



## Developing a Voluntourism Program

Building a voluntourist program through your organization takes careful planning and coordinated implementation.

Elements of a successful program:

- Accommodations
- Unique projects
- Civic partnerships
- Destination management company partnerships
- Corporate partnerships

### **Accommodations**

If voluntourists are traveling to a location in order to volunteer, they will need accommodations. Options for accommodations include:

- Volunteers find accommodations independently
- Partnering with local faith-based organizations, community centers and non-profits
- Partnering with camp grounds or utilizing available land
- Partnering with local hotels and hostels
  - Hands On New Orleans created a unique partnership with the local W Hotel. Voluntourists serving with HONO can take advantage of the “Hands On Package,” which includes box lunches, work gloves, and other amenities. Ten percent of the price goes to Hands On New Orleans.

Another option is for the hosting organization to operate a “volunteer house” where voluntourists can stay for a small fee. Whether dorm-style housing or bunk beds in a large room, volunteer houses offer the opportunity to build a stronger community among the voluntourists and staff. Hands On New Orleans builds community at the volunteer house through:

- Orientation
- Community meetings
- Service learning
- Planned “fun” activities
- Communal-style living
- Group meals

## **Unique Projects**

When planning service opportunities, consider the things that set your city or town apart and have an allure for voluntourists. Examples include:

- Atlanta: Working around Civil Rights
- New Orleans: Long Term Recovery & Cultural Preservation
- Gulf Coast: Wetlands Restoration
- Detroit: Urban Renewal

## **Civic Partnerships**

Partnerships with the local government and other agencies will be key to the success of a voluntourist program. If you haven't already, you should establish relationships with the following:

- City Government
- State Tourism Office
- Local Convention and Visitor Bureau

Hands On New Orleans has a strong partnership with The New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau. Hands On is listed on the NOCVB website as a place to volunteer. Additionally, NOCVB refers large projects and corporate groups to Hands On. One example is a 500-person project with a \$65,000 budget.

## **Destination Management Company Partnerships**

Destination management companies (DMC's) are another avenue for recruiting voluntourists. DMC's manage events and functions for visiting groups, corporations and locals. They provide recommendations and project/function/logistical management for meetings, conferences and conventions.

USA Hosts, a local DMC in New Orleans, connected Hands On New Orleans to Orange Business Services to engage 140 volunteers and for a \$20,000 project.

## **Corporate Partnerships**

Corporations and small businesses are a key source of voluntourists. Corporations can sponsor and promote voluntourism to their employees. Likewise, they can engage in voluntourist activities at meetings, conventions, and conferences.

## **Travel Management Companies**

Travel management companies connect individuals and groups with voluntourist opportunities. Examples include:

- Global Volunteers (United States and abroad)
- Break Away (Partners with universities to create Chapters, which are deployed to non-profits for alternative spring breaks)
- Hand Print Adventures (international opportunities for corporations and working professionals)

*This information is adapted from "Engaging the Voluntourist," a workshop presented by Geneva Marney, Associate Director for Hands On New Orleans, at the 2008 National Conference on Volunteering and Service.*