



8 Steps to a Winning Volunteer Engagement Strategy

1. Make volunteers feel needed and appreciated.

- Be prepared! Have materials ready ahead of time
- Make introductions!
- Create a welcoming environment at your agency
 - A casual welcome by the CEO or a welcoming smile by the receptionist are small gestures that make a difference!
- Coffee and a snack along with a big thank you go a long way to building loyalty.

2. Build flexibility into your volunteer opportunities.

- The more volunteer opportunities you can schedule in a variety of time slots/shifts the greater the pool of volunteers you will attract.
- Special events/one time projects are a great way to bring on new volunteers
- Be respectful of people's time!
 - Analyze the number of volunteers you will really need for a project and make your best estimate of how long the project will take to complete.
 - Volunteers become easily discouraged if they arrive planning to volunteer for 2 hours and the project is completed after half an hour.

3. Inspire volunteers with the cause not the organization.

- Inspire volunteers with real stories of people that have been helped by the program.
- Let them visualize the real-world challenges they will be helping address and solve.
- It is tempting to just copy and paste the volunteer job description or the agency's mission. **Resist the temptation!**
- Write a compelling message! Help volunteers see the difference their service will make!

Coats for Kids- Volunteers Needed!

Help us distribute 5,000 winter coats to children in need!

3 week commitment! November 9- December 1, 2019

Our artic Indiana winter is coming! Coats for Kids annually distributes over 5,000 winter coats, hats, gloves and scarves to the over 24% of children living in poverty in Allen County. Every year we hear stories from teachers about children arriving at school wearing sweatshirts in -10 degree weather and about families with siblings sharing one winter coat, taking turns wearing the one warm coat to school. The need is real!

4. Ask volunteers to help in specific action-driven ways.

- Instead of asking volunteers to join your cause be very specific in giving practical ways in which volunteers can help.
- Provide important tangible information: dates, times, location, address, etc.
- Make it easy for volunteers to find the information.
- Use bullets to highlight important information
- **For example:**
 - Instead of saying “Help Us Keep Children Warm This Winter!”

Coats for Kids- Volunteers Needed!

Help us collect and distribute 5,000 winter coats this winter!

3 week commitment! November 9- December 1, 2019

▪ **Opportunity #1: Store Coat Pick Up Volunteer**

- Collect coats three times a week at local stores & businesses
- Flexible schedule

▪ **Opportunity #2: Sort & Pack Volunteer Team**

- Sort coats and help pack orders for schools and local shelters
 - Saturdays December 7 & 14, 2019
 - Time: 9-12 pm
 - Location: Community Harvest North, 1010 N. Coliseum Blvd.

▪ **Opportunity #3: Coats for Kids Delivery Team**

- Deliver coats orders to local schools and homeless shelters;
- Flexible schedule
 - Delivery dates: December 9-12, 2019
 - Time: 9 am
 - Location: Community Harvest North, 1010 N. Coliseum Blvd.

5. Stay connected to your volunteers and ensure communication flows both ways.

- Keep in touch on a regular basis. Find out your volunteer’s preferences for communications and accommodate as much as you can.
- Offer trainings if possible; Share information about updates at the organization.
- Take volunteer feedback to hear! Be ready to listen to their suggestions and input. Often volunteers hear things about the organization that you need to address.

6. Show your volunteers how they made a difference.

- Share with your volunteers the results of their hard work.
- If possible, share a photo. (For example food sorted, coats packed, animal toys prepared, etc.)
- You can share stats on how many families were served, what the difference the service made to the families, the impact of their volunteer service on the agency (could compare volunteer hours in FTE equivalent)

7. Boost volunteer engagement by showing your gratitude & appreciation!

- Volunteering is the ultimate sugar high! People are energized and excited after their volunteer work. Show your appreciation!
- Never underestimate the value of a hand written note.
- Volunteer appreciation does not have to be expensive to be well received. A hand written note or a small gift card if the budget allows are all small ways to show your gratitude.

8. Create a sense of community by making volunteering fun!

- We are all social creatures!
 - As much as possible, make your volunteer opportunities a time for fun and an environment where friendships can develop.
- Increase volunteer engagement by connecting volunteers not just to your organization but to other volunteers.
 - The personal connection to other fellow volunteers can create positive feeling and bond volunteers to the organization.