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

Volunteerism for the Next Generation

Evaluating Volunteer Progress

"How am I doing?" We all ask ourselves that question. Many of the 50,000 thoughts we think each day are concerns about ourselves . . . our capability and even our lovability. Evaluation is a much needed response to that important question. Volunteers need and want to know how they are doing.

Evaluation is a comparison between the volunteer's performance and the standards set earlier. This feedback on role performance is very helpful.

Everyone wants to know how they're 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. Evaluation also provides useful information about the overall program.

When should evaluation be conducted? Evaluation, like recognition, should be continuous. Ongoing, informal evaluation helps the volunteer stay on the right track. It's 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.

What happens during a formal evaluation session? A cooperative, supportive dialogue with the volunteer is vital. The role agreement provides the content for the session. Discuss the duties and skills needed with each participant sharing feelings and perceptions. Items to discuss include:

1. What duties were you able to perform successfully?
2. What duties presented a problem for you?
3. How would you rate yourself in terms of the skills needed for this role?
4. Was the training you received adequate? What kinds of additional training or information would have been helpful to you?
5. What could staff have done to make your role more satisfying or manageable?
6. What is the next step for you as a volunteer?

If the volunteer has performed successfully, you may want to use this time to re-enlist him or her for another volunteer position. It's the perfect time for recognition.

What if the volunteer did a poor role? Sometimes, no matter how hard we try, the volunteer loses interest, lacks the necessary skills, or is unable to successfully carry out the agreed upon role. Pinpoint problem areas and determine whether the difficulties can be rectified. If you can't find a solution, thank the volunteer for his/her good intentions and look for a new volunteer for that role.

Don't compromise the basic performance standards. In most cases, you and the volunteer will be in substantial agreement as to whether the volunteer can succeed in your program. Consider whether there is some other role in the program that this volunteer can fill. If not, part in as friendly and professional a manner as possible. If possible, point out some possibilities for this volunteer's talents in Extension or in another organization. People do change. Someday, this person may be exactly right for a new position in your organization.

Evaluation may seem like a difficult phase of the volunteer delivery system to carry out. But if used correctly, evaluation can provide a systematic means to review and strengthen the program. It can also be a source of personal development and growth for volunteers in the organization.

The following are some sample evaluation forms. These allow for two-way evaluation by which the volunteer is evaluated and evaluates. Adapt these to your own program.

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Evaluation

ORGANIZATION EVALUATION OF A VOLUNTEER

Volunteer Name _____

Role Title _____

Demonstrated attitude toward role:

Relationships:
   With the organization:

   With other volunteers:

Other demonstrated qualities:

Benefits to the organization's mission from working with this volunteer:

Training/development of this volunteer:

Comments/recommendations:

Date _____

Signature of evaluator _____

Signature of volunteer _____

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VOLUNTEER EVALUATION OF THE EXPERIENCE

How would you describe your feelings about the time it took to accomplish your volunteer role? (Too many hours? Not enough?)

_____

_____

_____

Did we provide enough orientation and training? Do you have suggestions for us to improve our support of volunteers in the future?

_____

_____

_____

What has been most satisfying in your volunteer role?

_____

_____

_____

What do you feel has been your most valuable contribution in your volunteer role?

_____

_____

_____

What is most important to you in making your work with us more enjoyable?

_____

_____

_____

Did you have adequate resources to do your role? If no, please explain.

_____

_____

Other comments and/or recommendation:

_____

_____

_____

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Volunteer Evaluation Form
For 4-H Events, Activities, and Responsibilities

1. List 4-H Events, Activities, Responsibilities

2. Evaluate each Event, Activity, or Responsibilities using 1-10 Scale

1 = Low   10 = High

Total Columns and use totals to prioritize

The questions and/or statements under each item are provided for clarification only

2. REFLECTS NEEDS OF YOUTH IN YOUR UNIT - What needs have been identified earlier by those in your unit? - Does this program address those needs?									
3. HAS AVAILABLE ADEQUATE RESOURCES - Is there sufficient volunteer and/or salaried staff time to provide support for this program - Are materials and teaching aids available? - Is financial support adequate? - Is there an opportunity to pool resources with another unit agency or group?									
4. INVOLVES SIGNIFICANT AUDIENCE - How many participants are likely to be involved? - Is this an important affirmative action outreach?									
5. HAS CLEAR LEARNING OBJECTIVES - Are objectives clearly stated in terms of what the participants will learn?									
6. PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN LIFE SKILLS - Setting goals and making decisions - Feeling positive about oneself - Relating to other people - Developing an inquiring mind - Developing concern for the community									
7. MAKES A UNIQUE EDUCATIONAL CONTRIBUTION - Does the program provide information and experiences that are otherwise not available?									
8. ENCOMPASSES RELEVANT POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS - Are there support groups for the program? - Would there be a negative impact of some of the support bases were reduced or lost?									
9. INCLUDES SIGNIFICANT VOLUNTEER EFFORT - Are volunteers willing to carry out this program? - Are volunteers committed to it? - Are adequate numbers of volunteers available?									
TOTAL									

Events, Activities, Responsibilities (in order of rating left to right):

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