

Reasons to Evaluate Volunteer Progress

Evaluation is a comparison between the volunteer's performance and the standards set earlier. The volunteer received feedback on their role performance. It sounds simple enough, and it can be. Everyone wants to know how they are doing in the role they are performing. Whether through a formal evaluation meeting or an informal discussion, volunteers want and need feedback about their performance. In addition, evaluation provides useful information about the over-all program.

Why Evaluate? Marilyn Lesmeister, OSU Extension Service, gives these reasons. Evaluate...Monitor where the program is at...Reflect on the quality of the current program...Find ways to improve the program...Discuss volunteer successes and build self-esteem...Build credibility within the community...Information to share with organizational and governmental decision-makers and the media...Because self-evaluation develops individual standards...Because it allows volunteers to share concerns and "escape" an unfavorable situation...To allow staff to share concerns and "dismiss" the volunteer if the situation requires that action...

Evaluation, like recognition, should be continuous. Ongoing, informal evaluation helps the volunteer stay on the right track. It is important, however, to schedule formal evaluation sessions to review volunteer performance. The time frame for formal evaluation should follow the time frame for the program in which the volunteer works. In other words, the conclusion of a particular program or cycle of service is a good time to conduct a formal evaluation session with the volunteer.

For a performance evaluation, you need cooperative, supportive dialog and a copy of the volunteer position description.

Helpful Evaluation Questions: What was your greatest success this year? What other duties did you perform successfully? How did you feel about the event of the year? What would you have done differently? Why? What could management volunteers or staff do to make your experience still better? What resources or training might you need in the future? Are you uncomfortable with any parts of this role? I felt that... (Give feedback, praise, and suggestions) Would you do this again? If not, let's look for another type of role you might enjoy more.

If the volunteer has been less productive than expected, consider some of these possible reasons for low volunteer productivity. They are taken from the Oregon State University's Family Community Leadership program.

Possible reasons for low volunteer productivity or morale:

1. Boredom: too much routine.
2. Discontent: personality differences
3. Idleness: Fluctuating workload, inefficient staffing structure
4. Lack of interest in the work
5. Ill-defined assignments
6. Inadequate supervision
7. Misunderstanding of policies and their purposes
8. Resentment, overload, or unrealistic deadlines
9. Poor communication within work team
10. Emotional stress and personal difficulties

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Volunteerism for the Next Generation

