



WEBSITE CONTENT

4. Retaining Volunteers

The key to retaining volunteers is to have a volunteer management program in place and to apply its principles to the daily issues of volunteer management.

Orientation

Orientation is a process by which an organisation can introduce itself, its aims and policies to the volunteer and it is the first detailed introduction to the organisation and to the volunteer project.

The orientation should include a short introduction session with other volunteers and an introduction to key staff of the organisation where possible.

Training

Volunteers have the right to expect training and support where appropriate and required. Ongoing training provides opportunities for the personal growth and development of individual volunteers.

Training, like other aspects of a volunteer program, needs to be carefully planned. Training session can include specialist conferences, workshops, audio-visual materials and group exercises. Therefore, in the circumstances, the participation of volunteers in training can be seen as a demonstration of their enthusiasm and commitment to the project.

Supervision

Supporting volunteers

The functions of a volunteer supervisor includes assigning tasks, checking work, record keeping, providing support, and making training available as required and as appropriate. Volunteer managers are in an unique position to lead, guide and motivate volunteers to ensure that the goals of the project are achieved and that the organisation develops a talent pool of volunteers.

Technical aspects of supervision

In addition to providing personal support to volunteers, volunteer managers need to ensure that the volunteer project conforms to legislative and policy obligations such as Work Health and Safety requirements, reimbursements, equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination principles are adhered to as well as conflict resolution processes.



The major benefit of having robust policies in relation to anti-discrimination and equal opportunity is that these allow for the greatest chance of finding the best volunteer for the position, which in turn, makes the organisation more productive and allows for the most efficient use of resources.

Evaluation

Appraising the program

Evaluation provides a mechanism for making revisions and improvements to volunteer programs. It is an ongoing process to ensure the program's viability and vitality. Results are measured against the goals and objectives of the program so that appropriate changes may be made to suit the changing conditions of the community and client group.

Both qualitative and quantitative information can be used to judge whether the goals and objectives of the program have been met. Qualitative information, for example, can be gained through questionnaires to service users, volunteers and paid staff. Quantitative information is based on statistical records such as how much money was expended and what services were provided to how many users etc.

Appraising volunteers

The performance of volunteers can be considered in qualitative and quantitative terms and can be measured through good routine "housekeeping" records such as start and end times and by asking the volunteers about their own volunteer experiences.

The appraisal process

Appraising the work of volunteers is just as essential as appraising the work of paid staff. This provides an opportunity for volunteer managers to receive valuable comment regarding their own skills in supervising and supporting volunteers. This opportunity may also be used by volunteers to assess whether their own requirements have been met in relation to their volunteering experience.

Motivating volunteers

Motivating volunteers relies on being able to meet the "needs" of the volunteer through participation in the volunteer project. These "needs" may be as diverse as improving their fluency in a language to wishing to "give back" or "make a difference" to the community in which they reside. The volunteer manager will need to ensure that volunteer achievements are celebrated and enthusiasm is rewarded.

Acknowledging volunteers

A part of ongoing motivation for volunteers is through providing informal personal acknowledgment as well as formal recognition of their contribution to your organisation.

