

CLD2-4



# Generating Members, Volunteers and Leaders in Community Organizations

## Grow Your Group by Building Its Membership

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### Introduction

Successful organizations consist of people who serve the community by engaging their creative talents and interests to serve the organization as well as the community. Effective organizations are composed of a variety of members, volunteers and leaders. The collective interests, skills and abilities of these individuals can be called to action in order to fulfill identified community needs and assist or serve specific clientele, audiences or populations. The question remains: *What type of participant should your recruitment activities target?*

### Differences between Members, Volunteers and Leaders

Let's begin by using a faith-based community organization as an example. Anyone who joins is a member. However, not all members actually become volunteers. Volunteering requires active participation and involvement. It is possible to be a member of an organization without ever voluntarily contributing time, talents or service to it. Likewise, not all volunteers become leaders. A leader is an individual who shares leadership skills with a group. An important component of leadership is a group of followers. Individuals who are actively involved in the church but do not assume a leadership position contribute as volunteers.

All three groups—members, volunteers and leaders—have important roles in the organization and are dependent upon each other to complete their role. However, organizations may have different needs. For those organizations that simply need to build support or funding capacity, recruiting dues-paying members may be the priority. For member-rich organizations or those whose goals, programs, projects or activities require additional input or service, volunteer recruitment should be the focus. An established organization may find that building its leadership base is the most important need. This is especially critical for identifying future goals or building relationships with community stakeholders and elected officials.

A “member interest inventory” could be developed to determine the level of interest of current members who might be interested in serving the organization as volunteers. Organizations could distribute the member interest inventory with two goals in mind:

- What specific interests might members have that could be utilized in volunteer roles?
- What special interests, skills and abilities are needed in order to execute specific volunteer roles in your organization?

Identifying the greatest need for your community organization is a critical first



*Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it.*  
 —Marian Anderson



*The very essence of leadership is its purpose. And the purpose of leadership is to accomplish a task. That is what leadership does—and what it does is more important than what it is or how it works.*

— Colonel Dandridge M. Malone

step in this process. Ask yourselves the following questions:

- What is the difference between members, volunteers and leaders?
- How do we identify the greatest need for our organization: members, volunteers or leaders?
- What is the greatest need for our organization: additional members, volunteers or leaders?

## Assessing the Needs of Your Group or Organization

The involvement of community members is necessary in order to achieve the mission and vision and to accomplish the purpose and goals of your group or organization. Each community organization has a different mission, vision, purpose and goals. But to achieve the mission, fulfill the vision and accomplish the purpose and goals of your organization, you must first be able to identify and articulate them. This is accomplished by conducting a needs assessment.

A needs assessment provides a big picture look at the organization and its programs. Assessing needs determines what tasks need to be performed in order to accomplish the goals of the organization. The vague idea of “we need more volunteers in order to get things done” must be defined. A needs assessment is conducted by assembling a group of individuals representing different groups and segments of the community and soliciting their input and advice about a specific problem, issue, need or concern. Once identified, these problems, issues, needs or concerns become a basis for programming, based upon the mission of the community organization. In other words, after having identified these problems, issues, needs and concerns, the group then determines:

*How will our organization respond and what do we hope to accomplish through the efforts of members, volunteers and leaders?*

The first step in assessing needs is to determine whether the organization’s greatest need is additional members, volunteers or leaders. This is accomplished by conducting an organizational needs assessment to

gather the information to answer identified questions. To conduct a needs assessment in your group or organization, simply develop and pose some questions to your group. Examples of assessment questions include:

- What is the mission of our organization?
- Is that mission still relevant to our community?
- In order to accomplish the mission of our organization, do we need more members, volunteers or leaders?
- In what ways could we increase the involvement and participation of members, volunteers or leaders in our organization?
- What member, volunteer and leadership opportunities are available or should be created in the organization?
- What specific positions in the organization need to be filled by members, volunteers and leaders?

After answering these assessment questions, the group moves on to the process of generating members, volunteers and leaders to fulfill the group’s mission and achieve its goals. Generating new members, volunteers or leaders is directly related to understanding the group’s goals and concerns. (For example, if a focus of your organization is educating the community about obesity, you may need to focus on identifying individuals with a background and knowledge about this topic to serve on a program committee.) The first steps in generating members, volunteers and leaders involves identifying member, volunteer and leadership opportunities within the organization through a **needs assessment** and then articulating these opportunities in a **written position description**.

## Describing the Role of Leaders and Volunteers

In order to recruit volunteers and leaders, the duties, role and responsibilities of each will need to be articulated in a written volunteer position description. Volunteer position descriptions include a written explanation of the position and role and constitute an agreement between the

# *Because organizations need to use their resources effectively, they must target recruitment efforts to the most likely prospects.*

individual and the staff member or other organizational leader. Position descriptions help everyone, including both potential and current volunteers as well as the volunteer administrator, understand their duties, responsibilities, and the expectations of the position. People who don't understand what's expected either won't volunteer or won't experience success or won't have a positive experience. Position descriptions include the following components:

- position title
- time requirement (frequency and duration of service)
- location
- general purpose (a paragraph describing the position, function and purpose)
- specific responsibilities (usually a bulleted list of duties)
- qualifications
- support provided (clerical, financial, curricular, supervisory)
- benefits (education, recognition, scholarships, travel, etc.), and
- leader / mentor / supervisor

A collection of volunteer position descriptions can be found at: <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/4h/oldsite/VolPosDescription/index.htm>.

## **Identifying and Recruiting Members, Project Volunteers and Leaders**

Having assessed and clarified the needs of the group and developed a position description for individual roles, the organizational leaders or membership committee next **identifies** and **recruits** potential members, volunteers or leaders. The identification process includes developing a list of qualified individuals or groups to be contacted and solicited for participation, service or leadership. With the goals of the organization in mind, use the following questions

to develop a list of qualified individuals or groups to begin the recruitment process:

- Who is not involved in this organization that should be?
- Who would benefit from membership in this organization?
- Who would benefit by volunteering for this organization?
- Who would benefit by leading this organization?
- Whose family members or friends would benefit from belonging to, serving or leading this organization?

Recruitment is defined as the process of actively searching for new members, volunteers or leaders who have previously been identified. Targeted recruitment is based on the marketing premise that not everyone is a prospect for every product or service. Because organizations need to use their resources effectively, they must target recruitment efforts to the most likely prospects.

## **How to Develop a Recruitment Plan**

Eleven tips for recruiting new members, volunteers and leaders include the following:

- Conduct an organizational needs assessment. Identify the specific tasks that need to be done in order to fulfill the needs of the group or organization.
- Define the task (through a needs assessment) and role (defined in a position description).
- Market your organization and its volunteer opportunities throughout the community, using a variety of marketing strategies.
- Look around and ask: "Who's not here?" then recruit someone from an unrepresented group.
- Recruit for skills, interests or specific abilities rather than recruiting specific individuals.



- Begin with short-term, episodic (a single episode) involvement.
- Appeal to the individual's own interests and motivation.
- Use a "wide angle lens" for volunteerism. Begin with the general purpose of the organization, then narrow the search as you learn more about the individual's own interests.
- Send a member to recruit a member. Ask a volunteer to recruit a volunteer.
- Make good use of people's time by asking them to serve the organization in meaningful ways.
- Offer perks, incentives and rewards as recognition for outstanding efforts.

## Selecting and Placing Volunteers and Leaders in the Most Suitable Roles

Individual needs, interests, knowledge, skills, backgrounds and attitudes can be explored through the **selection** and **screening** processes with role selection based upon the volunteer's ability to perform the task or activity. If volunteers are the group's focus, the screening process would use information from the application, member interest survey—along with the position description—to select the best person, based on the abilities necessary to perform the task or fulfill the role.

Common screening processes for volunteer organizations that involve a specific screening protocol include completing an application, undergoing a background check, being interviewed and checking references. Generally, organizations whose clientele include children or at-risk audiences require the highest levels of screening. (Check with the organization to determine what activities might be involved in screening new members, volunteers or leaders.)

Generally, the members of an organization will not undergo a screening process, although contact information may be collected on a simple membership card or application form. If projects or activities are a focus of your organization, it is helpful for the organization to ask each member to complete an interest inventory. The interest inventory is used to determine what people enjoy doing, what they're good at doing, what projects or activities they are interested in, as well as the skills, interests and abilities that each person can share. For instance, organizational leaders could use the interest inventory to identify volunteers to chair a community event or work on a project group or committee.

People should not be selected for volunteer leadership roles if they lack the skills necessary to execute the duties and responsibilities of the position. In addition, the screening and selection steps also present the initial opportunity for the organization to practice risk management. Recruits presenting a risk liability could be screened out during this process or be given additional attention during new member and volunteer orientation.

Selecting members for leadership roles within the organization is an important process that should not be left to happenstance. Leadership development should be a planned process, with new leaders being nurtured and a succession plan for experienced leaders. Organizations who retain the same leaders for decades eventually wither and die, because they lose their relevance and do not stay current in the community. Selecting leaders involves placing an individual in the most suitable position based on organizational standards, the duties and responsibilities outlined in the position description and information learned during the application and screening processes.

## Conclusion

Generating members, volunteers and leaders is an important component of all community organizations. Without new members, volunteers and leaders, all organizations will eventually wither and die. The first step in generating members, volunteers and leaders is to conduct a needs assessment. The information gathered in the needs assessment is utilized to develop position descriptions for volunteers and leaders. Position descriptions articulate the general purpose of the role, as well as the specific responsibilities. Identifying and following a recruitment plan will ensure that your organization and its membership will remain strong, viable, healthy and active.

## References

- Culp, III, K. (2011). *Effective 4-H Councils*. 4-H-009. University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension, Lexington.
- Culp, III, K., Deppe, C.A., Castillo, J.X., & Wells, B.J. (1998). The GEMS model of volunteer administration. *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* 16 (4) 36-41.



# Fashion Review Coordinator

## **VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION**

Kentucky 4-H Youth Development Program  
Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service  
The University of Kentucky College of Agriculture

## **POSITION TITLE:**

Fashion Revue Coordinator

## **TIME REQUIRED / DURATION OF APPOINTMENT:**

- 15-18 hours (9 - 1 hour planning sessions) – 9 months prior to the event
- Approximately 6-9 hours on the day before and the day of the event
- Miscellaneous management time

## **LOCATION:**

Cooperative Extension Service office or other community locations for the committee meetings and/or Fashion Revue

## **GENERAL PURPOSE:**

Oversee planning and implementation of county Fashion Revue

## **SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Event Coordinator
- Coordinate event personnel
- Recruit committee members
- Provide meeting notification
- Plan and conduct meeting(s)
- Work with committee to establish a location for Fashion Revue, theme, awards/gifts, and identify and recruit judges.

## **QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Must complete the volunteer application and screening processes and be accepted as a volunteer by Client Protection/Risk Management Committee
- Provide own transportation to meeting and activities
- Self starter; be able to work with minimal supervision from professional staff
- Interpersonal communication skills
- A sincere interest in working with extension, volunteer, and parent
- Organizational skills; ability to organize information and materials in a timely manner
- To enjoy working with 4-Hers and their sewing projects
- Ability to organize events
- Ability to work effectively with people
- Ability to identify, target, recruit and orient volunteers
- Ability to organize information and delegate responsibility
- Ability to motivate and educate volunteers
- A sincere interest in working with other volunteers and professional staff in an educational setting

**BENEFITS:**

- The opportunity to work with youth and/or adults providing positive support and growth experience
- Receive intrinsic and extrinsic rewards at volunteer recognition events
- Volunteer development opportunities
- Opportunities to share your skills, talents and interests
- Orientation provide by extension staff
- Research shows that volunteering promotes improved health
- Opportunity to make the difference in the life of a child.
- Use office supplies and materials
- Extension Professional will be available for consultation

**SALARY:**

- Unsalared; volunteer. This position does not imply paid employment with the University of Kentucky.

**LEADER / MENTOR / SUPERVISOR:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Volunteer

-----  
Date

-----  
Signature of Extension Professional, Mentor / Supervisor

-----  
Date

# Volunteer Position Template

## **VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTION**

Title of the position  
Name of the program  
Name of the organization

## **POSITION TITLE:**

(Identify the actual position title. Remember that “volunteer” is a salary classification and not a position title!)

## **TIME REQUIRED / DURATION OF APPOINTMENT:**

(Estimate the total time required for orientation, preparation, education and actual volunteering efforts at programs, meetings, events and activities. Both the amount of time required per day, week or month and the duration or length of commitment should be included. i.e. “Approximately 4 hours per week from March through August.”)

## **LOCATION:**

(Identify the location(s) where volunteering will occur. Include training sites, meeting locations, work out of home, office or as arranged, etc.)

## **GENERAL PURPOSE:**

(Often listed in a single paragraph, outline the overall purpose of this volunteer position. This includes a general statement of what a volunteer in this position should accomplish.)

## **SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES:**

(Generally listed as bullets, this included an inventory of all of the duties which a volunteer in this position will be expected to perform. For example: Recruit members, schedule 12 monthly meetings, distribute enrollment cards, return completed enrollment cards to the office by April 1, conduct an annual Community Service Project, communicate deadlines and opportunities, and so forth.)

## **QUALIFICATIONS:**

(Listed in bullets, qualifications identify the specific skills, talents, interests and abilities which are necessary for a volunteer in this position to be successful. These could include level of education, an interest in a specific subject matter area, a desire to work with specific clientele, organizational skills, flexibility, computer skills, access to transportation, access to a telephone and so forth.)

The following statement must be included:

+ Must undergo the volunteer application and screening process and be accepted as a volunteer.

## **BENEFITS:**

(List all of the benefits provided. These could include educational resources and curriculum, including leader’s guides, educational or training opportunities at the county, area, state and regional levels, access to computers or copiers, and so forth.)

## **SALARY:**

Unsalaries; volunteer. This position does not imply paid employment with the University of Kentucky.

**LEADER / MENTOR / SUPERVISOR:**

Staff member or individual responsible and accountable for this position. Include:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Volunteer

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Date

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Signature of Volunteer Coordinator

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Date