



# eVOLve

technical assistance for  
leveraging volunteers

## Quick Links

[The Resource Center](#)

[CNCS](#)

[HandsOn Network](#)

[Points of Light Institute](#)

[\*\*Join our Mailing List!\*\*](#)

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 Quote

"The world is hugged by the faithful arms of volunteers."

Everett M'amor

Dear HandsOn,

How can I provide a good service experience to help successfully retain volunteers?

## Ask Us

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

[training@handsonnetwork.org](mailto:training@handsonnetwork.org)

## The Answer Corner

Every second of every day, someone, somewhere will be motivated to make positive changes in communities and become inspired to volunteer. According to the Volunteer in America 2008 report, 1 in 3 American volunteers dropped out in 2007. One of the main factors why volunteers dropped out was that volunteer opportunities were not challenging or meaningful enough. In effect, America's nonprofit leaders are holding a leaky bucket of crucial volunteer resources. To help you successfully retain volunteers, here are four major



components to assist you in providing a successful volunteer experience.

### **Establish the foundation - understand who volunteers are and why volunteers serve.**

The level of importance of a project is only something that you and only you can determine. This is your opportunity to establish a strong foundation for volunteers. You can help volunteers understand why they serve by asking probing questions. For example, ask volunteers why they chose to volunteer for the project or what knowledge and skills do they hope to gain from this project. Understanding why people serve can affect how you manage volunteers and how they serve in your organization. Establishing this foundation keeps volunteers motivated to serve and enhances service opportunities. Your goal should be to create a meaningful experience for volunteers.

### **Identify roles that fit volunteers' interests, skills, and abilities.**

Even fortune-tellers can't predict how things are going to turn out. So don't get too comfortable identifying volunteers you may think match your roles. Instead, identify roles that fit the volunteer based upon the volunteers' interests, skills, and abilities. It is your role to show the volunteer how they are capable of helping and allowing them to actively engage in the process.

- \* Take time to do some ground work to carefully facilitate this process.
- \* Think about the types of service experiences you want to provide for volunteers. Promote thinking with strategic questions. Create a learning environment where you actively listen to your volunteer.
- \* Think clearly about your goals and outcomes and build comprehensive assignments around those applications.
- \* Create a professional atmosphere for volunteers to effectively execute roles and responsibilities.

### **Communicate, Collaborate, Cooperate**

Communicate clearly, openly, honestly, and frequently. Introduce volunteers to members of your organization to create an engaging environment. Make sure volunteers understand the organization's mission and vision and how that relates to the current project. Share policies, regulations, and other information relative to volunteer service. Keep volunteers "in the know" on updates or changes in project operations, community partners, and planning process. In return, allow volunteers to communicate their needs and expectations of the organization and project. Give volunteers as much information possible before they engage in projects. Evaluate your volunteers on the planning process and actual project application. Ask how things can be done more effectively, strategically, and economically. Remember, it's ultimately about getting this done.

Collaborate with volunteers by allowing them use their professional experiences in the causes they care about. Allow volunteers to take ownership in the process. Remember, volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge, skills, and abilities to projects that can aid the organization in building significant impact in your communities. Volunteers can help you tell your story within your communities. The more they know, the more the project can grow and establish a long term impact in the community.

Just as you want cooperation from volunteers, they want cooperation from you. Establishing a good manager/volunteer relationship will assist you in gaining cooperation from your volunteers. Identify resources you can provide to your volunteers. Always do your best to maintain an open, honest, and respectful relationship with volunteers.

### **Recognition & Reflection**

Recognition and reflection are vital pieces in retaining volunteers through the end of the project. Without these pieces, you risk losing volunteers who would most likely return for another project. Recognition and reflection not only help volunteers to personalize the project, but also helps bring closure to the project.

If something is important to us, we will work for the success of the project and have some emotional attachment to the outcome. Remember how you felt as a child, when your parents recognized you for doing something good. You can use that same application in adulthood when you experience that warm fuzzy feeling being recognized for doing something good. Remember, the rules for recognition: give it, give it frequently, and give it a variety of methods.

Reflect with volunteers during and at the end of the project. Ask what they did, what they learned, and how they will grow or learn from the experience. Take a few moments and reflect on your best service experience and how that experience profoundly impacted your growth and learning. Now, imagine yourself in your volunteers' shoes. Your desire should be to give your volunteer the same experience. Be creative with reflection opportunities. For example, produce something tangible by asking volunteers to write a poem and share with other volunteers. Allow the time to have them reflect on their experiences and the thoughts about the project and how their tremendous work will impact the community they've served.

## Resources

***Volunteering in America*** (2008) offers comprehensive data on volunteering trends and retention - all at a new interactive website: [www.volunteeringinAmerica.gov](http://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, and cost-effective volunteering.

### Other Resources:

Visit [The Resource Center](#) to learn more about working with volunteers. Find resources such as:

- Resources on volunteer leveraging
- Online learning courses
  - Volunteer Management
  - Working with Diverse Volunteers
  - Project Development

Visit <http://volunteerweek.org> to find retention resources.

- Volunteer in America: Resources for Retention

## Volunteer Impact, Retention and Expansion (VIRE) Grants

HandsOn Network is pleased to announce up to \$1.5 million in grant funding to strengthen our nation's volunteer infrastructure.

These grants are made possible through a Cooperative Agreement between Points of Light Institute and the Corporation for National and Community Service. For the full Notice of Funding Availability and Volunteer Impact Retention and Expansion Grant Application, go to: [www.handsonnetwork.org](http://www.handsonnetwork.org).



Hands On  
NETWORK

### [Forward email](#)

✉ **SafeUnsubscribe**®

This email was sent to [sunderwood@handsonnetwork.org](mailto:sunderwood@handsonnetwork.org) by [jbelle@handsonnetwork.org](mailto:jbelle@handsonnetwork.org).

[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe](#)™ | [Privacy Policy](#).

Points Of Light & Hands On Network | 600 Means St., Suite 210 | Atlanta | GA | 30318

Email Marketing by

