

Volunteer Recruitment

Recruiting new volunteers is challenging.

According to the Do Good Institute in the University of Maryland, 63% of nonprofits in the U.S. have a paid volunteer engagement professional yet close to half of CEOs at these organizations cite volunteer recruitment as a significant issue – even though these professionals are spending more time on volunteer engagement than they did twenty years ago.¹ Staff capacity, lacks in funding and resources, and other structural issues can make this issue worse.²

Further, community needs have increased in recent years, and it is more important than ever to embrace evidence-based strategies to recruit volunteers and ensure they are filling critical roles to respond to the most pressing community needs.^{1,3,4}

What are some ways to invite individuals and groups to volunteer with your organization?

Let's consider the evidence...

SHOW UP IN YOUR COMMUNITY

For engaged Virginians, the most common motivators to begin volunteering include feeling invited to join a cause or being moved by current events and personal experiences, though these motivations may vary across generations and other demographics.³ It is important to educate your community about your organization's mission and impact, raising awareness of the issues you work to address. As you're planning that outreach and engagement, add engaging volunteer recruitment and talking points to the materials and information you share when tabling at a public event or otherwise showing up for your community.



MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Many things can play a role in how someone gets involved: their house of worship, their life experience and education, whether they were affected by an issue personally, or simply because they want to learn more.³ Think of ways to tailor your volunteer opportunities and messaging to specific entry points that individuals and groups may have. Recruitment relies on compelling stories that explain the issues an organization addresses and the impact that a volunteer can make.



INFUSE MEANING INTO SERVICE

The strongest correlation in whether respondents reported volunteering in the past 12 months can be seen in the benefits derived from the act of serving others.³ People are more likely to remain engaged when they feel fulfilled and that their service is meaningful. Whenever possible, help people understand the importance of their service, so that they find fulfillment in it.

This is part of the Volunteer Engagement Toolbox, a series intended to empower people with strategies and insights to mobilize volunteers. It is informed by the Virginia Community Engagement Index (VCEI), which provides data-driven answers to critical questions about how volunteers engage in communities across the Commonwealth.

Explore findings at ServeVirginia.org/why-serve

ABOUT SERVE VIRGINIA

Serve Virginia aspires to build a culture of service and volunteerism in all corners of the Commonwealth by inspiring individuals and organizations to engage, connecting them with the resources they need to make a difference, and celebrating the tremendous impacts we make together.



Explore regional insights by demographics to learn what motivates people to begin volunteering in your area.



REFERENCES

1. Dietz, N., & Grimm, R.T. (2023, February). The state of volunteer engagement: Insights from nonprofit leaders and funders. Do Good Institute, School of Public Policy, University of Maryland. https://dogood.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2023-02/TheStateofVolunteerEngagement_DGI2023_0.pdf
2. Initiative for Strategic Volunteer Engagement. (2023, May). Activating the power of strategic volunteer engagement for a better world: A conversation starter for funders and nonprofit leaders. <https://strategicvolunteerengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Activating-the-Power-of-Strategic-Volunteer-Engagement.pdf>
3. Serve Virginia. (2023). Virginia Community Engagement Index: Building a culture of service, volunteerism, and civic action in the Commonwealth. https://servevirginia.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/VCEI_FinalReport.pdf
4. Johnson, T. (2023, January 23). 2023 Volunteer management progress report: Back to business edition. VolunteerPro. <https://volpro.net/volunteer-management-progress-report/>