

# Basics of Volunteer Engagement and Introductory VolunteerMatch Training

Jennifer Bennett, CVA, Senior Manager, Education & Training  
Kevin Johnson, Community Support Manager

# Welcome!



Take a few minutes and write what questions you have, or what you're hoping we'll talk about on post-it notes.

# Program Introduction & Goals

# What Does Volunteer Engagement Mean?

# Volunteer Engagement

What does the word volunteer mean to you?

Have you ever volunteered?

Are you engaging volunteers in your library now?

What do we mean when we say “volunteer 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, not your mother’s volunteering.

# 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 clients and your organization?

# Create more Involvement

- Training and experience pathways
  - Do volunteers know what they need to do to be able to fill each role in your program?
  - Is it clear how that happens, or is it mysterious or based on longevity?
  - Do you offer those classes or have on the job experience checklists?
- Leadership positions
  - Do you have opportunities for volunteers to move into leadership roles? In your program? In the organization?
  - Shift leaders, committee leaders, subject matter experts, pro bono consultants

# Create more Flexibility

- Are there different types of opportunities or different levels of involvement available?
  - One size doesn't fit all
  - Doesn't allow for growth or retraction as a volunteer's life changes
  - Do you offer project based opportunities, virtual opportunities
- Bring more positions into your volunteer engagement program
  - Let volunteers help you!
  - Volunteers know the work that volunteers do - empower them to document or create the foundation and flexibility you need.

# Create more Understanding

- Keep volunteers informed
  - New ideas or theories in your impact area
  - New policies, practices or projects in your program
  - Milestones in your Library
- Incorporate impact into recognition
  - Don't just say thank you - share the work the volunteer has done
  - Include clients in the thank you message
  - Spread the thank you outside of your volunteer program - Social media, internal and external communications

# Create the Connection

Turn your volunteers into Advocates!

- Do volunteers know your mission?
  - Major accomplishments, funders
- Do they know about other programs?
  - Areas and impacts besides their own
- Empower them to spread the word
  - Keep them up to date
  - Use social media

# 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 in to advocates

**What are your ideas for volunteer engagement in your library?**

# Foundations of Volunteer Management

# 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?

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?”

- 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.

- 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.

# Successful Volunteer Position Descriptions

# 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

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

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.

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?

# Don't Just Put them in a Drawer!

Use Volunteer Position Descriptions to recruit.

- Tell prospective volunteers how they fit into the organization.
- Outline the day to day work a volunteer can do.
- Explain what skills you're looking for, and what volunteers can learn.
- Share the full position description with prospective volunteers so they can better understand what's expected of them.

# Don't Just Put them in a Drawer!

Use them to develop application and interview questions.

- Create application questions to investigate a prospective volunteer's previous experience.
- Develop interview questions that explore a volunteer's ability to fulfill the positions primary responsibilities.
- Ask questions that help you understand how well a volunteer might work with the team or in the organization structure.

# Don't Just Put them in a Drawer!

Use them to inform orientations and develop trainings.

- Use primary responsibilities and skills to develop training materials and courses.
  - What does a volunteer need to know before they start work, and what needs to be learned on the job?
- Integrate secondary responsibilities into orientations.
  - Standards and norms
- Reports to/Works with can also help volunteers better understand the structure of the organization.



# Creating Volunteer Position Descriptions



# Volunteer Retention and Program Evaluation

# Keep the Volunteers You Have

## Why do some volunteers leave and others stay?

- Difference in expectations
  - Organizational culture
  - Work v job description
  - Time commitment
  - Communication and style
  - Program support and training
  - Motivation and philosophy
- Maintain the relationship
  - Identify and address signs of disengagement
- Volunteers have lives, too. You can't plan for life.

An accurate position description can help you recruit and keep more of the right volunteers.

- Clear positions and responsibilities can help mitigate difficult situations with volunteers.
  - Everyone is on the same page.
- Give your volunteers room to grow
  - Graded or leveled positions, leadership positions, an opportunity to take on more responsibility or have a role to work towards.
- Program managers and team leaders can better understand how volunteers fit into the organization.
  - Build support for volunteers, and the work they do.

# Saying Thank You

- Create a culture of appreciation.
  - Incorporate impact into your thank you
- How a volunteer wants to be recognized is unique to each volunteer.
  - Ask! - Survey, questionnaire. What would they like to do, learn, see?
  - Recognize professional work in meaningful ways - Credit, public acknowledgement, portfolio
  - Don't underestimate a heartfelt, handwritten note - Created by clients or staff

# Evaluating your Impact

Quantitative impact is important. Think about what you can measure

- Number of volunteers
- Hours worked
- Clients served, or client satisfaction

But numbers are only the beginning...

# Evaluating your Impact

Qualitative impact is important too.

- Short term impacts
- Long term impacts
- What's different or better because of volunteers?
- How can you tell the story of why what volunteers do is important.

Share this information – with your volunteers, other staff members, clients, patrons, the community!

## **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/lids/getinvolved.html>

# Thanks for attending!

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## For any questions contact:

Jennifer Bennett

415-321-3639

[jbennett@volunteermatch.org](mailto:jbennett@volunteermatch.org)

Kevin Johnson

415-241-6871

[kjohnson@volunteermatch.org](mailto:kjohnson@volunteermatch.org)