



Getting Started With Volunteer Recruitment

About this Guide

First of all, credit for this guide must be given to *WildApricot.com* and their Membership Knowledge Hub section of their website. *WildApricot.com* is a Canadian membership & website software company. The Membership Knowledge Hub contains a wealth of information for any membership organization and I encourage those who use this guide to visit their site for additional tips.

The **Getting Started Guide** is divided into 4 sections that offer an overview of how you might approach volunteer recruitment for events, as well as a list of additional resources.

- 1. Pre-Recruitment Planning**
- 2. Targeting Potential Volunteers**
- 3. Outreach and Screening**
- 4. Follow-up and Orientation**

Additional Resources

Include links to various websites (mostly in Canada). See our website for additional links.

1. Pre-Recruitment Planning



If you are new to volunteer recruitment and/or your organization doesn't have a formal process in place, you'll need to do a little pre-planning including:

Establishing a volunteer recruitment group or team:

If your organization doesn't have a staff volunteer manager, or a recruitment committee in place, consider gathering your existing Event Committee Chairs or your Board of Directors to establish a volunteer recruitment team to help identify, screen, orient and manage event volunteers.

In addition, depending on the number of volunteers you need and the scope of the event, you might want to consider dividing up the recruitment tasks among a number of volunteers. For example, if there are a number of committees for the event, perhaps each Committee Chair can take responsibility for recruiting their own team (e.g., Publicity; Registration; Logistics/venue; Silent Auction; etc.)

Defining Volunteer Needs:

To help promote an optimal experience for volunteer and to ensure that you have the right person for each volunteer job, it's important to define specific volunteer assignments or roles. If there is no legacy volunteer information available, this will involve:

- Identifying volunteer job categories: For example, for an event, you might need volunteers for...
 - Program development (speakers; silent auction; entertainment, etc.)
 - Registration / Ticket sales (pre-event and on-site at event)
 - Publicity (website; event reminders; calendar of events; press, etc.)
 - Logistics: venue/catering management
- Determining how many volunteers you'll need for each job/assignment and whether you need additional team leaders or supervisors

Creating volunteer position descriptions:

For each specific job role, it is important to create a job description. This helps you match the right volunteer with the right job and also helps the volunteer understand exactly what's required of him/her. The job description might include:

- A "Job title"
- Necessary qualifications/experience required (e.g., knowledge of excel; driver's license; A/V experience, etc.)

- Specific responsibilities and tasks involved
- Overview of time commitment (e.g., 8 hrs on day of event; 2 weeks prior to event? etc.)
- Indication of who will supervise this role and other team members involved
- Outline of benefits – what’s in it for the volunteer? (e.g., support for a great cause; fun volunteer team; inside look at an exciting event; etc.)

*Also check out the **Additional Resources** section at the end of this document for further sources of information on writing volunteer job descriptions.*

Determining the type of recruitment method that best suits your needs:

There are a number of recruitment methods – which one would work for your organization? In an informative post – [Recruiting Volunteers – Three Approaches](#) – Joanne Fritz (About.com Guide) outlines three recruitment methods suggested by Rick Lynch and Steve McCurley, authors of [Essential Volunteer Management](#):

- **Warm Body Recruitment** – used when you need a large number of volunteers with minimum qualifications so you undertake a broad dissemination of information
- **Targeted Recruitment** – this method is for recruiting volunteers with specific skills
- **Concentric Circles Recruitment** – contacting individuals already in direct or indirect contact with your organization

If you’re looking for volunteers for a local event you probably want to focus mainly on a “Concentric Circles” style of recruitment. But you might also need some “Targeted” volunteers as well. If that is the case, perhaps you can use a strategy that combines the two. *See the next section - Targeting Potential Volunteers - for details on what this might entail.*

2. Targeting Potential Volunteers



As your team ramps up your recruitment efforts, it makes sense to start by looking within your closest circle of influence and then widening the search field as necessary. Here are some thoughts on where to start and how the recruitment strategy might progress:

a) Start with Previous/Identified Volunteers

Of course the first place to start is by identifying past volunteers as well as individuals who have offered to volunteer with your organization.

If your organization has a process in place to keep track of individuals who offer to volunteer throughout the year, you can simply pull that information and begin screening those candidates. However, if there is no pre-existing list or database of volunteers, you might want to develop a process for gathering and storing this information from here on in. This could involve creating a volunteer application form, a volunteer database or at the very least, a spreadsheet.

b) Look within Your Immediate “Circle of Influence”

Have each recruitment team member create a list of potential contacts, from among their:

- Friends
- Family
- Co-workers
- Neighbors
- Community members (at church; clubs; sporting teams, etc.)

c) Publicize within your network:

If you’re having trouble identifying enough volunteers within your immediate circle, consider:

- Writing a newsletter article or a post on your organization’s blog or forum
- Posting a request on your Facebook page
- Posting a compelling video or photos of last year’s event on your FB page and ask for new recruits (follow-up with anyone that “Likes” your post)

d) Broadening Your Circle of Influence

If you’ve surveyed family and friends and still come up short, you might need to widen your search to include:

- Putting an ad in your community newspaper

- Posting a request through your municipal or state/province volunteer center (see resources below)
- Posting a request at a local high school, college or a student volunteer center
- Signing up with one of the volunteer-matching sites (see "Additional Resources" section)

e) Targeting Specific Skills or Needs

If you need to find volunteers with specific skills or experience, you may need to look beyond your close circle. For example:

- If you need one or a number of volunteers with, for example, skills at website development, PR or social media skills, perhaps you should target local small businesses that might be able to offer pro bono services (note: this might lead to a need for sponsor recognition).
- If you are hosting a silent auction or another fundraising event for the first time, you might want to find out who has been involved in other similar events in your community – who might be willing to help (e.g., an auctioneer; member of a service club, etc.)
- You can also consider whether a local company might be willing to organize their employees to assist with your event as a corporate initiative.

3. Outreach and Screening



Once all of the potential volunteers have been identified, you need to ensure that you have the right person for each volunteer assignment and if so, you need to ask for a commitment. Here are some steps to consider:

Recruitment Tool Development:

Before you call or interview a potential volunteer in person, you might want to prepare some tools to help you make a case for volunteering as well as keeping track of possible candidates. Here are some ideas:

- Overview of the organization (mission, vision, key messages)
- Outline of the event
- Job description(s) (for this role and possibly others)
- A tool to capture information on each individual. You can also consider asking potential volunteers to complete something like a “[Window of Work](#)” tool that will identify their interests, skills and also what they don’t want to do as a volunteer.

Screening / Interviewing

Whether you call or interview potential volunteers in person, here is an overview of what you might want to cover:

- Introduce the organization and outline the overall event;
- Describe specific volunteer needs;
- Determine if the person is interested in volunteering;
- Find out the person’s past volunteer and/or professional experience;
- Determine what role might suit this individual – based on their interests and qualifications;
- Describe a specific volunteer role and what it would entail – including time commitment and tasks;
- Answer questions on the volunteer role and/or the organization.

4. Follow-Up and Orientation



Effective follow-up communication and orientation can be critical to both an event's success and the volunteering experience. All volunteers involved –new recruits *and* past volunteers – should receive:

Volunteer Notification:

- Once you've made the decision about who you are bringing onboard as volunteers and which roles they'll play, be sure that each individual gets a call to welcome them and confirm their role or else to thank them and let them know if their services aren't required.
- This call should be followed up by official notification by email or letter (see below).

Official Confirmation:

You should confirm the volunteer commitment through an email or letter with all of the pertinent details, such as:

- job description
- time commitment
- date and time of event
- supervisor details & contact information
- meeting schedule

Orientation:

While orientation sessions will differ depending on the volunteer job tasks, here is an overview of the type of information you might want to include in your orientations:

- An overview of the organization – its mission, vision, values
- Description of the event and its objectives (show a video, photos, etc.)
- Outline of the specific volunteer job and tasks
- Details on planning – schedule of meetings, activities, list of responsibilities, etc.
- Information on event location; resources that pertain to their role; necessary record or document keeping and support systems.
- Confirm their contact information and provide contact information for their volunteer supervisor and an alternate contact

Promoting a Positive Volunteer Experience

Once your volunteers are in place, be sure to keep the lines of communication open and recognize volunteers' efforts to promote a positive volunteer experience. With effective planning and tools in place, the volunteer recruitment and retention process should be streamlined and less stressful.



Additional Resources

- [A Matter of Design: Job Design Theory and Application to the Voluntary Sector](#)
 - (Volunteer Canada): this document offers both information on writing job descriptions as well as sample volunteer job descriptions.
- [Find a Volunteer Centre – in Canada](#)
 - (Volunteer Canada)
- [Recruiting, Mentoring and Retaining Volunteers](#)
 - Volunteer Canada tip sheet
- [Recruiting Volunteers – Three Approaches](#)
 - Joanne Fritz (About.com Guide): this post also includes a list of “volunteer matching sites” in the U.S.
- [Screening Resources](#)
 - (Volunteer Canada) includes Q & A and “10 Steps in Screening”
- [Volunteer Recruitment Quick Tips](#)
 - The Corporation for National & Community Service