

ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS

LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND INCREASING IMPACT

Volunteering can be the greatest, most meaningful form of community engagement with your land trust. It can also be an effective strategy for leveraging resources and increasing impact.

1. WHY ENGAGE VOLUNTEERS? WHAT IS THE BENEFIT TO THE LAND TRUST OR TO ANY ORGANIZATION?

An effective volunteer program creates goodwill in the community, develops advocates for the organization, leverages donations, and creates connections to foundations and corporations. In addition to helping accomplish the many tasks required to operate a nonprofit, there is no better way to develop potential board directors. Following are a few of the benefits of a successful volunteer program.

- Accomplish meaningful work to help achieve the organization's mission.
- Increase the number of individuals with a personal stake in the organization, creating a group of advocates, leaders, and donors.
- Get to know potential board directors, using volunteer service as a "farm league" to gauge leadership skills, dependability, and personal commitment while deepening their relationship with the organization.
- Forge stronger connections with the community, including donors and policy-makers.
- Engage volunteers to help the land trust expand its network into new communities and beyond its close circle of friends.
- Develop new collaborations or strengthen existing partnerships.

2. WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS WANT?

Volunteers want to participate in meaningful work with a level of trust and autonomy. They need clear directions so they understand the extent of their authority, and they need to understand how their work fits into the bigger picture for the organization. Motivations for volunteering differ for every individual. These include meeting people with similar interests, making a difference, making social connections, building a resume, learning new skills, having fun, and cultivating future job opportunities. If the person recruiting and placing the volunteer takes the time to understand what the volunteer wants it is likely to make the experience more successful for everyone.

3. WHAT KEY ELEMENTS NEED TO BE PRESENT FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE?

- Understand the motivation of each volunteer and connect them with the right project.
- Provide clear directions and the right tools to do the job (from shovels to computers).
- Offer appropriate supervision and regular communication.
- Create a sense of camaraderie and appreciation.
- Volunteer time is precious. Don't waste it! Define areas where volunteers can participate; have materials, training, and projects prepared before recruiting.
- Commit the necessary time, human capital, and finances for volunteers and volunteer projects to succeed.

Starting a successful volunteer program is a complex organizational change; this link provides a perspective on five elements of successful change: [Vision-Skills-Incentives-Resources-Action Plan](#).



Nonprofit resource courtesy of

MAYES | WILSON & ASSOCIATES, LLC

www.MayesWilsonAssociates.com

©2016 MAYES | WILSON & ASSOCIATES, LLC