting of an association of immigrants and showing your interest. Find leaders in the cultural communities who interested in helping their community connect with city.
2. **Learn what the cultural communities are interested in and host gathering to provide information on that topic.** Show that you are interested in reaching out on what interests their community. Hold the first gathering at a community location that is familiar to the people you are inviting. Volunteers suggested this as next step to building relationships.
3. **Broadly communicate that the city welcomes volunteer involvement from the full community.** Ask the local cultural community associations to help get that word out that the city wants their involvement. Find a community leader who is interested in connecting with the city and ask his/her help to spread the word. Encourage city staff to personally ask people they know to get involved. Put flyers up in locations your target audience will see. MAVA learned from volunteers that they know of people who would like volunteer, but do not know how to do that, and if their help would be welcome
4. **Understand that there are good reasons that immigrants might want to volunteer for the city.** The main motivation for volunteering that we heard from city volunteers was to help. However we also heard from city volunteers that volunteering was a very good way to learn how the city works, what events are happening, and other important things to know in a new country. Volunteering was also seen as way to get a local reference, fill time while waiting for employment status or in retirement, and to be healthy. Interestingly, some of volunteers indicated that they volunteered to be a good example to their children as participating in the community. Several volunteers mentioned volunteering is a way to give back for the helped they got when new in the country. Others talked about how they loved their community and America and wanted to make the community for good their family and others.
5. **Be aware there may be barriers for many immigrants to volunteering,** such as working two jobs, family commitments, language and transportation that might limit availability to help. Expect that some people will be too busy to volunteer. For others, try to work around those barriers with flexible times for volunteering, family friendly volunteering, and openness to doing things in a different way. While people of all ages and incomes are volunteering,

one person told us that, in general, people who are younger or better educated, may be more aware of volunteering.

6. **Make sure that someone is assigned to follow up with people who express an interest in volunteering for the city.** The volunteers told us how important it was to have someone that was well organized to guide their work. We learned that in immigrant communities people have had experienced offering to volunteer and not heard back from the organization. If there is not a response the first time a person expresses interest, he/she may not come back again.
7. **Take time to talk with a prospective volunteer about their interests, experience, education and previous work.** Volunteers spoke with excitement when volunteering for a city gave the chance to work in an area they had studied, such as the environment or when a volunteer position was matched for a personal interest, such as meeting people. Volunteers also told MAVA how discouraging it is when education and experience in the country they came from is not asked about or valued.
8. **Recognize that you may need to do things in a different way to appeal to the diversity of your community.** Ask questions if there is way to overcome barriers such as transportation. Possibly, the volunteering can be done at location close to their home. Learn about the culture and be ready to adapt to fit their expectations.
9. **Be well organized and make sure that volunteers can see the impact of what they are doing.** Volunteers told us how discouraging it is to take the time to help, and not have their time used well. A main reason that volunteers told MAVA they would continue volunteering after trying it once was if they could see the impact of what they were doing.
10. **Provide a welcome atmosphere.** Make sure that staff understand the cultures of volunteers and are welcoming. When volunteers described what made a good volunteer experience a top reason was the people were nice, were welcoming and showed appreciation to them.

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