Connect with your Community via VolunteerMatch

Jennifer Bennett, CVA, Senior Manager, Education & Training
jbennett@volunteermatch.org
@JenBennettCVA
Volunteer Engagement: What’s it all about?
Volunteer Engagement

How are you engaging volunteers in your library now?
• What kind of work? What types of volunteers?

How could you engage volunteers in your library?
• What’s stopping you? Concerns? Resources?

What do we mean when we say “volunteer engagement”?
• What is new model versus traditional model engagement?
What does it mean?

Volunteer engagement describes a cooperative and collaborative relationship between a volunteer and an organization.

- Volunteers contribute to outlining or defining the work they want to do.
- Volunteer management is the foundation or structure on which volunteer engagement can happen.
- New model for collaboration with volunteers – not a traditional model.

Why should we be thinking about volunteer engagement?
Keys to Creating Volunteer Engagement

• Develop work that is meaningful to the volunteer and important to the organization.

• Create a connection between volunteers, clients and your mission

• Establish the foundation necessary to support a diverse program of volunteer engagement

• Know and share the impact of the work volunteers do
Evaluate your Program

- **What are the current pieces of your program?**
  - What happens? When does it happen? Who’s involved? Who should be involved?

- **Why do you do what you do?**
  - “I don’t know” and “Because we’ve always done it” aren’t necessarily bad answers but you can do better.

- **What works and what doesn’t? How do you know?**
  - Are prospective volunteers a good fit?
  - Do volunteers stay? Do you want them to? Are they aging in place?
  - Are you filling all the needs in your program, your patrons and your library?
Tools for Evolving your Program

- Think strategically!
  - Do you have a 3 or 5 year plan for your program?
  - Get off the hamster wheel

- What type of program do you have now?
  - What type of program do you want to have?

- Where and why do volunteers drop out?
  - Ask them!
  - Survey past and current volunteers about what they like, are proud of, don’t understand about your program

- Don’t do this alone!
Tools for Evolving your Program

• Start with the easy (easier?) stuff
  • Create or document the structure that exists now
  • Identify volunteer position descriptions, how they fit together, what volunteers need to know to do them.

• Create more flexibility
  • What did your volunteers tell you they wanted to do, but couldn’t - so they left?
  • Where does the rigidity come from? You, organization leadership, the past, or perceived ideas about volunteers?

• Create a communication plan to turn volunteers into advocates
What are your ideas for volunteer engagement in your library?
Volunteer Management: The Basics
Successful Volunteer Managers

• Get to know prospective volunteers
  • Determine if they’re a good fit for the culture and the work.

• Complete their due diligence
  • Risk management, but also a chance to better know your volunteers, and give your volunteers the skills and support to be successful.

• Make sure everyone’s on the same page
  • Does everyone - volunteers, staff, clients – know what’s expected of them? Is it written down? Has everyone agreed to follow the rules?
Common Program Components

Not all programs need each component, but each component should be evaluated regularly

• Position Descriptions
  • Well thought out, detailed, comprehensive. We’ll cover this important first step in more detail.

• Recruitment Plan
  • Where and when, but most importantly why. Targeted message for each channel. Marketing!

• Application
  • Contact information, but start to get to know your volunteers “why do you want to volunteer at the library?”
Common Program Components – cont.

• Interview
  • Build on the application questions. Ask about skills, interests, experiences – are they a good fit?

• Orientation
  • An opportunity to share what you do and why you do it. Introduce the culture, policies, procedures. Can be one on one.

• Training
  • What does a volunteer need to know to be successful?
• Confidentiality/Non-Disclosure Agreement
  • Should cover work product, equipment, sensitive information.

• Background Check
  • At-risk populations: children, elderly. Positions with access to sensitive information or PII (personally identifiable information.)

• Reference Check
  • Consider asking for volunteering references, as well as personal and/or professional.
Common Program Components – cont.

• **Policies and Procedures Handbook**
  • Begin with applicable HR policies. Determine what other policies need to be included – start with instances where things went wrong. Include conflict resolution, dismissal or termination procedures.

• **Acknowledgement Form**
  • I acknowledge that I have been given a copy of the Volunteer Handbook…

• **Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement Letter**
  • Specific for each volunteer/volunteer position. Identifies the who, what, when, and for how long. Use to reinforce the most important policies and procedures.
Getting Started: Create a Position Description
Parts of a Position Description

• Title
  – Volunteer is a staff category, not a title
• Team or Department
  – Reports to/Works with
• Description of role
  – Brief but explains what the position does
• Primary Responsibilities
  – Secondary Responsibilities
• Skills and Experience & Training
  – What a volunteer needs to know to be successful
• Time Commitment
  – Hours/week, months
Involve Others

Before you get started create a plan and timeline for creating or updating volunteer position descriptions.

• Recruit a volunteer with HR experience

• Have volunteers write their own position descriptions
  – Do the position descriptions written by volunteers match your expectations for the position?

• Involve program managers, team leaders
  – Create a committee with representatives from each constituent groups to coordinate the process
Put Positions in Their Place

Integrate volunteer positions into the organization structure.

• Use the reports to/works with section to determine how positions fit together.

• Can positions be divided into new positions, graded levels or leadership positions?
  • Encourages volunteers to grow or take on more responsibilities.
Responsibilities

• Primary responsibilities

  • Day to day activities
  • Recurring responsibilities
  • What are volunteers expected to do in this position?
  • What behaviors or actions are required for this position?

• Secondary responsibilities

  • Actions or activities that are required of all volunteers
  • Team or program responsibilities
Creating Accurate Responsibilities

What responsibilities or activities are
• Missing?
• Appear on more than one position description?
• Happen each shift or day? Seasonally or annually?

Have they been included? What’s missing?
• Seek feedback from constituents and others from within the organization.
Skills and Experience + Training

All the things a volunteer needs to know to be successful in the position.

• Skills can be position or team specific
  • May include things that can only be learned in your organization or during a shift (on the job training.)

• Experience or characteristics a volunteer needs to have to be a good fit for the position or organization

• Career skills
  • Are volunteers expected to have these skills before they start, or can they be gained during service?
VolunteerMatch Basics
Intro to VolunteerMatch

• Log into your account

• Create a new opportunity or update an existing one!

• Learn to Repost
Tips for creating a great listing on VolunteerMatch

- Compelling titles!
  Use a unique title to grab a volunteer’s attention.

- Keep it brief!
  50-100 words are enough information.

- Have fun with it!
  Include the available hours and days in your description.

- Put you best foot forward!
  Always use correct spelling and grammar.

- I Want to Help! Button
  Do not include a URL or library contact information.

- Review your posting!
  Ask a co-worker or friend to take a look.
Next Steps: Goal Setting & Action Plan
Setting Goals & Creating a Plan

What are one or two of your top priorities for volunteer engagement?

• What are the deliverables or outcomes?
  • These should be measurable and actionable

• Who are the stakeholders?

• Who is accountable and responsible for the outcomes?
  • Work can be delegated, but someone is accountable

• What are the barriers?

• When does it need to be completed?
Questions, Thoughts, Ideas?
Resources

**Learning Center**
Find upcoming webinar dates, how-to videos and more
http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/learningcenter/

**VolunteerMatch Community**
Ask and answer questions after the webinar – use keywords Volunteer Management
http://community.volunteermatch.org/volunteer

**California Library Get Involved Resource Center:**
Videos, sample documents, policies, and position descriptions, photos and more!
http://www.library.ca.gov/lds/getinvolved.html

**VolunteerMatch Support**
Get help or answers to your account questions
idaholibraries_support@volunteermatch.org
Thanks for attending!

Join us online:

Like us on Facebook: www.Facebook.com/VolunteerMatch

Follow us on Twitter: @VolunteerMatch

Visit Engaging Volunteers, our nonprofit blog: blogs.volunteermatch.org/engagingvolunteers/

For any questions contact:
Jennifer Bennett
jbennett@volunteermatch.org
@JenBennettCVA