

Volunteers the Heart of the Community Information for Leadership Advisory Boards



Every human being has a circle of influence within their home, among their friends and their community that contribute in a positive way to society. Many feel that volunteering contributes to the uplifting of society and most importantly a great future for the next generation.

Program development is an integral part of many organizations and volunteers are the vehicle in which many programs are delivered. Without effective volunteers many programs would not exist today. Volunteers help to identify needs in the community and provide the manpower to implement the programs developed to those needs. The ISOTURE model is an effective way to volunteer management (Boyce, 1971).

- The **identification** is the first step in finding willing individuals who have the competencies and abilities to fulfill leadership roles. The following questions must be answered: what are the needs of the program?; what jobs need to be done?; are position descriptions written for these jobs?
- The process of **selection** is crucial in matching the abilities of the volunteer to the requirements of the job. In addition, criminal background checks, interviews and references are becoming standard for all volunteer organizations. The following are key components to selling or marketing the volunteer role: Ask!; Greet the person by name and with eye contact; Find out what the interests are of the volunteer; Offer the volunteer a choice of jobs; Invite the volunteer to visit the office to see the support given by paid staff; Provide training opportunities; Follow up with personal visits with a note, e-mail or telephone call; Put the volunteer to work no more than 10 days after they time they say "yes".
- The process of **orientation** should occur very soon after the volunteer has been recruited and selected. The volunteer will need to know general information about the organization but most importantly the specifics that will help them be successful in their role. The following are key components of the orientation: Agency/Organizations mission, vision, values, philosophy, objectives and staffing pattern; Volunteer job responsibilities and expectations; Assess and need for future training specific to their role; A printed job description with any adjustments based on the volunteers need of abilities.
- **Training** will stimulate and prepare volunteers in regards to knowledge, attitude and skills that will be necessary to carry out their roles. For training to be effective the organization must have the following in place: Annual training calendar; Basic and advance training based on job needs; Training occurs preceding the time it will be applied; Allow for individualized instruction at any time; Involve knowledgeable volunteers as instructors; Maintain accurate and up to date records on volunteers and their training.
- To **utilize** the volunteer, allows them to put into action their training and skills. Keys to success are a support environment, and a supervisor and peers that treat all paid and unpaid staff equally.
- **Recognition** should be provided to reward quality volunteer performance. Volunteers need to be thanked and feel appreciated for their work to be meaningful. Such a sense of satisfaction will result in dedication. Formal means of recognition include: certificates, newspaper articles, banquets, plaques and other gestures in front of peers. Informal ways to recognize include: word of thanks, hand written note, pat on the back.
- **Evaluation** is both important to the volunteer and the organization. The process will determine the results of the volunteer performance and give useful feedback to all parties. This type of feedback can assist the supervisor in discovering new leadership potential and how to best utilize volunteers. Volunteers want to know the following: How they are doing?; What they do well?; How can they improve?; Voice their opinion; Make suggestions to the program.

There is no doubt that the time invested in volunteer driven programs is well worth it. The percentage of time a paid staff volunteer coordinator devotes to volunteer management, the capacity of the organization to take on additional volunteers has increased. Furthermore, investments in volunteer management and benefits derived from volunteers feed on each other. Thus, investments bring benefits and benefits justify greater investments.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; it's the only thing that ever has."

-Margaret Mead