



eVOLve

technical assistance for
leveraging volunteers

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Ask Us

Do you have a question about working with volunteers? Send it to HandsOn Network at:

training@handsonnetwork.org

Welcome to **eVOLve: technical assistance for leveraging volunteers**. In this electronic technical assistance (eTA) brief, you will find tips and tools to help you leverage volunteers in your community. It is sponsored by HandsOn Network, a training and technical assistance provider for the Corporation for National and Community Service.

This Month's Question

What is voluntourism? Can you provide some best practices for establishing a voluntourism program in my community?

The Answer Corner

Voluntourism (or VolunTourism) combines the nonprofit sector and tourism sector. The primary purpose is to serve, to learn about the host community and its people. It is not simply to have an alternative to a standard vacation; rather, it is a chance for volunteers to use their skills and interests in an unconventional setting to benefit others (adapted from www.VolunTourism.org and www.GlobalVolunteers.org).



Voluntourism is a growing trend nationally and globally. According to the *Volunteering in America 2008* report, in 2007 more than 3.7 million Americans (about 6% of the total volunteer force) volunteered more than 120 miles from their homes.

Elements of a Successful Voluntourism Program:

Accommodations

If voluntourists are traveling to a location in order to volunteer, they will

need accommodations. Options for accommodations include:

- Volunteers finding accommodations independently
- Partnering with local faith-based organizations, community centers, and nonprofits
- Partnering with camp grounds and utilizing available land
- Partnering with local hotels and hostels
- Operating a "volunteer house" where voluntourists can stay for a small fee

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 and cultural preservation
- Gulf Coast: wetlands restoration
- Detroit: urban renewal

Partnerships

Partnerships with the local government and other agencies will be key to the success of a voluntourism program. Potential partners include:

- City government
- State tourism office
- Local convention and visitor bureau (CVB)
- Destination management companies
- Corporations
- Travel management companies

Voluntourism Lessons Learned - *shared by Hands On New Orleans:*

- Empower volunteers with a sufficient orientation and training for the project, so they are able to effectively complete tasks, but also learn a new skill and be able to process and reflect on their service.
- Give volunteers enough information about the long term plans for the projects they are working on and how they fit into the big picture so they know how important their work is, even if it seems tedious.
- Community meetings are a great way to communicate information, decompress, celebrate success, reflect on the experience, and to create a community feeling that makes people take pride in the organization and its mission.
- The cost of housing volunteers is great, but it can also be turned into a good revenue generating program. If you can afford to make it as cheap as possible when beginning you will have greater turn out of volunteers. If you are successful at creating the "community" or "family" feel, you will get volunteers to buy into the program. If you can get them to feel like they belong taking ownership then you can raise the price as time goes on and the dedicated will be willing to pay.
- Cleanliness is essential in communal living space. Make it a priority or suffer the consequences of sickness and volunteer disapproval. Encourage all volunteers to participate in the daily activities of the housing site including signing up for chores.
- Determine a focus area, either geographic or programmatic, for volunteer projects and clearly explain it to volunteers during orientation, during project assignments, and on site.
- Large groups of volunteers seem to always slow down after lunch. It is a good idea to design a day of service to have a smaller scope of work in the later part of the day.

Learn more about voluntourism on the *Volunteering in America 2008* [resource](#) page.

Resources

Volunteering in America (2008) offers comprehensive data on volunteering trends, retention, and the growing voluntourism movement, with state and city rankings and profiles - all at a new interactive website:

www.volunteeringinAmerica.gov.

The Resource Center offers tools and resources to address these new findings and strengthen volunteer management. [New materials are available](#) on the topics of volunteer retention, recruitment, human capital strategies, cost-effective volunteering and voluntourism.

Other Resources:

Geneva Marney and the team from Hands On New Orleans lead a voluntourism workshop at the 2008 National Conference on Volunteering and Service. Visit VolunteerResource.org to download the PowerPoint from this session.

Visit [The Resource Center](#) to learn more about working with volunteers and [volunteer leveraging](#).

HandsOn Network Training

HandsOn Network provides training and technical assistance to help national service programs leverage volunteers. From live training and webinars to on-line courses and effective practices, we provide a wide variety of resources for your program.

Join us for our upcoming webinar on **Thursday, July 31st at 2:00 p.m. Eastern:**

Volunteering in America: Voluntourism

Join us for a webinar to explore voluntourism and see how to make the most of it in your community. In this interactive online session, representatives from Hands On New Orleans, Hands On Orlando, and Denver's Metro Volunteers will share the process through which they came to work with voluntourists, from individuals to corporations to conferences. As they share best practices and lessons learned, you will discover recruitment strategies, partnerships, and policies that are key to a successful program.

To register, go to <http://pointsoflight.webex.com>. Click on the "More Services" drop-down menu to access the "Training Center." Then click on the "Upcoming" tab and the name of the session. You will not need a password to register.

After registering, you will receive an e-mail with log-in information for the session. Please note the session will involve both an online and a teleconference portion. If you have any questions, please contact HandsOn Network at training@handsonnetwork.org.

Contact HandsOn Network or visit The Resource Center for more information about our training and technical assistance services.

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