

# TAKE ROOT:



## VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

### Guidebook





# TAKE ROOT: Volunteer Management

Dear Colleagues,

As a training and technical assistance provider for grantees of the Corporation for National and Community Service, Hands On Network is delighted to share with you this guidebook on Volunteer Management.

Hands On Network has developed a new generation of volunteer engagement techniques—tailored to today’s community service organization. These techniques make the Hands On Network training curriculum dynamic, innovative, impact oriented, and easily applicable to your program.

This guidebook was developed to help national service programs explore the basics of volunteer management. It is meant to be a user-friendly resource for developing volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition strategies and methods of offering projects for diverse audiences. This guide does not prescribe how your programs should be structured; it does, however, provide resources you can adapt to meet your local program needs.

The goal of this guidebook is to provide information that will help your program take root, leverage volunteers, and grow. To that end, the guidebook contains action-oriented sections to help you recruit, schedule, retain, and recognize volunteers. In addition, each chapter includes an activities and templates section with tools to assist you in applying the guidebook content to your program.

If you are interested in further training or technical assistance, please contact us at [training@handsonnetwork.org](mailto:training@handsonnetwork.org). You can also access free eLearning courses and other valuable resources in the CNCS Resource Center at <http://www.nationalserviceresources.org>.

In Service,

Delores Druilhet Morton  
Director, Training and Leadership Development



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# CHAPTER I

## Volunteer Recruitment

### OVERVIEW

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Without volunteers, most not-for-profits would cease to exist or would otherwise suffer a drastic reduction in capacity to serve communities and achieve the mission of the organization. Recruitment is the first step in securing volunteer participation in your national service program. This chapter will help you explore the basics of recruitment and how to create a recruitment strategy.

### GOALS

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- Understand volunteer motivation
- Explore basics of recruitment
- Develop a recruitment strategy

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- Volunteer Recruitment: Tips from the Field
- Marketing Volunteer Opportunities to Baby Boomers
- Reaching Out to Potential Volunteers with Disabilities
- Volunteer Recruitment Websites
- Using Tag Lines to Attract On-line Volunteers



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## VOLUNTEER MOTIVATION

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Before you can begin recruiting volunteers for your project, you must first understand who volunteers and why. In a report released in December 2004, the Bureau of Labor Statistics noted Americans' strong commitment to volunteering. Between September 2003 and September 2004, about 64.5 million Americans engaged in volunteer work! Many factors people to volunteers. Some reasons include:

- They were personally asked.
- An organization with which they are affiliated is participating.
- They have a personal connection to the mission of the project or organization.
- They enjoy the type of work being performed.
- They want to learn new skills.
- They want to meet people.

One study from Independent Sector (2001) reports that 71% of people asked to volunteer, did.

Volunteering is also a great way to develop personal and professional skills. These skills include cultural awareness, creativity, problem solving, and teamwork. Volunteering can also meet motivational needs, as outlined by McClelland and Atkinson's Motivational Theory. According to this theory, people have three separate motivational needs, with one being predominate:

### Affiliation

The affiliation-motivated person needs personal interaction, works to make friends, likes to get involved with group projects, and needs to be perceived as a "good" person.

### Achievement

The achievement-motivated person needs specific goals to work toward, seeks responsibility, sticks to tasks until completed, and sees problems as challenges.

### Power

The power-motivated person needs to impact and influence others, can work alone or in a group, can respond to needs of people or programs, and keeps an eye on overall goals of the agency.

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Understanding why people volunteer and their motivational needs will help you target your recruitment strategies to engage the volunteers you need to achieve your project goals. While some volunteers may only relate to their own personal reasons for volunteering, you must articulate the relationship between the work of the project and the benefit to either the community or the volunteer. You can convey this and other motivating messages in your recruitment efforts.

## RECRUITMENT BASICS

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Recruitment is the process of enlisting volunteers into the work of the program. Because volunteers give their time only if they are motivated to do so, recruitment is not a process of persuading people to do something they don't want to do. Rather, recruitment should be seen as the process of showing people they can do something they already want to do.

People already know that there are problems in the world, that people, the environment and animals need the support of people who care. As a volunteer recruiter it is your job to enroll people into knowing they are that person who cares, give them incentives to volunteer, and point out exactly how they are capable of helping.

## Your Program's History, Culture, and Cause

Before you begin to recruit, be sure you understand your national service program's history, culture, and cause. You should be able to answer the following questions:

- How do we typically use our volunteers (committed or not, mostly service days, randomly or regularly)?
- Which programs are successful? Which are/were not?
- With whom have we collaborated? Which of those unions were successful? Which were not?
- What publicity, good or bad, has our program received that may affect our recruitment efforts?
- Can we speak knowledgeably about our program's mission/cause?
- Do we feel comfortable speaking to how the projects of the national service program will help achieve the mission?
- Can we clearly articulate to volunteers how their work will contribute to the program's mission and goals?
- Is our workplace open and friendly to volunteers?



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- Would we recommend volunteering in our program to close friends and family? Why or why not?

## Determining Volunteer Needs

Effective volunteer recruitment begins with a volunteer program that is well planned and executed and that offers meaningful work. Program staff should clarify the work that needs to be done to achieve the goals of the project/program and then segment that work into components that reflect the reality of today's work force.

You will need to consider the type(s) of volunteers you need for your project or program. Think beyond your traditional volunteer base. Do you need someone with many hours to devote to the project, or people who want to serve only one afternoon? Is the project appropriate for children, seniors, or other people with different abilities and needs? Some trends and groups to consider include:

### Long-term volunteering

Long-term service provides volunteers the opportunity to commit to a project or program that spans an extended period of time.

### Short-term/episodic volunteering

Episodic volunteer opportunities include those that are of short duration and those that occur at regular intervals, such as annual events.

### Family volunteering

Family volunteering provides volunteers the opportunity to participate in meaningful service while spending time with their families.

### Student volunteering

Through volunteering with schools and youth groups, young people gain valuable knowledge and skills.

### Internships

Through internships, fellowships, and apprenticeships, students gain valuable experience while serving the community service organization.

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## Virtual volunteering

Virtual volunteering allows anyone to contribute time and expertise without ever leaving his or her home.

For many volunteer opportunities, you can work with an advisory team or conduct a survey to identify volunteer assignments that will help advance the goals of the program. If you are working on a specific service project, you can determine your volunteer needs through developing a task list. Consider what you want to accomplish and the tasks needed; then create a comprehensive list of the assignments and the number of volunteers needed for each task.

## Volunteer Position Descriptions

The volunteer position description is a very useful tool. It outlines responsibilities, support, and benefits of specific volunteer opportunities. It also strengthens your recruitment efforts because it defines the assignment, skills, abilities, and interests necessary to perform the task successfully.

A volunteer position description should include the following components:

### Title

Provide a descriptive title that gives the volunteer a sense of identity. This will also help program staff and other volunteers understand the assigned role.

### Purpose/objective

Use no more than two sentences to describe the specific purpose of the position. If possible, state the purpose in relation to the nonprofit's mission and goals.

### Location

Describe where the person will be working.

### Key responsibilities

List the position's major responsibilities. Clearly define what the volunteer is expected to do as part of this assignment.



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## Qualifications

Clearly list education, experience, knowledge, skills, and age requirements. Also note if the opportunity is accessible to people with disabilities. If a background check is required, it should be indicated here.

## Time commitment

Note the length of the assignment, hours per week, and/or other special requirements.

## Training/support provided

Define nature and length of all general and position-specific training required for the assignment. Also list resources and other support available to the volunteer.

## Benefits

Describe benefits available to volunteer, such as a lunch, T-shirt, development opportunities

## Volunteer supervisor and contact information

List the staff person or volunteer leader who will be working most directly with the volunteer and his/her contact information.

## RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

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You have determined your volunteer needs and created a task list and/or position descriptions for the assignments. The next step is to create a recruitment strategy to determine whom you will ask to volunteer and how you will ask them.

First, examine the volunteer positions to be filled. Ask yourself these questions:

- Who will be qualified for and interested in this position?
- Who will be able to meet the time commitments?
- Where will you find these people?
- What motivates them to serve?
- What is the best way to approach them?

Now that you have decided on who, you need to start thinking about how to target them.

Remember that different messages will appeal to different audiences, so you will want to use a variety of recruitment methods. You can use targeted recruitment that is focused

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and addressed to a specific audience where people will have the skills, interests, and availability needed to fill your positions. Broad-based recruitment can be effective for positions requiring minimal training or for when you need a lot of people for a short-term event.

Here are just a few ways of recruiting volunteers:

- The personal ask is always the most compelling!
- Post your volunteer opportunity on the Web, using your program's Web site or another site such as [volunteermatch.com](http://volunteermatch.com).
- Strategically post flyers or brochures in the community.
- Partner with volunteers from a school, corporation, community center, faith-based group, or other non-profit.
- Utilize local media (e.g., newspapers and radio) to spread the word about your volunteer opportunities.
- Network with community groups and leaders.
- Use on-line forums and/or blogs to spread the word.

No matter the volunteer opportunity, you should have some idea of where to look for volunteers in your community. Consider a wide range of individuals and groups that are potential volunteers for your program or project, as well as locations to post flyers and brochures:

- Faith-based groups and/or houses of worship
- Military bases or retired military groups
- Unions and trade workers associations
- Sororities and fraternities
- Teacher's associations
- Retired firefighter, police, and executive associations
- Moms' groups
- Realtors (welcome wagon packages)
- Independent living homes
- Disability services groups
- Scouts, 4-H, Boys & Girls Clubs, or other youth organizations
- Other national service programs
- Grocery store billboards
- Bingo halls



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- Doctors' offices
- Public transit stations
- Shopping malls
- Corporate buildings
- Job counseling offices
- Schools
- Salons
- Restaurants
- Newsletters

Don't forget to get permission to display information in specific locations. You may want to ask the owners/managers to attend an orientation so they can better inform interested volunteers who pick up a flyer.

Here are some other tips to build volunteer initiatives:

- Make sure all staff know about the opportunities available for volunteering with your program and where to refer interested volunteers.
- Integrate volunteer management skills into staff training.
- Visit off-site volunteer projects so that the volunteers associate your program with the project.
- Use surveys to find out the interests of volunteers.
- Use colorful descriptions for volunteer positions that are clear and straightforward.
- Try not use the word "volunteer" on marketing pieces. You run the risk of attracting only those who already volunteer or other volunteer managers.

Remember that anyone can be a volunteer. People vary by age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, and income. Not all volunteers are the same and not all types of volunteering will appeal to all groups, so have diverse volunteering opportunities available and target recruitment in ways that will appeal to different groups.

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Your recruitment strategy is the key to engaging the right number of people with the right skills, interest, and availability for the job. Make sure to plan for a wide variety of volunteers at your project. If you have too few participants, the project will likely go unfinished. If you have too many, some volunteers will have little to do and might feel that their time was ill spent. The next chapter will offer tips on using project calendars to schedule volunteers for various service opportunities.

The above information is a compilation of materials from Make A Difference, a member organization of Hands On Network; *Volunteer Management* by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch (1997); <http://www.serviceleader.org>; and <http://www.independentsector.org>.



## Activities and Templates

The training and implementation tools in this section will help you identify your volunteer needs and develop your recruitment strategy. This section includes:

- History, Culture, and Cause Worksheet
- Volunteer Position Description Worksheet
- Recruitment Strategy Worksheet

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## HISTORY, CULTURE, AND CAUSE WORKSHEET

Before you begin to recruit, be sure you understand your national service program's history, culture, and cause. Take a few minutes to answer these questions:

How do we typically use our volunteers? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Which programs are successful? Which are/were not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

With whom have we collaborated? Which of those unions were successful? Which were not, and why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What publicity, good or bad, has our program received that may affect our recruitment efforts? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Can we speak knowledgeably about our program's mission/cause? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do we feel comfortable speaking to how the projects of the national service program will help achieve the mission? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





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Can we clearly articulate to volunteers how their work will contribute to the program's mission and goals? \_\_\_\_\_

Is our workplace open and friendly to volunteers? \_\_\_\_\_

Would we recommend volunteering in our program to close friends and family? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_



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## VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION WORKSHEET

Use the worksheet below to outline responsibilities, support, and benefits of specific volunteer opportunities. Remember to be as detailed as possible and use clear language — no jargon or acronyms that new volunteers may not understand.

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose/objective: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Key responsibilities: \_\_\_\_\_

Qualifications: \_\_\_\_\_

Time commitment: \_\_\_\_\_

Training/support provided: \_\_\_\_\_

Benefits: \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Program website: \_\_\_\_\_





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## RECRUITMENT STRATEGY WORKSHEET

Develop a strategy for how you will recruit volunteers for your project. Determine whom you will ask to volunteer and how you will recruit them.

### Volunteer Needs

How many volunteers are needed for the project? \_\_\_\_\_

By what date must volunteers be secured? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the time commitment required for this project? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the minimum age requirement for volunteers? \_\_\_\_\_

Is the project accessible to persons with disabilities? \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe what volunteers are needed for (include position descriptions if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe special skills, knowledge, or qualifications required: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



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## Recruitment Audience

Who will be qualified for and interested in this position? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who will be able to meet the time commitments? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where will we find these people? \_\_\_\_\_

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What motivates them to serve? \_\_\_\_\_

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What is the best way to approach them? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Recruitment Plan

What methods can we use (brochures, Web posts, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

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With what groups can we partner (faith-based groups, civic organizations, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Where can we post/distribute recruitment information? \_\_\_\_\_

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What are specific ways/places we can target diverse audiences? \_\_\_\_\_

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## CHAPTER 2

# Volunteer Scheduling

### OVERVIEW

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The way you plan your service projects will significantly affect the success of your volunteer recruitment. Imagine being a potential volunteer: You are a single parent whose only “family time” is on the weekends, a woman who works swing shift, or a large youth group. How does your program offer projects that appeal to these volunteers? This chapter will help you discover ways to maximize your recruitment efforts and strengthen your volunteer base by working with volunteer’s schedules and using project calendars.

### GOALS

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- Work with volunteers’ schedules
- Create project calendars

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- Service Events Calendar
- Managing Volunteers
- Using a Weblog to Manage Information and Promote Communication
- Using a Database-driven Website to Connect Students with Community Volunteer Opportunities



## WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS' SCHEDULES

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Just as volunteers come from different backgrounds and community groups, they also have a wide variety of schedules. In order to engage the highest number of volunteers, consider ways to coordinate service events for people with varying schedules, needs, and interests.

- Include volunteer efforts at different times of day and different days of the week.
- Have flexible hours or recruit volunteers to serve in shifts instead of an entire day.
- Plan projects around multiple impact areas or diverse opportunities within a single issue.
- Offer family-friendly projects in which parents and their children can serve together.
- Provide opportunities for first-time volunteers and for volunteers with more advanced skills.
- Plan projects for individuals and for groups.
- Include indoor and outdoor projects.
- Offer short-term and long-term projects.

## PROJECT CALENDARS

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A project calendar is a listing of available volunteer opportunities and other information about your program or projects. Project calendars are a great way to inform volunteers about upcoming service projects, recruit new volunteers, and engage new project sponsors.

In addition to an actual calendar outlining volunteer opportunities for the month, project calendars should include a brief description of projects listed. Sort project descriptions according to impact area (e.g., health, the elderly, education) and be sure to outline important details such as age requirements, times, locations, the number of volunteers needed, how to register, and the project leaders' contact information. Don't forget to specify who the project is appropriate for, such as families, first-time volunteers, or volunteers with specific skills.



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Project calendars can be used for more than detailing the upcoming projects. You can also use the calendar as a newsletter to spotlight certain volunteers or projects, give updates on your national service program, share news flashes, and highlight special events. Other calendar items could be volunteer orientation and recognition events.

## On-line Calendars

Maintaining your project calendar on-line is ideal for updating frequently and providing volunteers with the most current details and project information. On-line calendars also provide a search option so volunteers can more easily find opportunities that appeal to them. You can include an on-line pre-registration and/or project orientation. Software such as Hands On Technology can help you build and maintain an on-line project calendar.

## Print Calendars

You can publish a monthly or even weekly project calendar as a newsletter. Here are a few suggestions:

- Keep articles short.
- Include pictures.
- Make it consistent, readable, and easy to follow.
- Use a variety of serious issues and happy things.
- Involve program staff and volunteers in writing articles.
- Mail the project calendars to volunteers, partners, supporters, and other interested individuals.
- Distribute the calendars where you can reach prospective volunteers, as determined in your recruitment strategy.

Offering diverse service opportunities for volunteers and marketing the events through project calendars are great recruiting tools. Current and prospective volunteers will be more informed about upcoming projects that fit their schedules, needs, and interests. The next chapter will offer suggestions for retaining volunteers once they are recruited and registered for your projects.

Part of the above information is adapted from materials from Hands On Charlotte, a member organization of Hands On Network.



## Activities and Templates

The training and implementation tools in this section will help you identify ways to offer projects that meet volunteers' interests, skills, and availability. This section includes:

- Project Appeal Activity



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## PROJECT APPEAL ACTIVITY

Brainstorm ideas for projects that would appeal to the different types of volunteers listed below. Be sure to think about projects that meet volunteers’ schedules, needs and interests, including projects that occur at different times, have flexible hours, address various impact areas, and require skilled and/or first-time volunteers.

Long-term Volunteers:

Short-term Volunteers:

Families:

Youth:



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Interns:

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Virtual Volunteers:

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## CHAPTER 3

# Volunteer Retention

### OVERVIEW

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The best way to increase your volunteer base is to retain current volunteers. Retention is simply a matter of making volunteers feel good about themselves and their service. It includes motivating volunteers before the project, engaging them during the project, and leading them to reflect on the project. This chapter will provide you with tips for retaining volunteers for your program and projects.

### GOALS

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- Motivate volunteers before the project
- Engage volunteers during the project
- Reflect after the project

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- Using Volunteer Retention Principles to Examine Program Strengths and Challenges
- Care and Feeding of Volunteers
- Creating a Volunteer Handbook
- Resolving Conflict Between Volunteers
- Engaging Staff in Reducing the Volunteer Attrition Rate



## BEFORE THE PROJECT: MOTIVATION

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From the very beginning of volunteers' involvement in your service activities, you should maintain good communication with them. Motivate them to stay interested and involved in your project with a few simple steps:

- Be prompt in your response to phone calls/e-mails. Return volunteer calls or e-mails within 24 hours.
- Be thorough in your explanation of the volunteer duties. Volunteers will be more likely to sign up if they know exactly what they will be doing, and they will know what to expect at the project.
- Use this opportunity to teach potential volunteers about the issue area, the community service organization they will be serving, and the potential impact of the project.
- Use their names often; this helps develop a personal connection.
- Keep the commitments you make. People will not support you if you don't provide information requested, address issues they bring up, and/or miss scheduled appointments.

Continue to be in contact with your team. Keeping volunteers motivated and excited about your project is the best guarantee for success! The more contact you provide, the more engaged your volunteers will be, and the more motivated they will be when they arrive. Also, respond to people's inquiries in a timely and thorough manner.

Make sure to confirm project details with them. Contact volunteers with a phone call or e-mail that:

- Introduces you (or another staff person, partner, or volunteer) as the project leader
- Thanks them for volunteering
- Provides the date and time of the project, service site address, directions, and parking information
- Describes what will occur at the project
- Lets volunteers know what to wear or not wear to the project
- Encourages volunteers to bring supplies they may have
- Tells volunteers whom to contact if they have a change in plans



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By communicating all details and project background to volunteers and staying in touch with them frequently, they will begin to create an attachment to the affiliate and the project even before they arrive. Thus they are more likely to show up on the day of the project and want to stay involved with your program for future volunteer opportunities.

## DURING THE PROJECT: ENGAGEMENT

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Volunteer management incorporates elements of project and volunteer management. Having a well-planned and well-run project will make the volunteer experience more enjoyable and meaningful, thus they will be more likely to engage in future service.

On the day of the project, designate an area for volunteers to “check in.” This will allow you to better manage volunteers that attend the project and effectively track their volunteer hours. Welcome volunteers as they arrive. Use nametags at the project and get to know your volunteers. Introduce volunteers to one another to encourage interaction.

### Orientation & Training

Have the Project Leader and/or agency representative give a brief (5-10 minute) orientation. The orientation should include an overview of the agency’s mission and services, and how volunteer support is contributing to that mission.

Discuss the community issue that is being addressed by the agency and/or the project. This segment could include a brief history of the issue, current statistics, current events related to the issue area (e.g., legislation activity), and other civic engagement opportunities linked to this issue (e.g., advocacy training, future service projects).

The orientation and education portion of the project has many positive impacts on volunteers. It allows them to:

- See the impact they are having on the agency and its clients
- Feel a greater part of a whole, when they see all the services the agency provides
- Better understand the critical needs of the community
- Better understand how to effect change within the issue being addressed

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Orientation makes volunteers feel connected to the agency, clients, or their community, and makes their work more meaningful, and in turn makes them more likely to engage in future service.

After the orientation, give a brief outline of the project and what volunteers will be doing during the project, so that everyone knows what to expect and what is expected of them. Also be sure to allow time for training volunteers for any specialized tasks or skills they will need to successfully complete the project.

## Utilization

Make sure everyone has something to do. Underutilization is one of the biggest threats to retention. If people do not feel needed, they will not come back.

## Balancing Different Personalities

Working with groups can be challenging. Understanding volunteers' personalities can help you position them in different teams of your project so they have the best chance of personal success and compatibility with you and other volunteers. Some volunteers want to lead, some want to socialize, some pay attention to details, and others are compassionate and dependable. You may also encounter volunteers who are headstrong, who aren't actively involved, or who complain excessively.

When you are dealing with groups, you are almost guaranteed to encounter clashing personalities. Just remember: opposite personalities can complement one another if they try to understand the other's perspective. Treat every individual with dignity and respect:

- Talk openly and professionally with your volunteer to try to eliminate the problem.
- Consult with another staff person or volunteer leader who can troubleshoot with you on ways to resolve the problem.
- Document any incidents immediately and contact the office if you do not feel you can resolve the problem.
- If a client is causing problem, consult with the agency contact immediately. The agency is responsible for managing the clients; you are responsible for managing the volunteers.



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It is important to recognize and deal with problem volunteers. You cannot just ignore the problem and expect it to go away. It will affect other volunteers and their experience, and may influence them negatively.

## Project Closure

- Always leave time for clean up. Utilize your volunteers to assist with this!
- Review the accomplishments of the day (e.g., number of meals served, walls painted, boxes sorted, etc.) so volunteers have an idea of the impact of their service. Discuss how these accomplishments may have affected the service recipients.
- Reflect on the project (see below).
- Invite volunteers to participate in future service and take future action related to the issue or national service program.

## AFTER THE PROJECT: REFLECTION

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Reflection is an important part of offering closure to a project. Reflection allows volunteers to stop for a moment, think about what they've accomplished, share their experiences, and offer feedback for future projects or ideas for how they will continue to address the social issue. Reflection is designed to encourage volunteers to examine the project so that they see the impact of their service. Understanding how their service impacts the community will encourage volunteers to be involved in future projects.

Reflection can be conducted in many ways. Volunteers can have a group discussion, write about their experience, create a photo-journal of the project, or respond to quotes about service. Be creative and allow for interaction. Encourage each volunteer to contribute to the discussion and make sure that all volunteers have an opportunity to share their thoughts.

Sample questions for reflection discussion:

- What did you learn today—about the agency, your fellow volunteers, the service recipients, or yourself?
- How do you feel about the project? Was it worthwhile? Was it time well spent?

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- What would you change about this project?
- Do you plan to take future action related to this issue?
- What other ideas or opinions can you offer this program or project?

Be creative in how you offer reflection activities. Here are a few ideas:

**Web of Service:** Have the group stand in a circle. Holding the end of a ball of string, hand the ball off to another participant. Ask him or her to reflect on a particular question (e.g., what was something new you learned today?). Once she has answered the question, she should hold on to her piece of the string and pass the ball onto someone else. Continue the process until everyone has reflected on the question and has a section of string in his or her hands. When completed, you should have something that looks like a web. When everyone has answered, make some points about the interconnectedness of people, how they are all part of the solution, for if one person had not contributed to their service projects the outcome would've been different. End with another question and have the volunteers retrace their steps passing the string in reverse order.

**Talking Object:** Gather volunteers in a circle or semi-circle, offer a “talking object” to pass around the circle as people answer reflection questions.

**One to Three Words:** Each person shares one to three words to describe the service activity or how he/she feels about the service activity or anything else regarding the project.

**Poetry:** Have volunteers write a sentence about the project. Gather these sentences. Then after a few months/weeks, compile the sentence into a poem or story.

**Quotes of Service:** Quotes are useful to encourage volunteer reflection. Project leaders can read the quote and ask for a response or simply let the volunteers silently reflect on the words as they part from each other.

“Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It’s important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It’s the way in which we ourselves grow and develop...”

— Dr. Dorothy I. Height president and CEO of the National Council of Negro Women



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“No joy can equal the joy serving others.” —Sai Baba

“When you give to others, you speak a silent but audible thank you. Appreciation for others and ourselves is life and spirit for each and every one of us.”

—Submitted and written by Kara “Cherry” Whitaker, 14 years old, Ohio

“You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.”

—Winston Churchill

Be sure to thank volunteers for their efforts and inform them of upcoming projects. For volunteers who frequently return to your projects or who show leadership or desire additional responsibilities, delegate tasks to get them more involved and connected to your project or to allow them to enhance skills. Let them make phone calls, send e-mails, be in charge of specific tasks, etc. Encourage them to become a Volunteer Leader.

Retaining volunteers is essential to the success of your program. From project beginning to end, volunteers need to feel good about themselves and their service. You can accomplish this through motivation, engagement, and reflection. Many times retention and recognition are so closely related that they are actually interdependent on one another. The next chapter will offer many tips and suggestions for recognizing volunteers for their service efforts.

The above information is a compilation of materials from *Make A Difference*, a 501(c)(3); *Volunteer Management* by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch (1997); <http://www.e-volunteerism.com>; and <http://www.hiresuccess.com/pplus-3.htm>.



## Activities and Templates

The training and implementation tools in this section will help you explore volunteer retention methods, including project reflection and volunteer communication. This section includes:

- Reflection Directions Activity
- Volunteer Project Information Form



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## REFLECTION DIRECTIONS ACTIVITY

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Working with your small group, reflect on today's workshop using one of the exercises below:

### Activity 1

As a group, discuss today's session. Reflect on what you learned and how it will apply to your national service program. Share at least one action step that you will take as a result of what you've learned today.

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### Activity 2

Draw a cartoon about today's session. Illustrate what you learned, new ideas you discovered, and/or practices you will adopt.



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## Activity 3

Write a poem about today's session. Through the poem, reflect on things you learned and how you will utilize the information in your national service program.

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## Activity 4

Create and perform a dance that illustrates your experiences with volunteer management. Include how today's session has enhanced your knowledge and/or taught you new ideas to try with your national service program.

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## Activity 5

Create and sing a song or jingle about today's session. What did you learn, what new ideas did you discover, and how will this workshop affect the way you work with volunteers?

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## Activity 6

Think of one word that describes today's session. Write it in large capital letters going down the left side of the page. Pass the paper to the person on your left and have that person write a sentence beginning with the first letter of your word. The sentence should be a reflection on the workshop, including things learned or next steps. Continue passing the paper until every letter has a sentence.

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## Activity 7

Think about an answer to this question: "What will you do as a result of things learned in today's session?" Then act out your answer while the other group members try to guess what you're trying to convey. Continue until each person has had a chance to act. Debrief by asking questions to clarify or expand thoughts, feelings, and insights.

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## Activity 8

Create bookmarks with pictures, written reflections, or quotes about today's session. Illustrate what you learned and/or action steps you will take.



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## Activity 9

Create a group banner that depicts today's session using a combination of words and pictures. The banner should convey what you learned and how you will adapt it to your work with national service.

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## Activity 10

Choose one or more of the service quotes below. As a group, discuss the meaning of the quote and how it applies to both your work and today's session.

"A different world cannot be built by indifferent people." — Horace Mann

"One of the oldest human needs is having someone wonder where you are when you don't come home at night." — Margaret Mead

"Unless you choose to do great things, it makes no difference how much you are rewarded or how much power you have." — Oprah Winfrey

"If you don't like the way the world is, you change it. You have an obligation to change it. You just do it one step at a time." — Marian Wright Edelman

"Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be unlocked from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another, either by argument or by emotional appeal."  
— Marily Ferguson

"We can only serve that which we are profoundly connected to."  
— Sam Daly-Harris

"We are a landscape of all we have seen." — Isamu Noguchi





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“Those of us who attempt to do things for others or for the world without deepening our own sense of self-understanding, freedom, integrity, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give others.” — Robert Greenleaf

“The horizon leans forward, offering you space to place new steps of change.”  
— Maya Angelou (from “On the Pulse of the Morning”)

“We don’t see things as they are; we see things as we are.” — Cicero

## Notes

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## VOLUNTEER PROJECT INFORMATION FORM

Thank you for volunteering for our upcoming service project. We have a wonderful project planned! Below are the details for the project. Please review the following information and contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to seeing you!

Project: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Leader: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Day of event phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency we are assisting: \_\_\_\_\_

What will we be doing: \_\_\_\_\_

What you should wear: \_\_\_\_\_

What you should bring: \_\_\_\_\_

Project site address: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: \_\_\_\_\_

Where you should park: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions prior to the day of the project, please contact the project leader at the phone number or e-mail listed above. Plan to arrive at the project site prior to the start time. Check in at the volunteer registration area, where a team leader will greet you, answer any questions, and get you started.

### Timeline of Activity

\_\_\_\_\_ Volunteer check-in and registration

\_\_\_\_\_ Orientation to agency and project

\_\_\_\_\_ Serve!

\_\_\_\_\_ Clean-up

\_\_\_\_\_ Wrap-up, reflection, and evaluation





## CHAPTER 4

# Volunteer Recognition

### OVERVIEW

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Recognition is a key component of volunteer management. Volunteers need to know that their service has made an impact and that they are appreciated by the community, fellow volunteers, and program staff. This chapter will offer ideas for creative ways to tailor recognition to meet your individual volunteers' needs.

### GOALS

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- Recognize volunteers
- Understand rules for recognition
- Explore tips and tools for recognition

### CNCS RESOURCE CENTER — [WWW.NATIONALSERVICERESOURCES.ORG](http://WWW.NATIONALSERVICERESOURCES.ORG)

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- Recognizing Volunteer and Paid Staff: The Art, the Science and a Gazillion Ideas
- Creating Imaginative Recognition Events for Senior Volunteers
- Going Beyond Annual Banquets to Recognize Senior Volunteers
- Recruiting, Retaining, and Recognizing Seniors
- Celebrate Living: Volunteer Recognition



## RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERS

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Recognition makes volunteers feel appreciated and valued. If volunteers don't feel like their contribution is valuable or necessary, they won't return. Volunteer recognition can take many forms, from a simple thank-you card to a large annual event. An ideal recognition system makes use of many different procedures, to have something for every volunteer and to keep it personal and meaningful.

### Matching Recognition to Types of Volunteers

Volunteers have different personalities, are motivated to serve for different reasons, and serve in different ways. Therefore, you should use a variety of recognition methods for your volunteers. Tailor your recognition to individual volunteers, to make it most effective and meaningful.

#### By Motivational Orientation

Think about recognition that is appropriate for volunteers with different motivational needs.

##### **Achievement-oriented volunteers:**

- Ideal result of recognition is additional training or more challenging tasks.
- Subject for recognition is best linked to a very specific accomplishment.
- Phrasing of recognition should include “Best” or “Most” awards.
- Recognition decision should include checkpoints or records.
- Awardees should be selected by co-workers.

##### **Affiliation-oriented volunteers:**

- Recognition should be given at a group event.
- Recognition should be given in presence of peers, family, or other bonded groups.
- Recognition should have a personal touch.
- Recognition should be organizational in nature, given by organization.
- Recognition should be voted by peers.



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## **Power-oriented volunteers:**

- Key aspect of recognition is “promotion,” conveying greater access to authority or information.
- Recognition should be commendation from “Names.”
- Recognition should be announced to community at large, put in newspaper, etc.
- Recognition decision should be made by the organization’s leadership.

## By Style of Volunteering

You should also vary recognition for volunteers who serve one afternoon

### **Long-term volunteer:**

- Recognition with and by the group
- Recognition items make use of group symbols
- Recognition entails greater power, involvement, information about the organization
- Presenter of recognition is a person in authority

### **Short-term (episodic) volunteer:**

- Recognition is given in immediate work unit or social group
- Recognition is “portable” – something the volunteers can take with them when they leave, such as a present photograph, or other memorabilia
- Presenter is either the immediate supervisor or the client

## Informal vs. Formal Recognition

Day-to-day recognition is the most effective because it is much more frequent than a once-a-year banquet and helps to establish good working relationships.

Formal recognition includes awards, certificates, plaques, pins, and recognition dinners or receptions to honor volunteer achievement. They are helpful mainly in satisfying the needs of the volunteer who has a need for community approval, but have little impact (or occasionally a negative impact) on volunteers whose primary focus is helping the clientele. These volunteers may feel more motivated and honored by a system which recognizes the



achievements of their clients and the contribution the volunteer has made towards this achievement.

When determining whether to establish a formal recognition, consider the following:

- Is this being done to honor the volunteer, or so the staff can feel involved and can feel that they have shown their appreciation for volunteers?
- Is it real and not stale or mechanical?
- Does it fit? Would the volunteers feel better if you spent the money on the needs of the clients rather than on an obligatory luncheon?
- Can you make it a sense of celebration and builder of team identity?

## Goals for a Recognition Event

### Educate

- Educate everyone attending about the scope, meaning, and value of volunteer services to your organization.
- Report the outcomes of volunteer effort.
- Gain publicity for the organization and the volunteer program.
- Gain respect for the volunteer program and the director of it.

### Inspire

- Recommit (re-enthuse) volunteers for the coming year of work recruit.
- New volunteers for vacant positions.
- Challenge all volunteers through recognition of the accomplishments of a selected few.

### Recognize

- Say thank you for everything and anything volunteered to the organization during the past year, and make sure everyone volunteering during the past year feels appreciated.
- Acknowledge the contributions of some paid staff supervisors to the success of volunteers.



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Have fun!

- Allow volunteers, and staff, a chance to have fun and meet each other.

## Creative Recognition

Volunteer recognition does not have to cost a lot, and there are many alternatives to the traditional annual recognition banquet. Use your imagination and think outside the box to come up with some fun, inexpensive ideas that are fun for volunteers.

## RULES FOR RECOGNITION

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**Recognize . . . or else** — The need for recognition is very important to most people. If volunteers do not get recognition for productive participation, it is likely that they will feel unappreciated and may stop volunteering with your program.

**Give it frequently** — Recognition has a short shelf life. Its effects start to wear off after a few days, and after several weeks of not hearing anything positive, volunteers start to wonder if they are appreciated. Giving recognition once a year at a recognition banquet is not enough.

**Give it via a variety of methods** — One of the implications of the previous rule is that you need a variety of methods of showing appreciation to volunteers.

**Give it honestly** — Don't give praise unless you mean it. If you praise substandard performance, the praise you give to others for good work will not be valued. If a volunteer is performing poorly, you might be able to give him honest recognition for his effort or for some personality trait.

**Give it to the person, not the work** — This is a subtle but important distinction. If volunteers organize a fund-raising event, for example, and you praise the event without mentioning who organized it, the volunteers may feel some resentment. Make sure you connect the volunteer's name to it. It is better to say "John, Betty, and Megan did a great job of organizing this event" than to say "This event was very well-organized."

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**Give it appropriately to the achievement** — Small accomplishments should be praised with low-effort methods, large accomplishments should get something more. For example, if a volunteer tutor teaches a child to spell “cat” today we could say “Well done!” If she writes a grant that doubles our funding, a banner lauding her accomplishment might be more appropriate.

**Give it consistently** — If two volunteers are responsible for similar achievements, they ought to get similar recognition. If one gets her picture in the lobby and another gets an approving nod, the latter may feel resentment. This does not mean that the recognition has to be exactly the same but that it should be the result of similar effort on your part.

**Give it on a timely basis** — Praise for work should come as soon as possible after the achievement. Don’t save up your recognition for the annual banquet. If a volunteer has to wait months before hearing any word of praise, she may develop resentment for lack of praise in the meantime.

**Give it in an individualized fashion** — Different people like different things. One might respond favorably to football tickets, while another might find them useless. Some like public recognition; others find it embarrassing. In order to provide effective recognition, you need to get to know your volunteers and what they will respond to positively.

**Give it for what you want more of** — Too often your staff pays most attention to volunteers who are having difficulty. Unfortunately, this may result in ignoring good performers. We are not suggesting that you ignore sub-par volunteers, just that you make sure that you praise the efforts of those who are doing a good job.



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## TIPS AND TOOLS FOR RECOGNITION

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Here are some easy, everyday ways to recognize volunteers:

- Use e-mail to send thank you letters/messages.
- Send postcards or thank you cards to volunteers after they attend a project.
- Send a birthday card.
- Submit pictures of volunteers to be in your organization's newsletter.
- Post pictures of volunteers on a bulletin board at your organization.
- Provide organizational goodies – hats, shirts, pins, magnets, water bottles, etc.
- Have them join you for coffee or lunch.

Below are some more involved, intermediate recognition ideas:

- Nominate a volunteer Star of the Month – award them a certificate, letter, or small gift.
- Sponsor happy hours and social events. Encourage volunteers to meet each other.
- Recognize volunteers on local radio or television stations.
- Invite volunteers to serve as project leaders or committee members.
- Give gift certificates to museums, movies, restaurants, etc. Solicit your community for donations!
- Nominate volunteers for local/national awards such as the Presidential Service Awards.
- Write articles about them in newsletters or newspapers.
- Write a letter to their employer highlighting the accomplishments of the volunteer. Be sure to find out if the volunteer would appreciate this before writing the letter!
- Celebrate major accomplishments.
- Recognize anniversaries with your organization.
- Have them attend a training, workshop, seminar, etc. at the expense of your organization.
- Give them additional responsibilities.
- Create a photo collage or slide show of volunteer activities.

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Some large-scale means of recognition:

- Hold annual recognition events: a dinner, a breakfast, an awards ceremony/celebration, a picnic/potluck, theme party, etc.
- Recognize long-term volunteers with Service Awards: a plaque, trophy, certificate, etc.
- Give additional responsibilities and a new title.
- Put up a banner celebrating major accomplishments.
- Enlist them in training staff and other volunteers.
- Involve them in the annual planning process.
- Make a donation to the organization of their choice in their name.
- Organize an outing at a zoo, amusement park, sporting event, etc., where volunteers get in for free.

Recognition is an important part of volunteer management. Recognition is an opportunity for the community, other volunteers, and program staff to show their appreciation for the volunteers' efforts. When tailored to meet the volunteers' needs, recognition helps them feel good about themselves and their service.

The above information is a compilation of materials from Make A Difference, a 501(c)(3); *Volunteer Management* by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch (1997); <http://www.energizeinc.com>; and <http://www.casenet.org>.



## Activities and Templates

The training and implementation tools in this section will give you the opportunity to investigate volunteer recognition. This section includes:

- Why Bother? Activity

## WHY BOTHER? ACTIVITY

Working with your small group, brainstorm reasons that recognition is important. Discuss your own experiences in both giving and receiving recognition for volunteer efforts.

## Brainstorming Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



## Summary

Without the right number of volunteers with the right skills, your service project won't be successful. Whether recruiting volunteers for a one-day service project or for a weekly commitment, you should understand your volunteer needs and then target recruitment efforts to reach the volunteers you want to engage.

Offer opportunities that will appeal to their interests and work with their schedules. Retain volunteers by supporting them before, during, and after the project. Finally, recognize their efforts in a way that makes them feel appreciated and connected to the community.



## Additional Resources

Listed below are several on-line resources on volunteerism and volunteer development.

- Energize Inc.  
[www.energizeinc.com](http://www.energizeinc.com)
- ePhilanthropyFoundation.org  
[www.ephilanthropyfoundation.org](http://www.ephilanthropyfoundation.org)
- e-volunteerism.com  
[www.e-volunteerism.com](http://www.e-volunteerism.com)
- Hands On Network  
[www.handsonnetwork.org](http://www.handsonnetwork.org)
- Idealist.org: Action Without Borders  
[www.idealists.org](http://www.idealists.org)
- Independent Sector  
[www.independentsector.org](http://www.independentsector.org)
- National & Global Youth Service Day  
<http://www.ysa.org/nysd/resource/planning.cfm>
- National Service Resource Center  
[www.nationalserviceresources.org](http://www.nationalserviceresources.org)
- Network for Good  
[www.networkforgood.org](http://www.networkforgood.org)
- Service Leader  
[www.serviceleader.org](http://www.serviceleader.org)
- ServeNet  
[www.serve.net](http://www.serve.net)
- Students in Service to America Guidebook  
<http://www.studentsinservicetoamerica.org/guidebook/index.html>



## ADDITIONAL NOTES

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To learn more about Hands On training opportunities, please contact:  
[training@handsonnetwork.org](mailto:training@handsonnetwork.org)

Or visit us at [www.handsonnetwork.org](http://www.handsonnetwork.org)



The Corporation for National and Community Service works to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

The Corporation provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. Together with the USA Freedom Corps, the Corporation is helping build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America.



Hands On Network brings people together to strengthen communities through meaningful volunteer action. Hands On Network is a growing network of 58 volunteer organizations and a half million volunteers changing communities in and outside the United States.

Hands On Network creates and manages nearly 50,000 projects a year — from building wheelchair ramps in San Francisco, to teaching reading in Atlanta, to rebuilding homes and lives in the Gulf Coast communities. The Hands On approach equips volunteers, creates leaders, and changes lives.