

The Planning and Implementation of a Volunteer Recruitment Campaign

The competition for volunteers' time has never been greater. More people are working full time, experiencing less leisure time, combining work and social life as hours in the work week increase. Quality family time competes with volunteering opportunities and the ever increasing number of local organizations involving volunteers creates a "volunteer's market." Unless an organization places an emphasis on meeting the needs and interests of its volunteers, it will find itself less and less competitive when recruiting new volunteers.

Future volunteer recruitment will place greater emphasis on the benefits of the work to the volunteer, identifying prospective volunteers, and personal contact in asking the individual to become involved in volunteering.

The greatest untapped source of volunteers is those who have not been asked – older Americans, youth, limited income and under-represented populations. In order to increase your organization's volunteer force, recruitment can't be arbitrary or casual; it must be planned. Consider the design and implementation of a volunteer recruitment campaign.

Your organization would probably not think of conducting a casual, year-round fund raising campaign that would solicit funds whenever an opportunity arose. Neither should volunteer recruitment be conducted in a hap-hazard manner. So, here's how to conduct a successful volunteer recruitment campaign.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN PLAN

1. Discuss needs with Program Advisory Committee
2. Develop a volunteer staffing plan and key volunteer roles – write volunteer role descriptions.
3. Organize a volunteer recruitment committee.
4. Select volunteer recruitment strategies.
5. Determine length of recruitment campaigns, dates and procedures.
6. Involve others.
7. Publicize
8. Implement plan
9. Screen and place, conduct orientation, and basic training.
10. Begin volunteer work.

STEP 1: *Discuss needs with Program Advisory Committee*

Gaining support of your county/community advisory council is essential to a successful volunteer recruitment plan. It is also fairly simple if your council is kept informed of the direction of your 4-H program. Their support will legitimize the time you will need to spend to broaden your base of support within the community. Key elements to gain support include:

1. Clearly communicate your goals and direction for your program. This needs to be done with your council on a continual basis so when a special effort like this is being planned, support is easy.
2. Have them identify needed volunteer roles by involvement in the assessment process.
3. Include some members on the recruitment campaign committee.

STEP 2: *Develop a volunteer staffing plan and key volunteer roles*

If you have your vision of a local volunteer delivery system plan and how to staff it, the next step is to identify the priority volunteer roles and develop appropriate volunteer descriptions.



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STEP 3: *Organize a volunteer recruitment committee.*

Selecting committee members for a volunteer recruitment campaign is more effective than asking for volunteers. Selecting also enables you to get individuals with skills and interests necessary for the job and ensures the committee isn't too large or small, and has the prerequisite knowledge and skills to implement an effective campaign.

- Committee of five to nine is the norm.
- Some can be as small as three members, others as large as 15.
- When size approaches 15, consider selecting subcommittees or dividing the task among several other committees of equal standing.

Orienting the committee is usually the responsibility of the committee chair. Members must understand the committees

- Purpose – to recruit new volunteers
- Assignment
- Expectations – individual and group

STEP 4: *Select volunteer recruitment strategies.*

Many different approaches can be taken when recruiting volunteers. A Gallup Survey done for Independent Sector reported that most people volunteer because someone personally asked them. After that the second most popular reason for volunteering was a friend or family member was already involved. One-to-one recruiting, personally asking someone to volunteer, is the most successful method of recruitment. Asking acquaintances or relatives or people already involved in the program works well. If every volunteer asked a friend to volunteer, the volunteer workforce could be doubled with little effort. People feel wanted and needed when they are asked to help. It is important to have a specific job in mind when asking someone to volunteer. People are busy and will find other things to do if they are not given responsibility right away.

Community meetings which bring together prospective volunteers can be so successful in recruitment. Potential volunteers should be personally invited to these meetings where your program can be explained. Often the most successful community meetings are run by volunteers who can relate their experiences to the recruits. A follow-up thank you for attending the community meeting may encourage a "fence sitter" to join the team.

A very small percentage of those people who volunteer do so because they had seen an advertisement in the media. While mass media is not the most effective way to recruit volunteers, it should not be overlooked. Mass media and public relations can enhance either of the above strategies by making people aware of our need for volunteers. In addition, an occasional volunteer can be recruited solely through having seen it in the paper or heard of our needs on the radio.

STEP 5: *Determine length of recruitment campaigns, dates and procedures.*

Establish dates of recruitment and devote 75 to 80 percent of official campaign time of all involved to recruitment for the duration of the recruitment campaign. As your volunteer recruitment campaign progresses it's important to determine how long the campaign will last. Good advice is to plan a concentrated approach in a short period of time to make the most impact. One to two weeks is a good time frame. This keeps your committee members interested and the potential volunteers fresh.

STEP 6: *Involve others.*

Who should YOU recruit? Should it be someone who knows many people in the neighborhood or community? Should it be a person with talents or knowledge that people admire? Should it be a "person with sales technique pizzas" and gets prospects to believe they should join the winning team – by being a volunteer? The answer is yes. Find a person with some of each of these characteristics in their personality. Add to that good



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communication skills, fun to work with, has a positive view of your program, and not afraid to ask others to volunteer. Research tells us 75 percent of those who were asked, agreed to volunteer.

Other volunteers may be needed to carry out the recruitment campaign. Along with your planning committee, select leaders with targeted areas in mind, such as location in county, age, interest areas, and ethnic background. Provide volunteers with the goals the campaign committee has set and the methods of recruiting that can be used. Also provide training in recruitment methods, if needed.

STEP 7: Publicize

An integral part of your recruitment plan is publicity, it yields a greater return. So the more you publicize your need for volunteers the more volunteers you are likely to recruit.

Publicity should begin before you implement your recruitment campaign. This way potential volunteers will be waiting to be asked, or at least familiar with your goals.

Publicity strategies you may want to try are

- Word-of-mouth: Make sure everyone in the community is talking about the recruitment campaign
- Posters: Should be placed where they can catch people's eyes to create awareness
- Newspapers: Will accept articles describing what you're doing and when, and be sure to include a phone number where interested people can call. Hand deliver it, if you can, to the editor and tell him/her about your campaign. The more he/she knows about 4-H and its mission, the more publicity he/she will give you.
- Radio and Television Stations and other methods: Have free public service time available.

Publicity is important. It lets the community know the value of the program and how they can contribute.

STEP 8: Implement plan

A good approach is to tell them exactly what you want. (*I would like you to be the project leader of our 4-H photography club.*) How much of their time will be involved. (*This club meets once a week for six weeks for about an hour.*) Tell them what they will get as a result of this experience. (*I think you will enjoy seeing the progress of these young people as they grow in confidence when they learn to do things. I think you will gain a lot of satisfaction from playing a part in their development.*) Sharing a volunteer position description which includes duties, skills, and knowledge needed, training available and time required is helpful. Finally, you should give them an opportunity to ask questions. Remember that volunteers report many benefits to their volunteering so don't enter this process with an apology as if you are asking a big favor. The fact is you are doing the prospective volunteer a favor!

STEP 9: Screen and place, conduct orientation, and basic training.

Interview prospective volunteers. Place them based on interests, skills, and time available. Establish firm dates(s) for orientation and training prior to beginning volunteer assignment.

STEP 10: Begin volunteer work.

Volunteer assignments begin with built in support system of salaried and volunteer staff.

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