Everyone Ready®

Achieve more when *everyone's* ready for volunteers

FROM ENERG!ZE

Online Seminar Discussion Guide

Designing Work for Today's Volunteers

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Getting the Most from the Online Seminar

We hope that **organizational members** will view the Online Seminar in groups followed by a discussion on the content as it relates to your organization. One significant outcome may be the identification of procedures, tasks or skills that a unit, branch, etc., may want to discuss at length at a future time. *Make sure to see the next page for* ***ideas on building an on-site workshop around this seminar****.*

Individual members can also benefit by gathering a small group of individuals from your organization and share what you have learned after taking the seminar. Use the discussion questions below to lead the way.

Discussion Questions

1. This seminar is based on the general principle that many organizations do not consciously think about how they might most creatively involve volunteers. Instead organizations tend to rely on historical practices, utilizing volunteers in roles because that is what they have traditionally done with volunteers. **So, to begin your reflection on this seminar, consider the following:**

   - In what ways does your organization involve volunteers and for how long has this pattern of involvement been in place?

   - How often does your organization review its involvement of volunteers and is this review part of a regular planning process for maximizing the impact of volunteers?

2. Creating innovative and meaningful roles for volunteers can happen in both formal and informal ways. **What does your organization do to develop new roles for volunteers?** Consider:

   - Linking of volunteer roles to strategic goals or initiatives of the organizations.
   - Linking volunteer roles to directly assisting staff.
   - Linking volunteer roles to enhancing services to clients or providing outreach.

   - Who, if anyone, is responsible for developing new ways to involve volunteers? The volunteer manager? Line staff? The volunteers themselves?

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3. **Finally, see if you can think of roles for volunteers that are especially valuable for your organization.**

   - What are the key roles that volunteers now provide your organization?
   - Are there roles for volunteers that are more likely to attract new volunteers or to attract volunteers from special target populations?
   - If your organization only had the ability to involve ten volunteers, what would be the best way to invest the time they are contributing?

Ideas for Building an On-site Workshop around this Seminar

One way to tailor each online seminar for your organization is to incorporate it into a longer workshop session during which participants can view and discuss the seminar together. Here are some additional ideas for activities you can do before, in between, or after showing the three parts of the seminar.

1. **Assessment**

   Ask participants to evaluate how volunteer roles are developed within the organization. Have them examine each of the following areas:

   - ***History***: How has the organization tended to create volunteer roles in the past?
   - ***Capacity and Willingness***: Who is responsible for developing new roles for volunteers and how much time is available for this responsibility?
   - ***Structure***: What does the organization have in place that would assist in the development of new volunteer roles? What might discourage efforts to develop new volunteer roles?

   If both paid staff and volunteers are participating in the sessions divide them into two separate groups and then compare their assessments.

2. **Application**

   Have participants generate examples of volunteer roles in the following categories:

   - Roles that have been around forever and which don't seem to fit either key organizational needs or the interests of today's volunteers.
   - Possible new roles for volunteers that would both help the organization and attract new volunteers.

   For each example:

   - *Conduct a discussion of its incidence and impact*. Is it widespread, should it be addressed, how can we motivate staff to begin to involve volunteers in the new roles?
   - *Develop suggestions for updating the volunteer role*. How should we transition from the old system to the new role? How can volunteers currently performing this role be involved in this transition?

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