

# EFFECTIVE VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION



March 2025  
By Massachusetts Service  
Alliance



## About MSA and VGF:

Through generous state and federal funding, including the support of AmeriCorps' Volunteer Generation Fund (VGF), the Massachusetts Service Alliance(MSA) has successfully leveraged tens of thousands of volunteers by supporting the volunteer sector through trainings, funding opportunities, and resources. *In 2022 fiscal year alone, MSA directly empowered 6,495 volunteers who contributed 96,130 hours — an estimated value of \$2,782,355.*

The Massachusetts Service Alliance (MSA), a nonprofit founded in 1991, builds the organizational capacity of hundreds of Massachusetts nonprofits, schools, and agencies annually through funding, training, and resources centered on volunteerism and service. We are proud to be Massachusetts' official [State Service Commission](#).

We put the bulk of our effort into three initiatives: [AmeriCorps](#), [Commonwealth Corps](#), and [Volunteerism Initiatives](#).



**VOLUNTEER GENERATION FUND**



# SORTING OUT VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Put the strips of paper in order according to when each activity should happen in the volunteer management process
2. Check your answers
3. Be sure and tell the group if you believe the activity is on-going
4. When done, raise your hands



## **ANSWER KEY:**

1. Develop Policies and Procedures – Including a Risk Management Plan
2. Conduct Organizational Needs Assessments
3. Identify Appropriate Positions & Develop Volunteer Position Descriptions
4. Create Budget & Secure Resources for Volunteer Program
5. Create Agency/Volunteer Handbook
6. Train Staff to Work With Volunteers
7. Create Volunteer Application / Application Process
8. Create a Recruitment Plan / Recruit Volunteers
9. Develop Outreach & Marketing Materials
10. Review Applications
11. Screen Volunteers – Include interviews, running background checks, etc.
12. Distribute and Sign Agency/Volunteer Handbook
13. Orient Volunteers
14. Train Volunteers
15. Place/Match Volunteers in Positions
16. Supervise Volunteer – includes check-ins, etc.
17. Conduct Volunteer Evaluation / Collect Volunteer Feedback
18. Recognize Volunteers



# AGENDA

- **Elements of Volunteer Management**

- **Effective Recruitment Strategies**

- *Understanding Volunteer Motivation*
- *Strategic Placement of Volunteers*

- **Onboarding Volunteers**

- *Orientation and Training*

- **Retention Strategies**

- *Supervision and Recognition of Volunteers*

- **Evaluation Resource Sharing**

- *Orientation and Training*





# Elements of Volunteer Management





# SCHEDULING RESOURCES





# SCHEDULING RESOURCES

## FREE

- 8 popular tools for organizing your volunteer needs:  
<https://topnonprofits.com/8-tools-for-organizing-volunteer-programs/>
- SignUp: <https://signup.com/>
- GiveBackTime:  
<https://givebacktime.org/>
- YourVolunteers.com:  
<https://yourvolunteers.com/>

## SUBSCRIPTION-BASED/ FEE-BASED

- Civic Champs:  
<https://www.civicchamps.com/>
- Volgistics: <https://www.volgistics.com/> ( 30 day trial available)
- VolunteerHub: <https://volunteerhub.com/>
- Volunteer Management Database page at MSA ([link](#)) : Demos and Management Tip Sheets available







# EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES









1

2

3

**Top 3 reasons why people  
volunteer?**





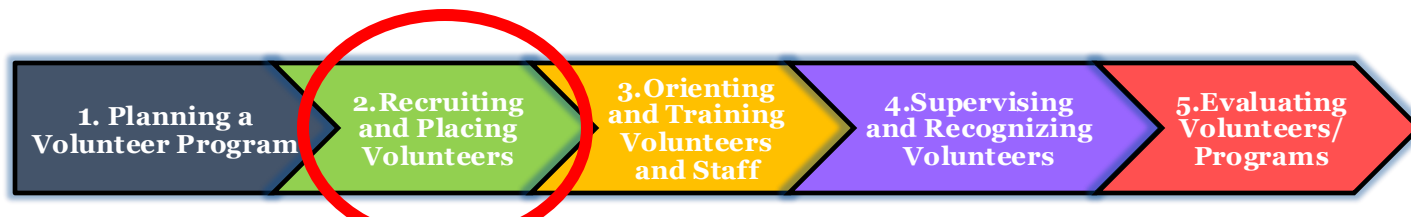
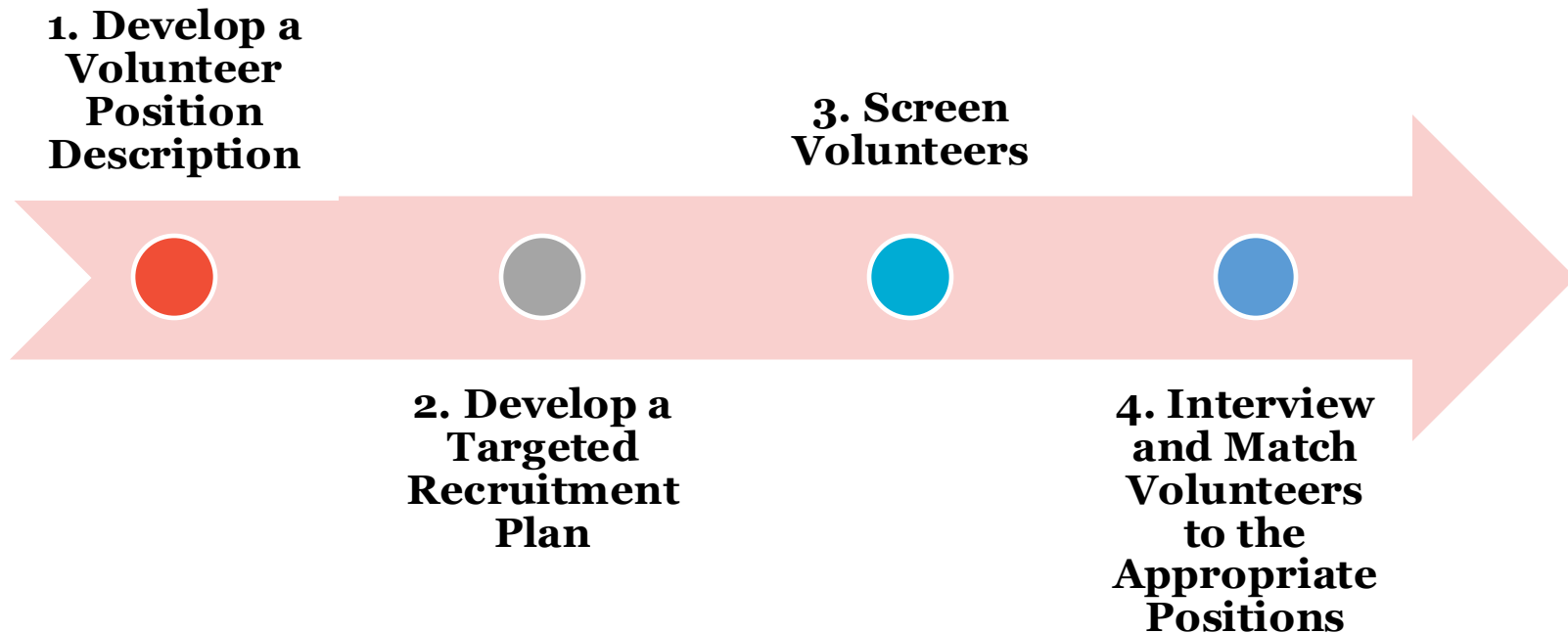


## Why do people stop volunteering?

They feel that their skills  
and time is not being utilized  
well



# STEPS TO RECRUITING AND PLACING VOLUNTEERS



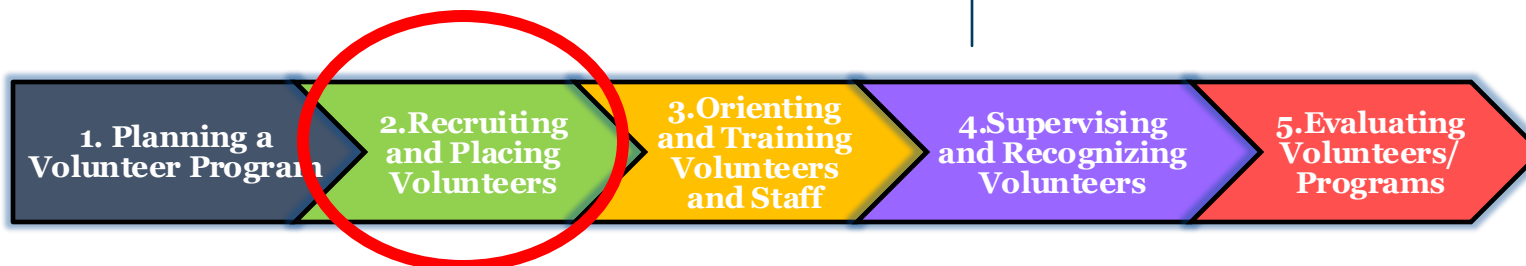


## Volunteer Position Description Activity :

1. Complete the Volunteer Position Description Worksheet for a new position that you would like to create.
2. Switch worksheets with a partner and provide feedback.

## Components of the Position Description:

- ☐ Position Title
- ☐ Purpose/Objective of Position
- ☐ Work Location
- ☐ Responsibilities/Duties/Tasks
- ☐ Qualifications
- ☐ Commitment Expected
- ☐ Training/Support Provided
- ☐ Benefits to Volunteer
- ☐ Supervisor/Reports to





# Defining Volunteer Recruitment:

The process of matching an organization's needs with a volunteer's interests and skills

BENEFITS

Helps the organization and program achieve its goals

Helps find the most appropriate people to fill a position

Maximizes organizational resources

1. Planning a Volunteer Program

2. Recruiting and Placing Volunteers

3. Orienting and Training Volunteers and Staff

4. Supervising and Recognizing Volunteers

5. Evaluating Volunteers/ Programs



# DEVELOPING YOUR TARGETED RECRUITMENT PLAN

## Warm Body Recruitment

- Sending a message about a volunteer opportunity to as broad an audience as possible (e.g., advertisements, PSA, brochures)



## Targeted Recruitment

- Sending a message about a volunteer opportunity to an audience who has the specific time, skills and/or traits required for the position



1. Planning a Volunteer Program

2. Recruiting and Placing Volunteers

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# DEVELOPING YOUR TARGETED RECRUITMENT PLAN (CON'T)

## Targeted Recruitment

- Sending a message about a volunteer opportunity to an audience who has the specific time, skills and/or traits required for the position



1. Identify and Target Your Audience

2. Identify Benefits and Features

3. Craft a Powerful Message

4. Design a Communication Strategy

1. Planning a Volunteer Program

2. Recruiting and Placing Volunteers

3. Orienting and Training Volunteers and Staff

4. Supervising and Recognizing Volunteers

5. Evaluating Volunteers/Programs





# DEVELOPING YOUR TARGETED RECRUITMENT PLAN (CON'T)

- Who is your target audience?
- What are important features of position?
- What would appeal to them about the position?
- What are some possible barriers?
- What additional things do we need to know about the audience?
- What strategies should you use to reach your audience?





# IDENTIFY BENEFITS AND FEATURES OF YOUR PROGRAM

## Benefit:

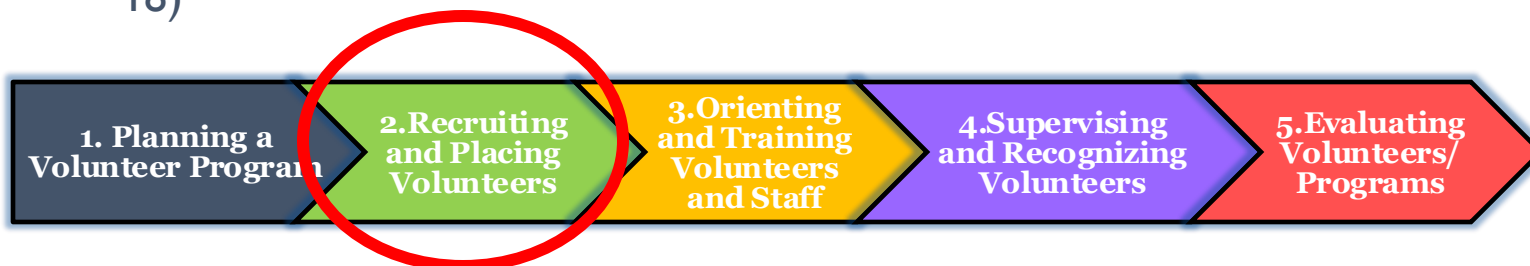
- What volunteering does for the volunteers, such as teaching them a skill, having fun, meeting people, etc.

## Feature:

- Descriptive elements of the volunteering, such as when, where, doing what with whom, etc.

## Independent Writing:

- Using your position descriptions, fill out step two, “Step 2: Identify Benefits and Features of Volunteer Position” in the of the Recruitment & Placement Message Worksheet ( page 18)





# DESIGN A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1. Different audiences require different communication strategies
2. Be strategic about communication
3. Identify specific ways to market your message
  - Distribute brochures or posters
  - Make public service announcements on television, radio, or newspaper
  - Advertise! Advertise! Advertise!
  - Speak to community groups (e.g., faith-based, neighborhood groups, community forums)
  - Post to online venues (e.g., Websites, Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, blogs, etc.)
  - Word of mouth - “The personal ask”
  - Talk to current volunteers, staff, and board members
  - Set up a booth at a local events (e.g., farmers markets, festivals, etc.)





# Screening is critical:

1. Ensures applicant meets the minimum requirements of position
  - \*Previous education and/or experience in similar roles
2. Ensures the volunteer understands expectations
3. Essential risk assessment process
4. Starts with position description and continues throughout life of volunteer service



# Screening Techniques

<b>1. Application</b>	<b>Volunteers are asked to fill out this form to document basic information about the volunteer and it is used as a starting point for the volunteer interview process.</b>
<b>2. Reference Check</b>	<b>Contacting individuals who have personal and professional relationships with the volunteer and who have been suggested by the volunteer.</b>
<b>3. License Check</b>	<b>Verifying the existence and validity of a printed document that provides permission under a law or regulation to perform an activity.</b>
<b>4. Orientation</b>	<b>The process of making volunteers feel comfortable with and understand the workings of the organization and to let them understand how they can contribute to the purpose of the organization</b>
<b>5. Supervision</b>	<b>The informal and formal process of guiding volunteers, managing expectations, and rewarding and recognizing volunteers.</b>
<b>6. Interview</b>	<b>The process of asking volunteers information to learn more about the individual so that you can assess whether the volunteer is a good match for the position.</b>
<b>7. Criminal Background Check</b>	<b>The review of any and all legal records containing any information collected and stored in the record repository.</b>
<b>8. Sex Offender Registry Check</b>	<b>The formal process of conducting a search on state and federal databases to verify that an individual is not listed as a convicted sex offender.</b>





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# ONBOARDING VOLUNTEERS

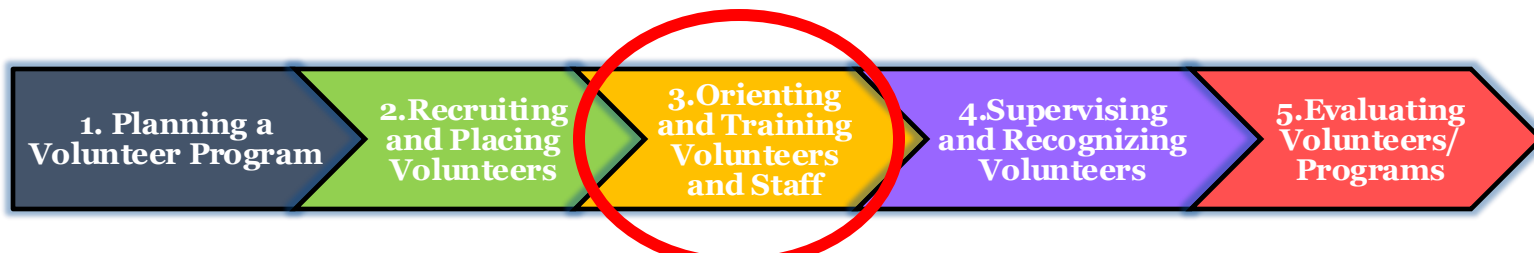


## ORIENTATION

- Provides volunteers with information about the organization, the volunteer program and how volunteers fit into the mission of the organization

## TRAINING

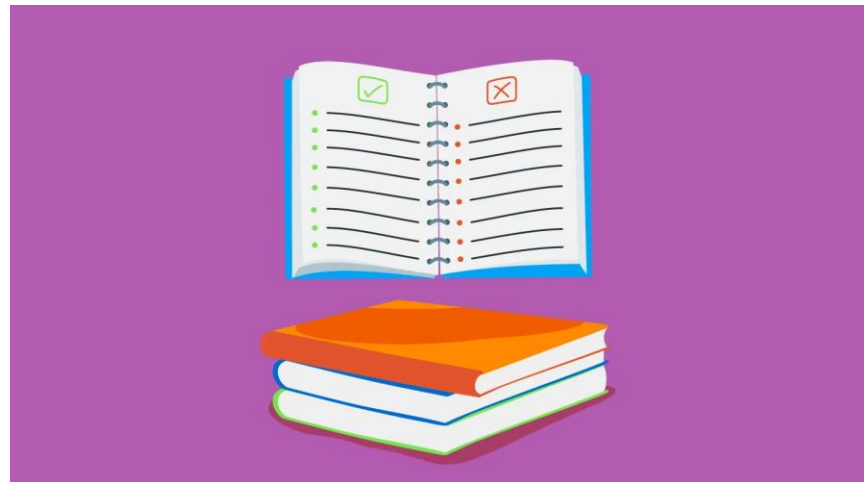
- Provides volunteers with specific knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need to effectively perform specific roles/duties





## ■ What are the key components of volunteer handbook?

- a welcome
- organization overview
- volunteer roles
- policies, procedures
- contact information
- A code of conduct



1. Planning a  
Volunteer Program

2. Recruiting  
and Placing  
Volunteers

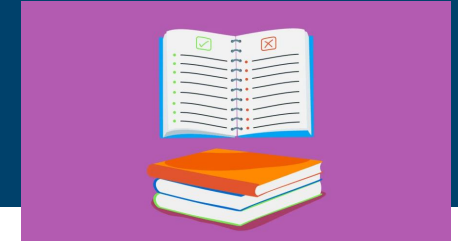
3. Orienting  
and Training  
Volunteers  
and Staff

4. Supervising  
and Recognizing  
Volunteers

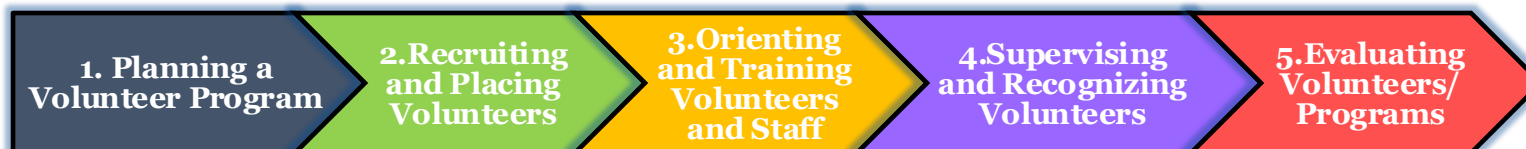
5. Evaluating  
Volunteers/  
Programs



# REFLECTION



- **What are the benefits of providing a volunteer handbook?**
  
- **What are the consequences of NOT providing a volunteer handbook?**
  
- **What are the key components of a Volunteer Handbook?**
  - a welcome, organization overview, volunteer roles, policies, procedures, contact information, a code of conduct







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# RETENTION STRATEGIES









1

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**Top 5 ways to retain volunteers?**





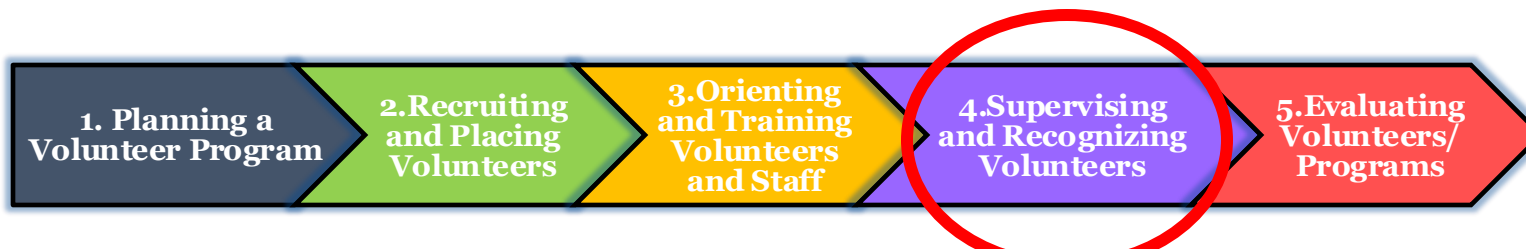
# HOW TO RETAIN VOLUNTEERS

## Make Volunteers Feel Valued and Appreciated

- Recognize their efforts publicly, thank them personally,
- Provide opportunities for them to see the tangible impact of their work
- Regularly communicate with your volunteers: provide constructive feedback on their performance and seek their input on how to improve the volunteer experience.
- Offer incentives, such as discounts, certificates of appreciation, or gift cards, for those who stay with the organization for an extended period or complete a certain number of hours

## Set Clear Expectations and Provide Training

- The amount of time you need them to commit and what you need from them
- Their specific responsibilities, and what they can expect in return.
- Provide detailed information about the projects they'll be working on
- Articulate how their efforts contribute to your organization's overall mission





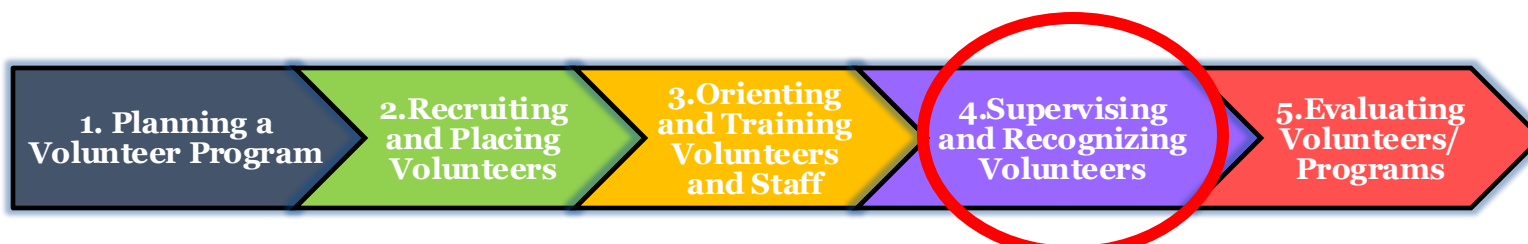
# HOW TO RETAIN VOLUNTEERS (CON'T)

## Offer Flexibility and a Variety of Engagement Points

- Offer flexibility in scheduling and responsibilities
- Think of your needs in advance/ pre-plan
- Provide options for remote or virtual volunteering
- Be open to adjusting schedules to accommodate volunteers' changing needs
- Offer a variety of roles and projects that cater to different skill sets, interests, and availability.

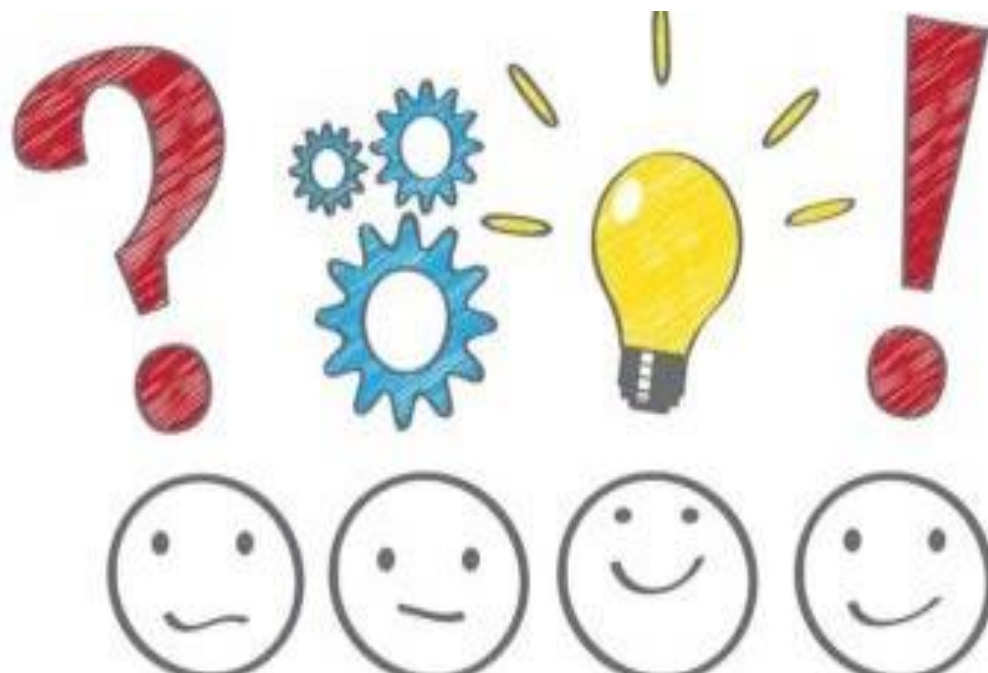
## Build Relationships and Foster a Sense of Community

- Encourage teamwork, collaboration, and open communication among volunteers and staff.
- Create opportunities for volunteers to connect with one another, share experiences, and build relationships
- Encourage networking among volunteers through formal events like volunteer appreciation dinners or informal gatherings such as potlucks
- Regularly seek feedback from your volunteers and act on their suggestions to continuously improve the volunteer experience





# QUESTIONS ABOUT RETENTION



1. Planning a  
Volunteer Program

2. Recruiting  
and Placing  
Volunteers

3. Orienting  
and Training  
Volunteers  
and Staff

4. Supervising  
and Recognizing  
Volunteers

5. Evaluating  
Volunteers/  
Programs



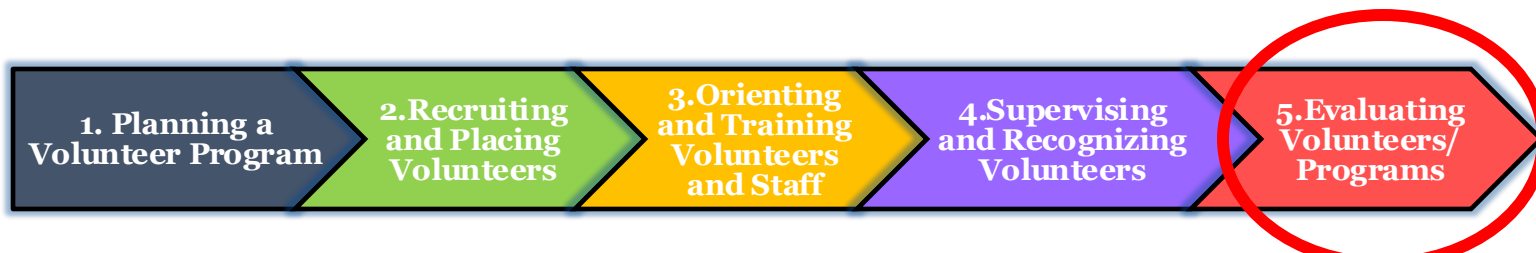


# EVALUATION RESOURCE SHARING



# QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

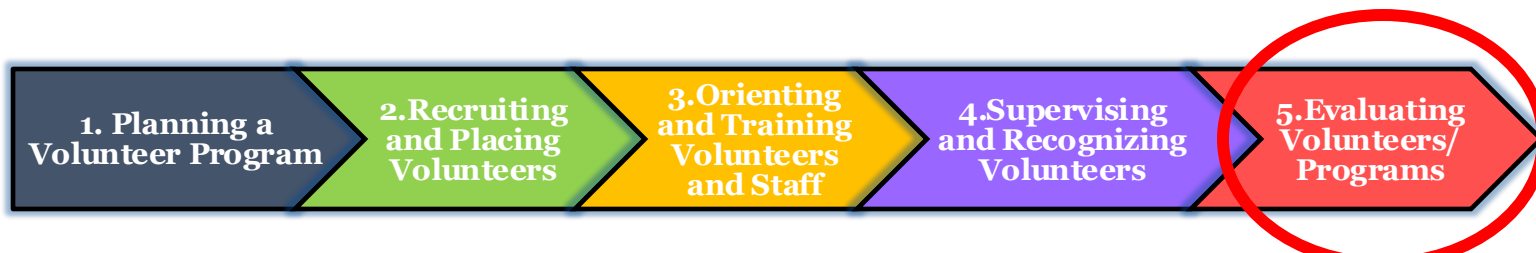
- Why do we want to evaluate our program? What questions do we have and why are they relevant? What value will the answers bring to our work or to the community we serve?
- What methods or activities can best show the hard work and outcomes of our program and participants?
- What questions do we have about how our participants experience the program? What would we like to know that we don't already?
- What types of data collection tools (e.g., surveys, records, interviews) can provide evidence that is most convincing/valued by our funders and stakeholders?
- How will we handle results that are surprising, unexpected, or disappointing? How will we explain surprising successes? How can we share disappointing results with an emphasis on how we will build on them as part of continuous improvement?





# Evaluation Resources

- The Community Builder's Approach to Theory of Change by Aspen Institute
- [https://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/TOC\\_fac\\_guide.pdf](https://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/TOC_fac_guide.pdf)
- Measurement Guidance Toolkit, National Mentoring Resource Center ([link](#))
- Volunteer Supervision Form ( *in your handbook* )







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THANK YOU!

ANY  
QUESTIONS?



# Citations and Resources

5 Essentials for Enhancing Your Nonprofit Volunteer Program by Foundation Group [\(link\)](#)

Volunteer Management Database Webpage by MSA [\(link\)](#)

What Motivates People to Volunteer, Stay Engaged by Association of Fundraising Professionals [\(link\)](#)

Helping people, changing lives: 3 health benefits of volunteering by Mayo Clinic [\(link\)](#)

[Exploring the Effects of Volunteering on the Social, Mental ...by National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) \(.gov\) https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov > articles > PMC10159229](#)

The Ultimate Guide to Retaining Nonprofit Volunteers by Civic Champs [\(link\)](#)

18 cost-effective ways to show volunteer appreciation by Civic Champs [\(Link\)](#)

Elements of Effective Practice by MENTOR National [\(link\)](#)

