

Sustainability

How to Recruit and Retain Volunteers

Including volunteers in your Venture is a great way to get extra help when there is a lot of work. It is also a good way to get the word out about your Venture. Below are some tips on how to recruit volunteers and how to keep them coming back once they're a part of your Venture.

Recruiting

- **Use personal contacts:** Most volunteers start doing community work because they are asked by a friend, a family member, or a neighbor. You will find that people will often respond positively if they are extended a personal invitation. It is much harder to say 'no' one-on-one, especially if it's someone familiar doing the asking.
- **Go to where the people are:** Instead of trying to get people to come to you, try going to them. To recruit volunteers, go to the meetings of other groups and to places and events where people gather.
- **Get the word out:** It is important to inform people throughout the community that your Venture exists. Post information at libraries, schools, public community centers, on websites, listservs, and other places volunteers might look. Check to see if your community has a volunteer resource center or is a part of the Hands on Network (www.handsonnetwork.org), which connects volunteers to projects in the community.

Managing Volunteers

- **Be welcoming:** Remember to make new people feel welcome and introduce them to the group. Volunteers who feel that a group is cliquey or unwelcoming will be less likely to stay. Give a helpful explanation of your work, why you do it, and why their help is important. Many people function better when they see the "big picture."
- **Make it fun:** Endless work can drive members away. Try planning social activities before or after a meeting. Do icebreaker activities to help people loosen up and get to know each other better.
- **Use peoples' time wisely:** Make sure you put people to work, but keep time demands reasonable. Everyone is busy! Don't ask volunteers to come to a meeting that they don't need to be at. If you have members volunteering at an event make sure there is something for them to do and that the task has a definite beginning and end. People like to know in advance what time commitment is needed.
- **Keep track of volunteers:** Create a chart that includes: volunteer's name, address, email or telephone number, time available, special skills, what the volunteer is willing to do, and what the volunteer is not willing to do. Match volunteers to positions that use their skills and help them feel passionate about the work.

continued on next page...