





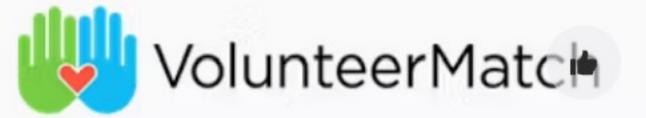
# Learning Pathways Building Volunteer Relationships Part 1: Creating the Relationship Foundation



### Welcome!

This is a new format for learning at VolunteerMatch

- Designed for more participation.
- All resources and slides will be available afterwards.
- Please register for all Parts of a Learning Pathway they build on each other.

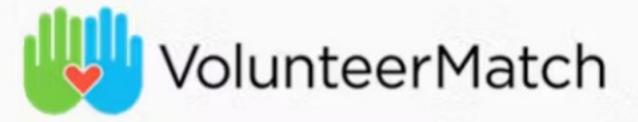




## It's really about relationships

#### We need a new model!

- Recruitment, Retention, & Recognition these are all relationship building.
- We need to consider and develop volunteer opportunities with relationships at the forefront.
- Authentic relationships are two-way it cannot just be about what a volunteer can do for you





good listener Respectful and Reliable, empathetic Honesty responsible Collaboration good communication Honesty. Dependability supportive interesting. Creative. Compassionate



Someone you can share feelings with that will listen and give advice

Encouragement, support

Genuine interest in you, your thoughts, feelings, your wellbeing:)

Kindness, Trust and Respectful

reliable, communication

Reliability and cooperation

open communication

Truly care about me



Someone who is kind to others, who follows through, and who checks in with me.

Trustworthy, loyal

growing together

Same values and goals

Trust

Open communication and trust

Caring, staying in contact, being there.

Supportive



Listening well

Someone who listens and understands what you may need in the moment.

Fun - no pressure

**Follows directions** 

Good listener, genuinely interested in you

communication, clear and direct

Kindness, good listening, mutuality, caring

Good listener



interested in the things I Respect, trust, authentic. Respect and supportive dependable do and appreciate me authentic Being themselves with empathy, understanding, reciprocity, reapect and kindness for honesty

all

communication, trust, loyalty, generosity



They genuinely care about you, what you care about, and they appreciate your genuine reciprocity.

Someone who checks on how you are doing

Mission alignment

**TRUST** 

Loyal, good heart Team player

Clear communication

good communication, honesty, dependability respectful





Reliable Authenticity able to provide feeback in a Good listening skills constructive manner. Not demanding or whining Someone who genuinely listens. Engaged Integrity support Empathetic. Someone who doesn't one up!Collaborative. Loving. Puts the relationship first and outcomes second.



Honest feedback

encouragementUndersta ndingpresence Genuine interests in volunteer and organization

Authenticity, reliable

Kind, empathetic, good communication

positive attitude

Trust, encouraging, caring,

fun



Dependable, willingness to learn, open communication.

Understanding that things don't always go as planned.

Kindness

authentic; innovator; forward thinker (i.e. visionary)

positive, happy

They invest in the relationship

mutual respect

Reliability



Is there when you need him/her

Passionate. Busy.



## How would you describe the role of volunteers in your orgnaization? 316 responses





## How would others in your organziation describe volunteers? 167 responses



### Retention is an outcome



## Real relationships are based in respect and understanding

- For personal relationships and relationships with volunteers
- Build pathways for more involvement and allow volunteers to step back, not away
- Respect and Understanding
  - For volunteer time and talent
  - Impact/Mission driven opportunities with decision-making authority
  - Understand how volunteers are a key component of your organization's strategy
  - AND managing our, and our organization's, expectations

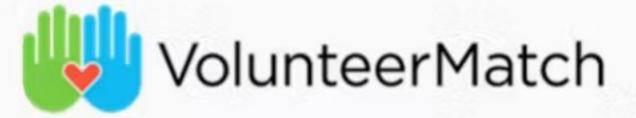


## Rethinking Volunteer Relationships



## What does successful volunteer engagement look like?

- Volunteers come for a reason, a season, and maybe for a lifetime
  - One can lead to the next, but success cannot just be a lifetime.
- How can volunteers grow or contract their relationship
  - o If they want more responsibility or need to step back
    - can they?
- Volunteers deserve open, honest, transparent communications

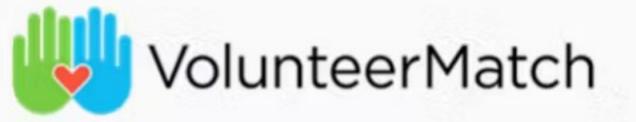


## Designing Two-Way Relationships



## Volunteer's needs are met - Organization needs are met

- Respect for mission, standard operating procedures, and policies - respect for time and experience, and impact
- Feedback and evaluation goes both ways
  - Channels and opportunities for volunteers to provide feedback on the work, the program, opportunities
- Suggestions and questions are encouraged guidance and support is provided
- Recognition is personalized, authentic and includes opportunities for additional responsibility





## Relationship Building



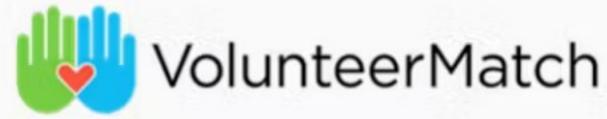
### Opportunities to Build Relationships

- Recruitment
- Onboarding
- Training
- Supervision
- Communication & Feedback
- Impact & Celebration
- Other



### Take a moment...

- Think about how you are designing relationship building into volunteer engagement. Are you:
  - o Centering mission and impact?
  - o Creating two-way communication?
- Where are your opportunities to create better relationships?
- What initial steps can you take to better understand your current relationship building challenges?



#### **Building Ongoing Relationships with Volunteers**

Mode	
li 🖺 III	VolunteerMatch

Activity	Successes	Opportunities	Challenges
Recruitment			
Onboarding			
Training			
Supervision			
Communication & Feedback			
Impact & Celebration			
Other			



Volunteer trainers are doing great with new volunteers!

Everywhere!

I like to get to know my volunteers, I spend time out of my day to go down and talk to them and introduce myself.

I feel like I dont have enough training to fully be successful in my job

We host a end of year party for volunteers with games and food! It's a bit hit. Meeting potential volunteers for coffee to get to know each oyher

Where we have staff or volunteers who are specifically dedicated to volunteer management and communication

onboarding - it's personal, low barrier, quick





Building partnerships with nearby community centers!

Periodic volunteer get togethers

starting to show some consistency in their coordinator

Check ins with volunteers, onboarding feels more cohesive now

Due to the nature of our organization we are able to spend time chatting and get to know them.

When a current volunteer helps us by recruiting new volunteers. Other times we've had volunteers help us by using their network and connects us with funding.

One-on-one initial trainings and orientations to answer personalized questions and create a strong introduction

Getting to know them and show interest in them and their lives. Building the relationship.





Connecting with volunteers

Work with them, meet with them where they volunteer.

Creating a society for young folks who are just getting into volunteer work. They have ownership and oversight of programming and volunteer ops

Staff have great relationships with volunteers built over time

I've had lot of time to get to know volunteers individually Connecting one on one getting to know what they do when not volunteering

building connections with local universities and other organizations for recruiting, creating moments of connection during orientation, connecting with recurring volunteers regularly

intentional conversations with people prior to onboarding. Utilizing mentors and regional managers. (our volunteers are nationwide!) Quarterly training on ZOOM/TEAMS to meet and greet.



including volunteers with staff fun activities, trainings, etc.

We spend time at the beginning of onboarding giving a tour of the wider organization and introduce them to other departments.

Creating training and staff positions that focus on volunteer management as a start.

During the first phone interview make to ask a lot of questions about them, my staff continuing the training and communication, I have weekly check in calls with each staff (there are 4). Texting vols

Coffee chats 1 on 1 or zoom depending on the volunteer's time and comfort level.

Engaging families volunteering in "families for families" events (fun+functional and open to kids) is resulting in increased volunteering inquiries from adults

Parent mentors are trained 1-on-1 with the program manager to get comfortable with their role We have an annual baseball game activity.





Meeting with volunteers or groups of volunteers for Volunteer Spotlights in our quarterly newsletter. We get to learn so much about their experience this way, and it helps volunteers meet each other

lots of word-of-mouth volunteers - one person comes to volunteer, then tells a friend to come and join!

Specially trained volunteers mentor new volunteers.

Coming up with projects for volunteers

Trying to keep good notes about each volunteer on the applications, Keep track of vacations and when they will be out so I don't bug them a lot.

volunteer cafe conversations

We send all volunteers our company newsletter with monthly impact. How many households served, and hours served.

We have an orientation with our volunteers, where they can ask questions and we can know better where to place them.





remember and celebrating special events like birthdays

Volunteers donate personally to support mission.

Offering new trainings like trauma informed care

Finding the "right" people to connect with (ex. community engagement staff at local universities, who then share with students)

I spend a lot of time with them, we have special events every quarter. I do tours for them. I know everything about them and their families and sometimes I meet their families.

Language issues, not being able to understand them.

being more intentional about talking with volunteers on a consistent basis and getting to know them after orientation

We are an RSVP program so most of our volunteers help at our partner organizations. We don't always know how things are run there.



We are a RSVP program, so most of our volunteers actually help at partner organizations. We can't control what happens there.

Welcomed





More interaction with prospective volunteers

Some staff are stronger at relationship building than others. We lack consistency

Finding projects for volunteers

facilitating better relationships among staff and volunteers

Want to do more onsite training to support volunteers

Ask them more questions during our 1:1 Zoom orientation

making use of lead volunteers

More opportunities for engagement activities outside of their volunteer service



Making processes streamlined & efficient

Being more outgoing as a volunteer coordinator

I want to be able to check in more often

onboarding

Opportunity for volunteers to leadership

Previous volunteer coordinator did not conduct any outreach into the community or work on recruitment

Ask more questions

There is a struggle with advancing volunteers - eventually they outgrow the role, needing new opportunities but I cannot provide more.



As a volunteer manager, I don't see the actual volunteers very often.

Coffee with volunteers like was just suggested.

communication and feedback

regular check-ins can improve

Supporting virtual and in person volunteers so they all have support and training needs met.

Creating more interaction opportunities with volunteers for staff

Would like to have volunteers read their emails which shares communications. We also text, but some don't text

enable addition ways to obtain volunteer feedback





supervision - having regular check-ins

Including volunteers in different areas of interest. Projects, events...reaching out to them in times of need.

Display boards to advertise positions and recognize volunteers.

Need a recruitment plan

better relationship building with virtual volunteers being able to facilitate better relationships between volunteers so they can work better together!

broadcasting the greatness of volunteers systemwide

Stay connected with newsletter and education to stay engaged



Using tech to connect more. Not just tractional.

Train the volunteer

Surveying volunteers to understand them better

Provide different levels of volunteering within each shift. Increase responsibities and authority.

the hand-off to their staff supervisors -- they can sometimes get lost in this transition Some folks at the organization push fundraising and bringing in money- it's a BIG turn off.
Especia when we tell volunteers we want them to feel connected by participating in volunteer ops.

Expectations given up front (background screening, signed documents, etc.)

Connect volunteers together



More meaningful evaluation

being more intentional about reaching out to volunteers outside of new volunteer orientations, creating more opportunities to build relationships with me/other staff & vols Being careful with how we present the organization. It's not always in the best light.

Need a part time person to help with paperwork! I am stuck in admin. I currently have an Intern and it is helping, but will end in May. How do I keep this support? I use volunteers, they not consiste

No public facing office.

staff turnover

staff workload

Retention and recruitment





Volunteer's conflict with each other

Need vol appreciation ideas now for planning. We will be doing this in April so ideas are appreciated now. Thank you! Speaking in front of others! I'm invited to speak at a Gala to share how they help bring in volunteers and it causes me a lot of anxiety.

Creating training materials and presentations

outdated





Getting the actual volunteers on front of me

Difficult Personalities

Frequent staff turnover

Not enough time to get to know the volunteers

buy in from other departments

Very new ongoing volunteer team at our organization learning the ropes.

I am the only person in the volunteer office so impossible to build deep connections with everyone but want everyone to feel valued/seen

Time





Not knowing what questions to ask

distance

Rentention

Staff turnover

Our volunteers are spread across the state so I don't always get face to face time with them

I echo difficulty virtual volunteers, but also being an introvert!

We have hundreds of volunteers nationwide. Hard to meet with them and keep up with each person.

turnover makes volunteers
wary of getting to know new
staff and building
relationships





Getting parents, grandma etc in front in me. Having a lot of volunteers to manage

I dont think that others in the org understand this job If other staff don't work at connecting with volunteers as well

training time

People don't read emails.

no regular training schedule

Large amount of volunteers, small amount of staff for personal relationship building



not having procedures and policies in place

Time - I have other responsibilities. Some difficult personalities. Turnover - volunteers moving on.

Volunteers gossip, share misinformation and get each other "riled up".

Being told to recruit volunteers, but not being supported with the ways to do that- ie not always being in the office.

not enough capacity

Retention and recruitment

Getting the organization leaders and staff understanding what a volunteer relationship should look like.

My own anxieties of pressuring others





Rarely see the volunteers

Staff being torn in so many directions that they don't have time to properly train their volunteers and make them feel welcome

Large geographic area served, limited staff.

Not enough financials for appreciation

Lots of turn over in volunteer manager position

Staff turnover leading to lacking relationships with volunteers

busy with other tasks and not enough time spent getting to know the volunteer

Time! Traveling to multiple locations





Keeping up with recognition of volunteers

Public speaking

Volunteers continuing to leave

staff turnover

I'm a department of one.

Too much for one to

handle

Changing old school folk's mindset on what it means to volunteer in 2024.

Diffused leadership. As the volunteer director, sometimes my supers want to be 'in charge'. It's confusing to volunteers.

meeting with volunteers for specific projects





Capacity! I am ONE person!

Need two people, but 1st person waiting for another person before they will step up. Community not supporting us.

Organizations whose success depends on volunteers, yet the org doesn't want to create a volunteer budget.

having tough conversations

I don't see the volunteers much after training.

I think we are more middle of the road. This is due to the nature of our business. Trying to keep up with them all!

### Culture Plays a Role



### What does it feel like to be a volunteer?

- Unrealistic expectations around time commitment
- Lack of respect for volunteer time or experience and impact
- Volunteers held to a different set of standards than others
- Environment is welcoming and inclusive or are volunteers siloed or ignored
  - Micro-aggressions, sub-cultures, can be driven by volunteers as well as paid staff
- Are volunteers included in decisions, do they have visible representation





### Take a moment...

- How is your culture holding back your organization's engagement of volunteers?
- What could your organization accomplish if you changed what it means to be a volunteer?
- What happens if you do nothing?





Extremely excited and welcoming!

Fairly engaged!

Welcoming of all

separated from the organization as a whole

needs improvement on appreciation

New and exciting with lots of room for growth

Welcoming, celebrating

Seems like they might be a number that is required.





We could use some work with other staff accepting and engaging them

an engaging, safe space to learn and practice skills We don't have any outreach or engagement other than for existing volunteers

moving beyond a one-size-fitsall model of volunteering to figuring out how to match volunteer skills with more opportunities to get involved so much potential for growth!

Positive culture, but definitely siloed by type of volunteer. Would love to build more community!

Excited and thankful for their help

Vol are treated differently at different sites. Hard to create a uniform culture

too busy to notice them sometimes





Lacking consistency

Volunteers are pretty siloed because of regulations, but most of our staff appreciates having them. We are trying to have get togethers to have more interaction with volunteers.

Volunteer appreciation month

welcoming and thankful, but needs imrpovement on involvement Volunteers are wanted but opportunities not really utilized or projects not currently prepared for volunteers to take over.

Variety of volunteer opportunities

need more engagement in the Fall/Winter. We are very heavy Spring and Summer



We have great volunteers, but it's hard to get new ones to stay longer than their required hours. Those staff engaging and using volunteers are happy and think it is great. Those staff that don't use volunteers are hesitant and feel it is to much work. Wildly different viewpoints throughout org

We've got plenty of good volunteers for specific interests and tasks! Lots of interest in our org!

definitely siloed.

Most locations are in a good place but some locations are stretched so thin they don't engage much.

approaching volunteers who often sign up but do not show up

Too many hands in the execution. Volunteers are missed or not contacted

Needs much improvementvaries between programs in our organization.





Looking forward to connect with community organizations/companies to provide an avenue for relationship building.

It's MY job because I'm the program coordinator so the rest of staff doesn't willingly engage in welcoming volunteers and engaging them actively to make them feel like they are part of the team.

Multiple volunteer events throughout the year

It is not to open and welcoming to a more diverse group of volunteers

We need to listen more and provide other growth opportunties

# Ask for Volunteer Input



We can guess what volunteers are thinking, why they aren't staying, but it's better if we ask!

- Regular volunteer engagement/satisfaction surveys. Past and current volunteers.
- Combination of quantitative and qualitative questions. Support the results with additional quantitative data like attrition rates.
- Consider additional opportunities for feedback focus groups, stakeholder interviews.
- Be thoughtful about when and how you conduct surveys anonymous v named, timing, etc.

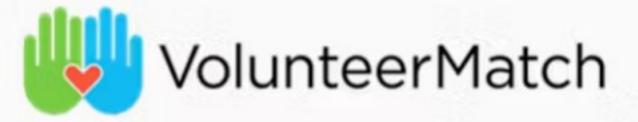


# Relationships from Day Zero



### Relationship building needs to start before you recruit

- Two-way relationships meet the needs of the volunteers as much as volunteers contribute to the organization.
- You cannot and should not -be the only person building relationships with volunteers.
  - Supervisors, mentors, SMEs, volunteer and paid staff
- Create realistic expectations time commitment, training and support, feedback/retraining, supervision.
- It has to be ok for volunteers to change roles or leave when their commitment is complete!

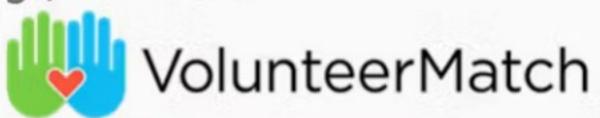


# Designing from Day Zero



### Successful volunteer engagement doesn't just happen

- How is work designed?
  - Mission driven with real impact or outcomes
  - Meaningful decision-making authority
- How are relationships developed?
  - How are volunteers invited in?
  - Where are the opportunities for community or connection?
  - Who's responsible for orienting, supporting, training, or mentoring?
  - Check in systems and processes for additional training, retraining, reassignment
  - Are you incorporating toxic elements guilt, pity, need



# Designing with Relationships in Mind



### Start from day zero – before you recruit

- How will volunteers receive feedback? How will they share it?
  - Regular check-ins, satisfaction surveys, connections to supervisors/colleagues.
  - Formal and informal pathways
  - Respect for volunteers knowledge and experience
  - O Ideas for roles, processes/procedures
  - Leadership opportunities
- Real recognition events
  - Match to volunteer motivation and impact on clients/organization
  - Variety of recognition activities
  - ASK! recognition styles



#### **Engagement Gap Analysis Worksheet**

Marks	
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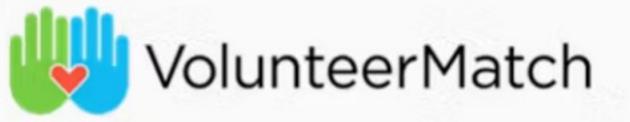
Engagement Activity or Goal	Current State - What's happening now?	Future State - What should it look like?	Gap - What's different/needs to change?	What actions are needed to close the gap?

# What is a Relationship Success



### A volunteer departure is not necessarily a failure

- Completed a minimum requested time commitment or a project.
- Built skills, went on to school or paid work.
  - Or learned that this field/work is not a good fit for them.
- Learned about your mission and the needs of the community.
- Became a donor, supporter, advocate.
- Went on to volunteer for another organization.





### For Next Time:

### Explore the Resource Packet:

- Can the worksheets help you start conversations?
- What addition resources do you need, what resources do you have to share?
- Join the LinkedIn Group to share ideas, ask questions, get support.





### Thoughts, Ideas, Questions?



# Thank You!

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