



Steps to Building an Inclusive National Service Program

Incorporating inclusive practices into your program’s current recruitment strategies is necessary for successfully recruiting and selecting a diverse group of service participants. Whether you have an AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve, or Senior Corps program – or are an organization working toward being more inclusive – using the practices and tools outlined in this chapter will help with the successful inclusion of people with disabilities in your programs and activities.

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Writing Inclusive Service Position Descriptions

The first step to creating an inclusive national service program is to review your program's current service position descriptions. It is important for national service participants to understand the difference between a "service position" and a "job," and this distinction begins with the position description. Before beginning recruitment, you must have a clear idea of the specific tasks that need to be accomplished and the environment in which the individual will be serving. A clear service position description will aid you in:

- Crafting your recruitment message to target potential national service participants who possess the skills your program needs (for Learn and Serve programs, crafting your recruitment message to target youth for whom your program is appropriate).
- Writing appropriate interview questions.
- Determining whether a person is qualified to perform the essential functions of the position.
- Identifying reasonable accommodations to enable a person with a disability to perform the essential functions.

When writing an inclusive service description, the position should be analyzed to determine the following:

- **Purpose:** The reason for the position.
- **Essential Functions:** The tasks or duties fundamental and critical to the performance of the position.
- **Marginal Functions:** Those activities that are seldom or intermittently performed. The position does not exist to perform these functions and their removal would not fundamentally alter the nature, purpose, or result of the essential tasks to be accomplished by the national service participant.
- **Setting:** The work/service station and/or conditions where the essential functions are to be carried out.
- **Qualifications:** The minimal skills an individual must possess to perform the essential functions.

It is helpful to describe the purpose and results of the essential functions, rather than *how* the functions must be performed. The following are some questions to help you analyze each service description in your program.

Purpose:

- What are the particular contributions of the position toward the accomplishment of the overall objectives of the organization?

Essential Functions:

- What activities actually constitute the position? Does the position exist to perform these functions? Is each activity really necessary? For example, in order to perform administrative duties, is it *necessary* to type, file, answer phones, and take dictation?



- What is the relationship between each task? Is there a specific sequence the tasks must follow?
- Do the tasks necessitate specific physical activities such as sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, etc.?
- How many other people are available to perform an essential function? Can the performance of that function be distributed among any others?
- How much time is spent in performing each particular function? Are the less-frequently performed tasks as important to success as those done more frequently?
- Would removing an essential function fundamentally alter the overall purpose of the position?
- What happens if the task is not completed on time?

Service Setting:

- Is the setting compliant with ADA requirements? If not, what accommodation can be made to bring it into compliance or to change the setting?

Qualifications:

- Do the qualifications define the *skills* required to perform the essential functions and not the *person* who performs them?



The Essential Functions of a Service Position

What is an essential function?

An essential function is a task or service duty that is critical to the position. If it is not performed, then the nature of the position is fundamentally changed.

Three factors that make a function essential:

1. The position exists to perform a specific function.
 - “Participant will provide education through public speaking and information dissemination.”
 - “Participant will read stories to preschool children in their homes.”
2. There are a limited number of other participants available to perform the function or among whom the function can be distributed.
 - “Participant will have a commercial vehicle driver's license.”
 - “Participant must have previous experience installing drywall.”
3. A function is highly specialized and the person in the position is selected for special expertise or ability to perform it.
 - “Participant must have the ability to understand and communicate in Spanish and English.”
 - “Participant will provide estate planning legal advice to participants at the senior day care center.”

When identifying essential functions?

- Identify the purpose and importance of the task/function.
- Consider the frequency with which the task/function is performed.
- Consider the amount of time required to perform the function.
- Consider the consequences if the function is not performed
- Essential functions must be completed, but they can often be completed in any variety of ways rather than in one particular manner.



This information is provided by:

The National Service Inclusion Project (www.serviceandinclusion.org)

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A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MANUAL ON THE EMPLOYMENT PROVISIONS (TITLE I) OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The excerpt (pages II-12–II-22) from the *Technical Assistance Manual on the Employment Provisions (Title I) of the Americans With Disability Act* published by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission provides an in-depth discussion on identifying the essential functions of a position. Included is what qualifies a position’s function as essential and how reasonable accommodations can be implemented so an individual can perform the essential functions of a position. Use this resource to aid you in determining the essential functions of a service position. The full text of the Technical Assistance Manual can be found at the following link: <http://askjan.org/links/ADAтам1.html#III>

Crafting an Inclusive Service Description

The following documents will assist you with crafting an accurate, inclusive service position description:

- *Example of a Position Description*
- *Suggested Additions – Basic Outline of a Position Description*
- *The Service Position Description Form*

KEY POINT:
Remember to determine the essential functions and that certain tasks may be accomplished in a number of different ways.

Having a concise service description is the first step in recruiting qualified candidates for your national service program. More information about evaluating a position’s **essential** and **marginal** functions can be found in Chapter 3 of the Train-the-Trainer download provided by the National Service Inclusion Project at:

http://serviceandinclusion.org/ttt/Level_I_TtT.zip



Basic Outline of a Service Position Description

Each service position description should follow a similar format with headings. The following checklist is a compilation of recommendations from the National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP) and the MCSC Statewide Inclusion Team. This will allow service members to make an informed decision of whether or not the program meets their skills, abilities, and interests and will provide an environment in which they can be successful.

- Service Position Title
- Time Commitment (full-, half-, quarter-, minimum-time)
- Name and Title of Supervisor
- Brief overview of service position
- Basic requirements, age, background check, citizenship etc.
- Essential Functions (what are the specific functions for why this position exists?)
 - Limited number of others who can do the function
 - Function is specialized (person to be selected because of expertise)
- Marginal Functions
 - Secondary to essential functions
 - Tasks that can be traded or done by another volunteer, if necessary
- Working Relationships
- Knowledge, skills, and abilities
- Academic Qualifications
 - If a high school diploma or GED is required, will the equivalent be sufficient (i.e., Certificate of Completion)?
- Service Conditions
- Physical, emotional, and intellectual demands
- Equipment Used
- Benefits of position (i.e., stipend, healthcare, professional development, etc.)
- Increase font size of position description for easier readability by anyone who has difficulty with reading small print (or have alternative formats available).
 - Arial font is an easily readable font
 - Size 14 font is the standard size used by libraries for the blind
- Is traveling within the work day an essential function of the position? If so, add the following statement: "Frequent, reliable travel is required during the work/service day."
 - For most travel, the use of drivers and/or public transportation can be utilized to meet this function if a person is not able to drive his/herself in a personal or agency vehicle.
- Is the service schedule adjustable/flexible?
- Always remember to use people-first language on position descriptions.
- Add a statement of how a person with a disability can go about requesting accommodations, if needed.
- List the contact person for position



SAMPLE:

**Foster Grandparents Position Description
Reading Coach**

Purpose: This is a Foster Grandparents position which exists to provide caring and compassionate reading tutors for students in local elementary schools who are at risk for academic failure. Volunteers must participate in and lead literacy groups and activities in the classroom. Volunteers will receive monthly training to implement a literacy program.

Job Title: Reading Coach

Key Responsibilities:

- 1) Works with assigned students at-risk for academic failure.
- 2) Coaches students in identifying reading resources that fit their interests.
- 3) Provides positive feedback on the student's progress and encourages the student's continued focus on reading and academic excellence.

***Possible additions include:**

- *Essential functions of position*
- *Marginal functions of position*

Time Commitment: 40 hours a week.

***Possible additions include:**

- *Location where service will be performed*
- *Type of supervision provided*

Qualifications: You must be a United States citizen, United States national or lawful permanent resident of the United States and at least 60 years of age. You must also have graduated from high school or have a GED or equivalent. A criminal background check will be completed before you may begin service.

***Possible additions include:**

- *Minimal skills required to perform service position (ex. education, specialized training, experience working with children)*

Support Provided: Pre-service and monthly training sessions on a literacy program along with other literacy strategy training.

Benefits Available: Reimbursement for travel and some meals are provided. Also, an annual physical; Accident and liability insurance while on duty; and Income-eligible Foster Grandparents also receive a modest, tax-free stipend to offset the cost of volunteering.

***Possible additions include:**

- ❖ *Can attendance hours be adjusted?*
- ❖ *Conditions of service*

Member Signature: _____
Date: _____

Director Signature: _____
Date: _____



Service Position Description Form

Position Title: _____

Name & Title of Immediate Supervisor: _____

Supervisor's Email: _____ Phone: _____

Main purpose of this position:

Location(s) where service will be performed:

Machines, tools, electronic devices, communication devices, software, and other tools typically used to accomplish the tasks of this position:

Education, experience, or specialized training requirements:

Special conditions of service (if any):

Position Duties:

List both essential and marginal functions and their related tasks, beginning with those that are most important. A function is a distinct area of responsibility; a task is a particular work action performed to accomplish the function. Indicate the approximate amount of time spent on each function using percentages. The statements below are intended to describe the nature and level of work being performed within this position. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities, duties, and tasks.

Percent of time	Duties and Tasks – Essential Functions
	Essential Functions: The tasks or duties that are fundamental and critical to the performance of the position.
Percent of time	Duties and Tasks – Marginal Functions
	Marginal Functions: Those activities that are seldom or intermittently performed. The position does not exist to perform these functions and their removal would not fundamentally alter the nature, purpose, or result of the essential tasks to be accomplished by the national service participant.



Is a driver's license required to perform the essential functions of this position?

_____ Yes _____ No Type of License: _____

Comments:

Can attendance hours be adjusted?

_____ Yes _____ No

Comments:

Type of supervision received:

Close Supervision_____ General Supervision_____ Off-site Supervision_____

List examples of written materials (i.e., correspondence, reports, or significant compositions) the person in this position would be required to produce:

List examples of written materials (i.e., correspondence, reports, or significant compositions) the person in this position would be required to access and comprehend.

Does the person in this position perform any of the following functions? If yes, provide examples.

- a) Gather information
- b) Identify key issues
- c) Analyze the impact of alternative solutions
- d) Make recommendations

List contacts with others (internal and external) and describe the purpose and frequency (daily, weekly, occasionally) of contact:

- a) Title of Person/Organization
- b) Purpose
- c) Frequency

Is this position subject to testing? If yes, list tests:

Is this position subject to a background check? If yes, list type of background check:

Worksheet completed by:
[Name/Title/Date]



Examples of Action Verbs to Use In Service Position Descriptions

accommodate	consult	generate
achieve	control	govern
acquire	convert	guide
act (as)	cook	handle
adapt	coordinate	highlight
address	correlate	identify
adjust	correspond	illustrate
administer	counsel	implement
adopt	create	improve
advise	customize	improvise
allocate	delegate	incorporate
analyze	deliver	increase
apply	demonstrate	influence
appoint	design	inform
appraise	determine	initiate
approve	develop	inspect
arrange	devise	install
assemble	devote	instruct
assess	direct	interact
assign	discuss	interface
assist	disseminate	interpret
assume	distinguish	interview
assure	distribute	introduce
attain	document	investigate
attract	draft	issue
audit	drive	maintain
augment	edit	manage
authorize	eliminate	modify
budget	encourage	monitor
calculate	enforce	motivate
circulate	ensure	negotiate
clarify	establish	notify
clean	evaluate	observe
clear	execute	obtain
collaborate	exhibit	operate
collect	expand	originate
combine	expedite	organize
communicate	explore	participate
compile	extend	perform
complete	extract	persuade
compose	facilitate	plan
compute	file	predict
conduct	forecast	prepare
confer	formulate	present
consolidate	furnish	preside
construct	gather	prevent



CHAPTER 3 NATIONAL SERVICE INCLUSION RESOURCE GUIDE

process
produce
program
promote
propose
provide
publicize
publish
quantify
recognize
recommend
reconcile
record
recruit
redesign
reduce
refer
refine
reinforce
repair
reorganize
report
represent

research
resolve
restructure
review
revise
schedule
screen
search
secure
select
serve
service
sign
simplify
solicit
solve
specify
stimulate
strategize
streamline
strengthen
study
submit

suggest
summarize
supervise
support
survey
systematize
teach
test
trace
trade
train
transcribe
transfer
translate
transmit
troubleshoot
type
update
upgrade
validate
verify
write

****Adapted from Rice University Human Resources How to Hire Handbook online at:***

Home Page:

www.ruf.rice.edu/~humres/Training/HowToHire/Pages/8.shtml

Direct Link:

http://cohesion.rice.edu/campuservices/humanresources/jobs.cfm?doc_id=7333



Recruiting National Service Participants with Disabilities

Inclusive Recruitment Practices

The information in this section will assist you with creating an inclusive recruitment message and materials, provide methods for effective outreach to the disability community, and address the importance of diversity in your national service program.

Recruiting national service participants with disabilities relies on the same fundamental principles that guide all effective recruitment practices:

- Target potential participants with the abilities and experience needed to participate successfully in your program.
- Use images and language that promote diversity and give potential applicants the feeling they will be welcomed.
- Send recruitment materials and announcements to every appropriate contact.

Display Welcoming Images and Language

- Include images of volunteers and staff with visible disabilities in brochures, flyers, application packets, videos, and other recruitment tools.
- Identify local individuals or organizations that will review materials to ensure accurate language use and positive portrayals of participants with disabilities.
- Make questions related to disability optional on application forms.

Provide Access

- Include a TTY (text telephone) number encouraging individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired to call.
- Include a statement regarding the provision of materials in alternate formats in all promotional materials.
- Identify alternative methods of filling out application forms for individuals who may have difficulty completing a written application.
- All published materials should contain an accommodation statement: “Individuals with disabilities can make reasonable accommodation requests by calling *[Name of Contact]* at *[telephone/TTY number]*.”
- Include disability in your non-discrimination statement: “*[Name of Organization]* does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, gender, national origin, color, political affiliation, religion, age, or disability.”
- Check the accessibility of your web site.
- Schedule information sessions in accessible locations.

Knowledgeable Staff

- Train all staff to work with members/volunteers with disabilities in the following areas:
 - TTY/operator assisted relay service
 - How to locate and hire sign language interpreters
 - Materials in alternate formats
 - Transportation issues
 - How to identify meeting places that are accessible

**This material has been adapted from the UCP National’s Access AmeriCorps Project.*



Equal Opportunity / Reasonable Accommodation Statement & Offering Materials in Alternate Formats

An Equal Opportunity/Reasonable Accommodation statement promotes your agency as an organization that includes all citizens in your activities and programs while letting people know that your materials are available in alternate formats.

Sample Statement:

The Michigan Community Service Commission is firmly committed to providing access, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation in its programs, activities, and materials. Please call (517) 335-4295 to request accommodation or to obtain materials in an alternate format.

The following items should include an EO/RA statement:

- Brochures
- Event materials
- Applications and application guidelines
- Materials for meetings/events
- Training materials
- All event registration materials
- Email announcements
- Faxes
- Newsletters
- New publications

Alternate formats include:

- **Large print**
 - To put a document into a large print format, print on white or buff-colored paper, normal type only (no italics, limited use of bold type), 18-point Times New Roman font, unless recipient requests otherwise (ask individual's preference, if possible).
- **Braille**
- **Audio Tape**
- **Files on disk (or as email attachments)**
 - This format is useful for people who use screen-enlargement or screen-reading programs.
 - Keep the format simple, avoid tabs whenever possible.
 - Avoid tables – they can be problematic for screen-reading programs.



Inclusive Interview and Selection Practices

Inclusive Interviewing Practices

Once you have prepared an inclusive service position description and have actively recruited national service participants with disabilities, the one remaining task is to select the best service providers for your program. The following steps will assist you with accomplishing this goal:

- Review the disability awareness materials in Chapter 6 with all participants and staff who will have contact with potential participants to be interviewed.
- Review the disability laws in Chapter 5 that apply to your organization or agency.
- Review the information in this chapter to ensure you conduct your interviews properly.
- Remember that your goal is to select the most qualified participants. Having a disability should not be a barrier to national service, but neither does it guarantee selection.

The Interview

- Schedule interviews in accessible locations.
- Be familiar with the essential/marginal functions described in the position description.
- Ask all interviewees the same questions.
- Be willing to consider alternative ways essential functions may be performed or marginal functions can be reassigned.
- Be willing to ask how to be of assistance to the interviewee.
- Be willing to provide reasonable accommodations during the interview if requested, as well as at any other point during the service relationship.

During The Interview

- Maintain any information volunteered by the individual about his/her disability as confidential. Keep this documented information in a separate locked file.
- Focus on questions about the ability of the individual to perform the essential functions of the volunteer position with or without reasonable accommodations.
- Do not make assumptions about reasonable accommodations or ability.
- Withhold judgment about what an individual can or cannot do and how a task may be accomplished. Be open to the many ways a task can be performed.
- Maintain the same expectations and standards you would for any applicant, but be willing to offer reasonable accommodations so they can be met.
- Create a comfortable and open interview environment enabling the interviewee to request reasonable accommodations.

Interview Questions

The questions asked during any interview must be related to the position for which the applicant is applying. Below are samples of appropriate versus inappropriate interview questions.

Appropriate Questions

- This position typically requires lifting and carrying 15 pound boxes. Can you do that? If not, how would you move these boxes from point A to point B with or without reasonable accommodation?
- This position requires seasonal tasks and requires that volunteers devote 15 hours each week. Can you do that?



- This position involves working varied hours. Can you do varied hours?
- This position involves taking information over the telephone and entering it into the computer. Can you do that?
- Can you file documents?

Inappropriate Questions

- Do you have a disability or illness that I should know about?
- Have you ever filed a worker's compensation claim?
- What diseases have you had?
- Are you taking any prescribed drugs?
- Do you have any physical or mental impairments that may affect your performance in this position?
- How many days were you sick last year?
- Have you ever been hospitalized?
- To do this service, you will obviously need reasonable accommodations. Which ones will you need?

Interviewing and Selecting National Service Applicants

The best way to ensure that you are providing equal opportunity to all applicants to your national service program is to prepare a list of questions that will be asked of all interviewees. The following guidelines will assist you in preparing your questions:

You May Ask:

- Whether the individual needs any reasonable accommodations or assistance during the selection process (this should be asked of ALL potential applicants).
- About the individual's ability to perform essential position functions.

You May:

- Give a copy of the service position description to the individual that identifies all essential functions and ask whether the individual is able to perform all of those essential functions with/without reasonable accommodations.
- State your organization's standards regarding the drug policy, on-the-job alcohol consumption, and the smoking policy.
- State your organization's standards for attendance and the performance standards and expectations for a particular position.
- Ask how an individual could perform tasks with possible types of accommodation *if* the applicant indicates that he or she can perform the task with an accommodation.

Do Not Ask:

- Whether the individual has a current disability or a past disability.
- Whether the individual has any serious illness (such as AIDS).
- Back problems, history of mental illness, or any other physical or mental condition.
- How the individual became disabled or the prognosis for the applicant.
- Questions about the nature or severity of the person's disability or comment in anyway on the individual's physical condition.
- Whether the individual wears a hearing aid or needs to wear glasses while working.
- Questions about the applicant's past on-the-job injuries.
- Whether the applicant has ever been treated for any mental condition.



- Applicants to list any conditions/diseases for which they have been treated in the past.
- Whether the individual has ever been hospitalized, and if so, for what condition.
- How many days the applicant was absent from work last year because of illness.
- Whether the applicant has any disease, including HIV or AIDS.
- Whether an applicant has ever requested and/or received assistance or assistive devices in performing past jobs.
- About an applicant's past or current need for or receipt of medical/disability benefits.
- About applicant's past drug or alcohol use.
- Whether the applicant has ever filed a worker's compensation claim or ever received an award of worker's compensation benefits.
- Whether an individual has ever been found to be disabled or has a spouse, children, or other friends with disabilities.
- Questions of applicants with disabilities that you do not ask of all applicants.
- Whether the individual has any disabilities or impairments that may affect performance in the position.

Should the individual indicate that he/she has a disability and may require a reasonable accommodation, you should:

- Offer reasonable accommodation during the hiring process, should the individual have an obvious disability or a disability known to you that may interfere with their ability to complete the pre-employment procedures (such as testing). Inquire about the types of accommodations the individual believes may be necessary.
- Work with the individual to find the most effective and cost-efficient reasonable accommodation.
- Make inquiries with the individual and with others (if necessary) as to the nature and costs of the proposed accommodation.

The Selection Process

As you are making your final selections:

Do:

- Ensure that careful consideration of an applicant's ability to perform essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodations, is made before rejecting an applicant with a disability.
- Keep in mind your primary goal: To include the most qualified applicants in your national service program. This must be the applicant(s) who can perform the essential functions of the position with or without reasonable accommodation.

Do Not:

- Refuse to consider an individual because he/she has asked for an accommodation.
- Refuse to consider an individual for a position merely because he/she has a disability or is associated with a person with a disability.
- Refuse to consider a person merely because he/she has filed a past worker's compensation claim.
- Refuse to consider a person for fear it might increase insurance or worker's compensation costs.

**Adapted from information provided by Florida State University.*

Methods and Contacts for Outreach



Methods of Outreach	School & Vocational Rehabilitation Programs	Disability Organizations (Public and Private)	Faith-Based Organizations	Local Equipment & Technology Vendors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles in newsletters • Brochures in program mailings • Outreach at resource fairs • Presentations to program participants • Staff referrals, placing posters in offices • Posting messages on email • Messages on bulletin boards • Open houses • Internet listservs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services for Students with Disabilities • University Affiliated Programs or Organizations • Special Education Personnel • Private Schools <p style="text-align: center;">Vocational Rehabilitation Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and Local branches of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) system • Private employment programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Resource Centers • Self-Advocacy Groups <p>Local agencies serving people in the areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Disabilities • Deafness/Hard of Hearing • Blindness/Vision • Psychiatric • Physical • Therapeutic Recreation Programs • Residential Programs • Local Disabilities Information and Referral programs • Governor's Commission on Disability Concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local churches, synagogues, & mosques • Faith-based service organizations <p style="text-align: center;">Support Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Groups • Teen Groups • Adult Groups <p style="text-align: center;">Youth Organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts • 4-H • Camp Fire • YMCA / YWCA • Boys & Girls Clubs • Big Brothers Big Sisters <p style="text-align: center;">Civic Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lions • Civitans • Kiwanis • Elks Club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility Device Vendors • Communication Device Vendors

***Michigan Outreach to Disability Organizations**

To assist national service programs with outreach and recruitment to the disability community, the Michigan Community Service Commission has created a spreadsheet of Michigan's disability organizations entitled *Michigan Disability Organization Database* available for download at:

<http://www.michigan.gov/mcsc/0,1607,7-137-55459---,00.html>



16 Tips in Recruiting Adult Volunteers

Recruiting the right people for the right program requires a commitment of time, energy, creativity and persistence, in addition to a well-considered plan. According to the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University, effective practices include:

1. Decide on the characteristics you want your volunteers to have

- Think about the goals of your project, the strengths and needs of the population it will be serving, and the activities the volunteers will be engaged in with families and youth.
- Consider the physical and time demands of your program. Factor in the requirements of grants that may be funding your program, including possible time limits on age, gender, or place of residence.

2. Develop a checklist of the most important requirements

The checklist you develop for your volunteer requirements will probably contain similar categories. When writing the volunteer job description, you might not choose to include all of the items you have checked off on your list. However, you should develop an application and interview process that helps you assess whether potential volunteers meet all the requirements.

3. Identify the barriers that may deter people from volunteering, which may include:

- Cultural myths and perceptions that old age is a time for relaxation, not learning or contribution.
- Lack of confidence in their ability to contribute – inability to translate their life experiences and skills to a particular program's needs.
- Fear about safety (i.e., having to use public transportation, go into a stranger's home, or concerns about drugs and crime associated with teens or low-income populations).
- Physical limitations, such as illnesses or lack of energy.
- Financial issues, including concerns that expenses associated with volunteering may strain their already limited financial resources.
- Lack of or difficulties with arranging transportation.
- Competition for volunteers is yet another obstacle – it is likely that many other organizations are trying to recruit the same "volunteer-minded" older adults you are targeting. In addition, baby boomers are staying in the workforce longer, or returning to it after retirement, thus limiting the time they have available to volunteer.

4. Think about what could motivate elderly people to volunteer for your program.

Identify strategies to address some of the barriers and encourage older adults to volunteer. For example, they might be interested in volunteering because it will give them the opportunity to:

- Increase their satisfaction with life by participating in an enjoyable and rewarding experience.
- Increase their sense of connection to the community.
- Feel productive.
- Address a social issue in a way that is consistent with their personal values.
- Use their skills and share their experiences, interests, and knowledge.



- Learn new skills.
- Learn more about youth.
- Make new friends through the volunteer experience.
- Leave a legacy for the younger generation.
- Also identify ways to address logistical barriers such as transportation and the perceived expense of volunteering. Will volunteers be serving in a location that is easily accessible to their homes? Can the program provide any financial incentives to help cover the volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses?

5. Develop a recruitment message that "sells your program."

What is it about your program's mission, goals, and population of participants you can "sell" in order to attract volunteers? In developing your message, consider:

- Motivations for volunteering.
- Volunteers' roles and responsibilities (including the length of time they will be expected to participate).
- Benefits of serving in your program. These could range from benefits to society (making a difference, strengthening a community) to the volunteers' self-interest (learning new skills, acquiring new knowledge, meeting new people) to stipends (if any). Be sure to include information about the training and ongoing support volunteers will receive.

6. Create recruitment materials that will catch people's attention.

A recruitment message can be adapted for a wide range of materials, from flyers and brochures to videos and websites. Be sure your print and other media materials reflect the feel and quality of your program.

- Make sure all materials convey the sense of professional expertise and purpose appropriate to the project. Use attractive graphics that draw attention to the materials and include your agency logo.
- Consider the audience when creating materials. Use language that is familiar to them. Make sure fonts are large enough for older adults to read comfortably. Choose colors that will be inviting to your target recruits. When appropriate, translate posters and materials into languages other than English (and be sure someone carefully checks the translation).
- When possible, use photographs and narratives to convey a sense of the program participants and volunteers. However, don't use images or stories that are sad or discouraging. Portraits of your program should be inviting and convey a sense of excitement, hope, and purpose. Be sure the photographs reflect the diversity of the pool of potential volunteers.
- To ensure your materials are appropriate and appealing, always have someone who is representative of the people you are targeting for recruitment review a draft and give you feedback.

7. Plan presentations that put a personal "face" on your program.

When giving presentations to recruit volunteers, use some of the following strategies to make your program less anonymous and the potential recruits less able to "hide" behind their own anonymity:



- Let people see the problem their volunteer work will address. People want to make a difference and are often motivated by their heart to volunteer. Use videos, success stories, and photographs to show the social problems the volunteers will address.
- Bring along an articulate, older volunteer who can share his or her experiences. If your program is just starting up, but is modeled after another program, you may be able to have a volunteer in that program accompany you to some presentations and convey his/her excitement.
- Conduct smaller, more intimate presentations. Though in some ways less efficient, presentations to small groups (less than 20) often work better than large group presentations because they reduce the possibility of anonymity among members of the audience.
- Actively involve your audience. Engage potential recruits in dialogue, asking questions such as, "How many of you are parents or grandparents?" "How many of you have ever known a child with a disability?" "How many teens in this city, would you guess, can't read a newspaper?" You can also engage the audience in brief activities – perhaps an example of one you use in training. This kind of interaction helps get people away from the "anonymity trap."
- Have materials that people can take home with them. These should include volunteer job descriptions, flyers/posters, application forms, general agency literature, and copies of any local or national news articles about the project.
- Allow time after presentations to interact informally with the people who have attended. Have refreshments available -- it encourages people to stay and talk. Give people something to remember you by. For example, a pencil, key chain, or refrigerator magnet imprinted with the name of your agency or organization.
- Never walk away from a meeting where you have given a talk without getting the names and contact information of those who are interested. Pass around an attendance sheet for people to sign who want to receive additional information. If possible, take applications and ask those who know they are interested to complete them on the spot. Be sure you get back to interested applicants within a week.

8. Use a range of recruitment strategies to reach volunteers.

Strategies for recruitment range from the uncomplicated and cost-free to the more complex and relatively inexpensive. These include:

- Word of mouth.
- Direct mail. Have personal letters written by your agency, sent through other organizations such as local civic associations, community groups, and local chapters of the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons).
- Information tables at community events.
- Presentations to community groups.
- Recruitment meals. These could be potluck dinners or breakfasts that include presentations about your program.
- Flyers, posters and brochures. Be sure the flyers are 8 1/2" by 11" so they can be easily mailed or posted on bulletin boards.

Key Point:
Remember there is not just one way to recruit volunteers. Use all the resources available to you!



- Articles or press releases in local and community newspapers. Take advantage of the fact that community newspapers are understaffed and looking for good copy. Write a one- or two-page press release describing your program and the need for volunteers, and include a high-quality black and white photograph.
- Other organizations' newsletters. Ask religious institutions and relevant local agencies and organizations to run your press release in materials they send out to their members.
- Presentations on local cable television shows. Look for programming that is aimed at the particular audience you are trying to reach.
- Public service announcements (PSAs). Send television stations a ready-made clip, 30 seconds to one minute long. Create radio PSAs that are 20, 30, 45, or 60 seconds in length, and send them to stations or programs that your potential volunteers or their relatives are likely to listen to.
- Web pages. During recruitment drives, have your message posted on websites that are likely places to be visited by older adults or their relatives. Possibilities include the AARP website or a local daily paper's sites. Be sure your recruitment message is marked "New!"

9. Start with what's in front of you.

Recruitment is all about relationships. Think about who you already know. Brainstorm with co-workers about strategies for recruitment. Survey staff, board members, and volunteers to find out what organizations they are or have been involved with -- as members or board members or in some other capacity -- that might be a good connection for your recruitment efforts.

- Think of everyone connected to your program as an assistant recruiter. Staff, volunteers, board members, trainers and consultants have all seen the program at work, and, with prompting, will translate their enthusiasm for the project into recruitment of friends and family members.
- Current volunteers can be your most effective recruiters. Ask them to talk to their peers about the benefits they have received by being part of the program, and make sure they have the resources (such as extra program materials) they need to recruit. You can formalize this approach by giving them "assignments" such as generating one new volunteer applicant every six months.
- You can also find recruiters outside of your program. Have the clergy at your church, synagogue or mosque -- or the clergy of your volunteers -- make a statement of support for the program. Use your wider social network. Enlist your relatives, friends and professional acquaintances, especially those who work at social service agencies or those who have connections to your desired group of volunteers.

10. Cast a wide net.

Do broad outreach to raise awareness of your program in the community. Developing connections with organizations that have credibility with the groups you are targeting can help your program gain visibility and access to those groups.

11. Target your recruitment efforts.

Identify the specific community agencies, institutions, and other groups that are most likely to help connect you with potential volunteers. The following steps can help you build on these initial contacts:



- Take the time to establish relationships with the most promising agencies and institutions. Request assistance from appropriate agency staff on the best way to publicize the project to their older constituents. One way to get them actively involved is to obtain commitments from them to provide a certain number of volunteers from their membership and to identify them as "partners" in all publicity. This approach can help you recruit groups of volunteers, but be aware that some "turf" issues may surface if your agency or program is "competing" with your potential partner agency to provide similar services.
- Meet with formal and informal community leaders, including block captains, activists, clergy, and local politicians. "Sell" the program to them. Invite them to an event or to be part of the program advisory board.
- Target geographically to neighborhood senior centers or high-rises and housing projects where many seniors live. Offer to give a talk as part of a committee or governance meeting.
- Request that a church or synagogue "adopt" your program. If that occurs, and a significant percentage of your volunteers are from that congregation, you can hold trainings and program events in its building. Be sure to give the church or synagogue public recognition for its "adoption."
- In addition, target mailing and outreach efforts to populations that are already interested in doing the work of your program or working with the population you are serving or are generally interested in volunteering.

12. Recruit more people than you actually need.

Assume that approximately 25 percent of the people who show some interest in your program will not follow through, that a significant number of those who do will not be appropriate for the program, and that some of those who are appropriate will drop out during training.

13. Pay attention to timing.

Recruitment may need to be ongoing throughout the duration of the program if attrition is high (some attrition is normal in all volunteer programs). However, most recruitment is likely to be accomplished during one or two major drives each year. Fall and spring are usually the best times for recruitment drives, but what is most important is to minimize the lag between recruitment and program start-up -- otherwise you may lose interested applicants. Once people are recruited and screened, begin training with little delay, and get the new volunteers involved in program activities as soon as possible.

14. Be sure your agency is ready to provide good customer service.

While recruiting volunteers, be sure your organization is ready to respond to the people who are interested enough to contact you for more information or to apply. Your agency should always be prepared to respond to inquiries from potential volunteers, even during periods when you may not be actively recruiting. Therefore:

- Have someone on your staff who is specifically responsible for responding to initial telephone inquiries.
- Develop guidelines for the staff member to follow.
- Have materials ready to mail to people who call.
- Be ready to follow up. If a caller completes and returns an application, be prepared to take the next steps.



15. Avoid the first "warm body" syndrome.

It is tempting to accept every applicant who wishes to volunteer for your program, but it would be a mistake. Not everyone will meet the requirements you have identified as necessary for serving effectively. Use a screening process that includes tools such as:

- A written application
- A face-to-face interview
- References
- Criminal record and child abuse checks (required in many states for anyone who works with children or youth)
- Some programs also use their training sessions as part of the screening process, particularly because the trainings present an opportunity to see how potential volunteers interact in a group setting. Depending upon the project, a physical examination might also be part of the screening. When the screening process reveals that an applicant is not appropriate for a particular project, offer that person another volunteer assignment in your agency or encourage the volunteer to apply at a partner agency that would welcome the person's particular skills.

16. Be patient and persistent.

Recruiting is almost always a challenge -- talking to dozens or even hundreds of people may only result in a few recruits. Don't take the frustration personally. Continue to be diligent and creative in your recruitment efforts. And also be sure to get support for yourself from other staff and peers.

Context

The decision to volunteer is usually a two-step process – a person thinks generally about becoming a volunteer and then a "trigger event" transforms this general thought into concrete action. The "trigger" is often something very simple: someone they know asks them to volunteer in a specific role, or they learn about an opportunity through an organization to which they belong. This two-step process suggests that it is important to create broad local visibility and name recognition so when people are ready to volunteer, they will know who you are and to target your recruitment so you are asking people who are ready to volunteer.

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