

Description: Ideas and strategies to build and sustain a successful volunteer program. Topics will include volunteer recruitment, engagement, training, evaluation, recognition, staff interactions, and overall administration.



JEG Consulting

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Rate: \$100/hour

Bio Introduction

Julie lives in Bayport with her husband and three children. She loves being outdoors, traveling, baking, and being an Uber for three different schools and multiple sports.

With two degrees in environmental policy and water resources, Julie has a diverse background with over 25 years of program management in national and local non-profits, museums, state government, and corporations. She enjoys work that reflects the intersection of mission, staff and volunteers, programs, community, and budgets. She finds professional fulfillment as a consultant focused on non-profit organizational development for volunteer programs, staff structures, fundraising, coaching, and strategic planning.

She coordinates a statewide group of environmental non-profit directors focused on professional development, manages fundraisers for Andersen Elementary, and is a SCVF CIS consultant.

ORGANIZATION

Is your organizational culture supportive of volunteers?

- Staff okay with volunteers helping/understand value of vols?
- Staff and board open to volunteers being face of organization (with staff)?
- Staff position descriptions (ALL incl line about work with + support vols)
- Some staff may feel resistant to volunteers (job security, extra work)
 - o Key to engage staff in boundaries/descriptions/training discussions
- Identify specific / effective needs and not cater to applicants (time suck)
 - o Staff will appreciate this, need boundaries set
- Recognize and appreciate volunteers as current or possible donors
- Give strong consideration to having an employee that is dedicated to staff (TLC)
- If multiple org's partnering, important for vol staff to work near each other
- Space for volunteers to gather (hang up coats, store lunch, get coffee)
- Where do volunteers eat? Drink coffee? With staff or separate?
- Place/location for nametags, schedules, upcoming events, reminders, weather, changes in facility or land/buildings, special situations (i.e. – students coming with special needs – talk with Julie as prog director)

BUDGET

- Volunteer coordinator for onboarding/comm/scheduling/admin
 - o Important position for volunteers to have one specific person to go to and to feel supported in work
 - o Individual can support staff in difficult situations, spokesperson for needs
 - o Occasional, part-time, and full-time (daily email-phone check or post schedule and tell staff-volunteers (orientation)).
 - o If position is part-time, can be somewhat difficult as other staff will interact with volunteers daily and this position/person needs to be kept in-the-loop on decisions made, scheduling, needs, conflicts, successes
- Database can be used for onboarding, scheduling, track time-hours-assignment-service, reports, emails, notes
- Daily-weekly: chocolate, thank-you notes, birthday cards, banner, nametags, background checks (can incorporate into staff support \$)
- Professional Development (trips, speakers, etc)
 - o Training and evaluation tools (can incorporate into program budget)
- Recognition (small thank-you, swag, meals/coffee, media, newsletter)

ONBOARDING

Position Descriptions

- same as staff structure, detailed, task or role-oriented
- include mission statement
- clear, direct, descriptive for some tasks, and other general/open
- include behavior expectations & representation of org
 - o imagine best & worst-case scenarios and then assess – include?
- Give during interview and prior to orientation/background check/training
- Have posted on your website's volunteer page
- Excellent tool for communicating needs, limitations, and disciplinary conversations
 - o Use as base for evaluation tool and identifying professional development needs of volunteers
 - o Use in corrective/evaluation talks

INTERVIEWING

- Suggest doing as a group and seasonal
- interview times during times you would want volunteer to do actual shift

- short: brief intros/connection-org/availability/skills, organization discussion should include mission statement/needs/position descriptions
- Set up a 2-week break between interview and scheduled orientation for interested individual to contact you if still interested after interview, background check to be processed, schedule orientation
- Identifying an interested individual as “not a good fit or no” is okay – you and your organization are not required to adjust volunteer work or roles to fit specific skill or interest! SO IMPORTANT for staff happiness, time to support, avoid mission drift
- Time to assess cleanliness, verbal and body language, public speaking comfort, eye contact, any disabilities needing support, able to be on time (and ending)

ORIENTATION

- Suggest small group (if similar role) to establish new friends
- 1-3 hours based on size of group, facility and # of opportunities
- Review expectations, organizational culture, staff structure - contacts
- Tour (check-in/nametags/breaks/clothing/random tasks for down time)
- Review key points in written handbook
(smoking/parking/discipline/comm/problem areas you anticipate?)
- Schedule 1-2 shifts/training plan/introduce to employee for work area
- If have concerns, great time to review professionalism, how they should be representing your organization, client-audience privacy issues, etc.

HANDBOOKS

- Use staff handbook as base for writing volunteer one
- Use in orientation, on-boarding, and have out in volunteer check-in area
- Include section on evaluation-dismissal: reflecting issues that may arise around dress code, age, training, performance requirements per position, who to go to for complaints
 - o i.e. youth: approp lang, speak clearly, follow curricula
 - o i.e. med: HIPPA, COVID, medications

TRAINING

- engage staff in all trainings (demonstrate expectations/methods, connections)
- role model and give detailed instruction so volunteers know what to expect
- VERY important for success in role – need to take time early on in this step for less time for volunteer management needed in future and happy volunteers

- Set up as a group experience that works best for your organization-schedule
- Make sure to backward map volunteer onboarding schedule: interview/orientation/training/start dates so volunteer is not waiting around to start position and actual volunteer shifts

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Invite outside experts/speakers to come to your organization to talk (for free!)
- volunteers themselves can give talks – lunch and learns (sense of community)
- on the road: visit other facilities/orgs with similar mission for learning/social

RECOGNITION

- small/manageable/low cost: swag, potlucks, media acknowledgement, newsletter
- unique approaches: cadre of vol leaders, volunteer mentor program, small grant applications

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

- document situations as arise from staff/vol viewpoints, involve HR if possible
- straight, to the point, in writing if needed, ask for nametag-keys at same time