

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks
60-Minute Module Series



PROGRAM PLANNING

Training Guide

National Park Service
Volunteers-In-Parks Program



HOW TO SUCCEED WITH VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS

60-Minute Module Series

Program Preparation
Program Planning
Motivation
Needs Assessment
Designing Jobs
Recruitment
Interviewing
Orientation
Training
Safety Management
Supervision
Delegation
Performance Reviews
Recognition

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| I. | Training Guide | Page |
|-------------|---|-------------|
| | Introduction | . I |
| | Purpose and Learning Objectives | . 2 |
| | General Notes to Trainer | . 3 |
| | Workshop Outline | . 4 |
| | Trainer's Notes, with Keys to Transparencies, Handouts, Timing. | 5 |
| | Suggeted for Expanded Activities | . 10 |
| | Resources | . II |
| II. | Transparencies | T |
| III. | Handouts | H |

INTRODUCTION

Program planning is a key developmental process that measures the current status of your volunteer program, and serves to chart the future direction of the program in line with the park's management objectives.

Most parks have a general sense that their volunteers are doing needed work. Too often, however, the work is defined by individual staff members, or even by the volunteers themselves. By contrast, comprehensive volunteer program planning identifies true parkwide priorities, including the means to address them.

To create buy-in by all staff and volunteers, successful volunteer program planning requires a strong team effort. Park management, park staff (representing all divisions), park partners and volunteers should all be involved. The ultimate objective should be to develop a mission statement and long-term goals with specific outcomes that can guide and support the volunteer program in reaching its full potential.

Ideally, the same team that carries out the program planning effort should oversee a parkwide needs assessment, which in turn leads to the development of written job descriptions and then to a targeted recruitment effort to find the best qualified volunteers to fill those jobs.

PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The **Purpose** of this module is to establish the need for volunteer program planning that is defined by collaboration, based on park-wide priorities, and is keyed to outcomes.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Articulate the strengths and weaknesses of their current volunteer program.
2. Explain the process and importance of developing a mission statement.
3. Articulate how a well-managed VIP program directly benefits the park superintendent.
4. Identify and commit to ways of strengthening their volunteer program.

GENERAL NOTES TO TRAINER

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free, however, to personalize it to meet your park needs.
2. The developmental exercises in this module should help lead participants to the conclusion that comprehensive parkwide volunteer program planning is both important and necessary.
3. Program Planning works in combination with Needs Assessment to lay the ground work for a successful volunteer program. These two modules are best presented in conjunction with Designing Jobs and Recruitment since each is dependent on the other for success.
4. When this module is presented at the park level, it is recommended that the Superintendent be present to introduce it and to lend his/her full support to this important planning effort.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

| Transparency Handout | Section | Method of Presentation | Time |
|--|--|---|------------|
| T-1 T-2 | H-1 Introduction Learning Objectives Key Concepts | Presentation | 5 minutes |
| T-2 T-3 | H-1 H-2 H-3 Concept 1 An objective assessment of your current VIP program | Presentation Activity | 15 minutes |
| T-3 T-4 | H-1 H-4 Concept 2 A Mission Statement | Presentation Brainstorming Group Activity | 20 minutes |
| T-3 T-5 T-6 T-7 T-8 T-9 | H-1 H-5 H-6 H-7 Concept 3 Support from top management and other staff is critical | Presentation Activity | 15 minutes |
| T-3 | H-1 Summary/Wrap-Up/ Evaluation | Summary Remarks | 5 minutes |

TOTAL TIME: 60 minutes

TRAINER'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Time: 5 minutes

T-1: Purpose of Program Planning

T-2: Learning Objectives

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

Opening exercise: Designed to demonstrate the need for program planning

Ask participants to think about three questions:

How does your VIP Program support your superintendent's management objectives?

Does your park have a mission statement for your VIP Program?

Are your volunteers performing priority work? What is the goal of your VIP Program in the next year? The next five years?

Does your VIP Program have clear leadership and direction?

If you would have trouble answering these questions, program planning can help.

Read purpose of program planning or summarize learning objectives.

This training is based on **three Key Concepts**

CONCEPT 1

Time: 15 minutes

An objective assessment of your current VIP program is the starting point for all of the planning that will follow.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-4: The Benefits of Volunteer Program Assessment

H-2: How Close Are You To a Model Volunteer Program?

H-3: The Benefits of Conducting a Volunteer Program Assessment

Activity:

Ask participants to take a quick snapshot of their volunteer program by using the handout “How Close Are You to a Model Volunteer Program” as a reference.

After working individually for 5 minutes, have participants get together in pairs and compare the strengths and weaknesses of their programs. Ask participants to identify 2 of the lowest rated components and to propose actions to strengthen them.

Transition to Concept 2 by saying that “Many of these weaknesses can be addressed by first establishing a solid foundation for your program.”

CONCEPT 2

Time: 20 minutes

A mission statement will create the philosophical framework for your VIP program.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-5: Mission Statement

H-4: Developing a Mission Statement

Brainstorming

Ask: “Why Do We Have A Volunteer Program?”

Make sure responses reflect what’s in it for volunteers, the NPS, and the public. Record responses on flip chart if desired. There are many benefits in having a volunteer program.

A mission statement is one way of summarizing those benefits.

Definition of mission statement:

A mission statement identifies the main business and philosophy of the organization. Mission statement focuses on the following:

- Resource
- Visitors
- Volunteer/park staff

Additional Handout: examples of volunteer program mission statements

Group activity:

Have small groups each pick a park represented by a participant and write a mission statement using handout H-4 as a guide. Make sure the mission statement is specific to the park selected.

Things to consider:

- What do volunteers add?
- What is the value in working with volunteers?
- Is the mission statement inviting to diverse audiences?

Have several groups read their missions statements. Record mission statements on flip chart paper and post around the room if desired.

Summary:

Ideally, every division in the park should have the opportunity to provide input into the development of a park volunteer program mission statement. In fact, it is only with full staff support, including management support, that your volunteer program will succeed. That leads us to Concept 3.

CONCEPT 3

Time: 15 minutes

Support from top management and other staff is critical for the ultimate success of your volunteer program

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-6: What Does Your Superintendent Think of Volunteers?

H-5: What's in it for the Superintendent?

H-6: We Need Your Feedback

H-7: Characteristics of Commitment to Highly Effective VIP Programs

T-7: Promoting Good Volunteer/Staff Relations

T-8: Why Do Some Paid Staff Resist Volunteers?

H-8: Symptoms of Paid Staff Resistance

T-9: What are Some Symptoms of Paid Staff Resistance to Volunteers?

T-10: What are the Long-Term Goals of Your VIP Program?

Ask participants:

“What does your superintendent think of volunteers?”

“How is that demonstrated?”

How do you get parkwide commitment to your program from management as well as other paid staff and volunteers?

Activity:

Have small groups come up with their top five answers.

If time permits:

Activity:

Have each participant identify up to 5 long-term goals for their park.

Additional handout: examples of park goals

SUMMARY/WRAP-UP/EVALUATION

Time: 5 minutes

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1 Key Concepts

The road to a successful volunteer program is paved with good planning. Involve the superintendent, park managers, other park staff, park partners and volunteers. Work hard to develop a sense of ownership. Your self-assessment, your mission statement, and your short and long-term goals, will all reflect the strength of a unified team. You will have the building blocks in place to create a truly successful VIP program.

END 60-MINUTE TRAINING

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITIES

1. In order to fully assess your volunteer program and develop a mission statement, you may wish to schedule a full day retreat.
2. In order to fully develop your volunteer program, additional time should be spent in writing long term goals for the park.
3. The issue of paid staff resistance to volunteers is very sensitive, and may require considerably more time than is available in this 60-minute module, to reach a satisfactory level of comfort for all participants.
4. Your volunteers can also participate directly in the process of program planning. One way is to use handout H-6, "We Need Your Feedback," a questionnaire designed to give departing volunteers a chance to provide helpful feedback. A similar form could be developed for a group of volunteers after they have been on the job for a while.

RESOURCES

1. Lynch, Rick. *Laying the Foundation with Mission and Vision: Creating a Strategic Volunteer Program*, Points of Light Foundation, 1996. [www.pointsoflight.org/catalog]
2. *Field Guide to National Park Service Performance Management*. National Park Service, Office of Strategic Planning, 1998. [See Overview, 2-7; NPS GPRA Implementation, 3-5 regarding mission statements]
3. McCurly, Steve, and Rick Lynch. *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources of the Community*, 1996. Chapter 2, “Planning a High - Impact Volunteer Program.”
4. Scott, Cynthia, Dennis Jaffe and Glen Tobe. *Organizational Vision, Values, and Mission*. Order from Crisp Publishing, 1200 Hamilton Court, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Other resource that may be available

5. Ellis, Susan J. *From the Top Down: The Executive Role In Volunteer Program Success*, Energize, Inc., 1996. [www.energizeinc.com]
6. Cambell, Katherine Noyes and Susan J. Ellis. *The (Help) I-Don't-Have-Enough-Time Guide to Volunteer Management*, Energize, Inc., 1995. [www.energizeinc.com]

TRANSPARENCIES

Guide to Transparencies

- T-1:** Purpose of Program Planning
- T-2:** Learning Objectives
- T-3:** Key Concepts
- T-4:** Benefits of Volunteer Program Assessment
- T-5:** Mission Statement
- T-6:** What Does Your Superintendent Think of Volunteers?
- T-7:** Promoting Good Volunteer/Staff Relations
- T-8:** Why Do Some Paid Staff Resist Volunteers?
- T-9:** What are Some Symptoms of Paid Staff Resistance to Volunteers?
- T-10:** What Are the Long-Term Goals for Your VIP Program?

Purpose of Program Planning

1. Measure the current status of your VIP Program
2. Chart a park -wide course for the future

Learning Objectives

- Articulate the strengths and weaknesses of their current volunteer program.
- Explain the process and importance of developing a mission statement.
- Articulate how a well-managed VIP Program directly benefits the park superintendent.
- Identify and commit to ways of strengthening their volunteer program.

Key Concepts

Concept 1

An objective assessment of your current VIP Program is the starting point for all of the planning that will follow.

Concept 2

A Mission Statement will create the philosophical framework for your VIP program

Concept 3

Support from top management and paid staff is critical for the ultimate success of your volunteer program.

Benefits of Volunteer Program Assessment

- Identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Anticipating or explaining problems
- Improving morale and involvement
- Identifying high turnover problems
- Pinpointing positive impacts of volunteers
- Laying the groundwork for planning

Mission Statement

The mission statement identifies the main business and philosophy of the organization.

Mission statements focus on the following:

- Resource
- Visitors
- Volunteer/Paid Staff

What Does Your Superintendent Think of Volunteers?

Promoting Good Volunteer/Staff Relations

Involve both staff and volunteers in
program planning for volunteers

Use written job descriptions for
volunteers

Hire the right volunteers

Orient paid staff and volunteers
together

Match volunteers to supervisors

Celebrate accomplishments together

Why Do Some Paid Staff Resist Volunteers?

What Are Some Symptoms of Paid Staff Resistance to Volunteers?

What Are the Long-Term Goals for Your VIP Program?

HANDOUTS

Guide to Handouts

- H-1:** Key Concepts of Program Planning
- H-2:** How Close Are You to a Model Volunteer Program?
- H-3:** The Benefits of Conducting a Volunteer Program Assessment
- H-4:** Developing a Mission Statement for your Volunteer Program
- H-5:** Characteristics of Commitment to Highly Effective VIP Programs
- H-6:** Methods of Promoting Good Volunteer/Staff Relations
- H-7:** Symptom of Paid Staff Resistance
- H-8:** We Need Your Feedback

Key Concepts of Program Planning

The purpose of program planning is to measure the current status of your VIP program and to chart a park-wide course for the future.

Concept 1

An objective assessment of your current VIP program is the starting point for all of the planning that will follow.

Use the handout “How Close Are You to a Model Volunteer Program” as a reference to see if all the basic elements of a good volunteer program are in place. Identify strengths and weaknesses. See if program is addressing priority needs and if staff resources are being effectively used.

Concept 2

A Mission Statement will create the framework for your VIP program.

Keep the mission statement short and simple so even first time readers can easily understand it. It will explain why your park supports volunteers as full partners in contributing to the park’s mission.

Concept 3

Support from top management and other staff is critical for the ultimate success of your volunteer program.

Get park-wide commitment to your program by involving management as well as other paid staff and volunteers, in defining the major goals to be accomplished within the next five years. Establish accountability in your VIP Program by assigning specific individuals the responsibility for meeting each of your goals.

How Close Are You to a Model Volunteer Program?

Instructions: Rate your volunteer program against each of the components of an ideal Volunteer Program (A = Excellent; B = Good; C Poor). Note methods of improving your ratings in each area.

| Component of Ideal Volunteer Program | Rating | Suggestions for Improvement |
|--|--------|-----------------------------|
| Strong, positive motivations to have a volunteer program | | |
| Written agency/park mission statement | | |
| Park partner involvement | | |
| Written policies and procedures for volunteer program | | |
| Volunteers involved in planning and evaluating volunteer program | | |
| Good staff/volunteer relations | | |
| Peer recruitment | | |
| Effective safety training program in place | | |
| Short and long range plan for volunteer program | | |
| Volunteer recruitment plan | | |
| Formal and informal volunteer recognition | | |

| Component of Ideal Volunteer Program | Rating | Suggestions for Improvement |
|---|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Systematic and regular volunteer performance reviews | | |
| Written job description for all volunteers | | |
| Volunteer record keeping system in place | | |
| Paid volunteer coordinator | | |
| Agency/park orientation session/manual | | |
| Diversity among agency/park volunteers | | |
| Strong support/direction of volunteer program by superintendent | | |
| Creative utilization of volunteers | | |
| Staff trained to work with volunteer | | |
| Place for volunteers to work | | |
| Time to supervise volunteers | | |
| Agency/park has good visibility and reputation | | |
| Adequate training of volunteers provided | | |
| Annual outcomes report prepared for superintendent | | |

The Benefits of Conducting a Volunteer Program Assessment

Taking the time to go through a formal assessment process may seem an overwhelming task and a questionable use of very limited time. However, performing an assessment maybe the turning point in the development of your park's volunteer program. If we are totally engrossed in the daily pressures of operating a volunteer program, we often lose sight of the larger picture and the problems or resistance which may be dramatically impacting our effectiveness in leading a volunteer program. The National Park Service is clearly committed to our Volunteers-In-Parks Program. We must also be committed to excellence in managing our VIP program.

Among its many benefits, a good assessment will assist you in:

1. Identifying your program's strengths/weaknesses
2. Anticipating or explaining problems within the program
3. Improving the morale and involvement of volunteers and staff
4. Discovering which staff or assignments have the highest volunteer turnover
5. Uncovering what new or enhanced services are directly or indirectly related to volunteer work
6. Lay the ground work for planning

Volunteer Program Assessment: Five Essential Components

A simple numbers game (i.e. how many volunteers enrolled and how many hours of service they gave) does not give the full picture of what was truly accomplished, the quality of that work, and how the organization benefited from volunteer efforts. It is, therefore, recommended that each park annually or biannually engage in a program assessment. Depending on the size of your park, you may want to design the assessment on a formal basis with written questionnaires and assessment forms or on a more informal basis through focus groups, interviews, etc. Either way, it is recommended that you gather the following information:

Essential components of a volunteer program

1. Annual assessment of program goals
2. Demographic picture of our volunteers
3. Assessment of volunteer program by: paid staff and volunteers
4. Assessment of administrative support
5. Overall park program assessment (i.e., How close are you to a model volunteer program?)

Developing a Mission Statement for Your Volunteer Program

Definition: A mission statement identifies the main business and philosophy of the organization. Mission statements focus on the following:

- Resource
- Visitors
- Volunteers

Having a written mission statement as to why your park wishes to utilize the Volunteers-In-Parks program will have an impact in the following ways:

It will impact the types of jobs your park will develop for volunteer opportunities.

It will enable your park to explain to volunteers how and why they are contributing to the NPS Mission.

It will assist in establishing clear relationships between your volunteers and paid staff.

The statement becomes the basis upon which you can then develop policies and other decisions affecting volunteers in your park.

Volunteering provides an opportunity for the local and international community to participate directly in the operation and management of national parks.

Volunteers bring numerous linkages to groups in which they are involved, thus potentially opening the doors considerably wider into the community.

It is often easier to experiment with new ideas and approaches not yet funded through volunteer help.

As you develop your mission statement, see how the choice of such words as supplement, enhance, innovate, develop teams, etc. tell a great deal about how volunteers are regarded and utilized within your park.

What's in it for the Superintendent?

A well-managed VIP Program:

- Supports GPRA (Government Performance Results Act) goals
- Targets management objectives
- Develops NPS constituency
- Helps connect parks to citizens/communities
- Encourages better utilization of paid staff
- Extends ability of staff to get priority work done
- Makes better use of taxpayer dollars
- Increases “bragging rights”

As You Complete Your Volunteer Time With Us... We Need Your Feedback

Thank you for volunteering for the National Park Service. Your feedback and advice will help us maintain the best possible volunteer program. Please complete this evaluation form and return it to the Volunteer Coordinator. We welcome any additional comments or suggestions you may have about the VIP program.

1. Did you feel you, had enough input regarding your job selection and placement?

2. Was your job description accurate/adequate?

3. Did you receive an appropriate orientation to the, park, the park staff and the National Park Service?

4. Did you receive adequate training, if needed, to do the job? Did you receive safety training?

5. Did you feel the job utilized your talents and satisfied your reasons for choosing to volunteer?

6. Did people in this organization acknowledge and appreciate your volunteer contributions?

7. Did you feel adequate supervision and direction to do your job?

8. Was your time as a volunteer a worthwhile experience for you?

9. What suggestions do you have for improving the VIP program?

Park Name _____

Name (optional) _____

Characteristics of Commitment to Highly Effective VIP Programs

- I. The mission of the National Park Service and the significance of the park are clear to all volunteers.
2. The role of volunteers in the park is viewed as a positive extension of paid staff and volunteers are seen as valuable human resources.
3. Management at all levels in the park make a concerted effort to promote and facilitate volunteer involvement.
4. There is a clear focal point of leadership and support in managing volunteers in the park.
5. Paid staff and volunteers work effectively together toward common goals.
6. All volunteers have signed agreement forms and written job descriptions and are evaluated on the performance of their duties.
7. Significant volunteer contributions are celebrated with both the paid and volunteer staff.
8. There is a conscious effort to represent diversity in the park's volunteer work force.
9. All volunteers are given an orientation to the park, park staff, and their job, as well as adequate training, including safety training, to accomplish their work.
10. The park has a volunteer handbook that includes all park-wide policies that relate to volunteers and to the volunteer program.
- II. Volunteer jobs clearly address priority work in the park.

Symptom of Paid Staff Resistance

The following observations may be related to paid staff resistance:

- high turnover in volunteers
- few volunteers in park or in some districts/division
- volunteers “look” like staff (no diversity)
- references like “your volunteer program” or “your volunteers” instead of “our”
- many reasons to keep volunteers out
- lack of rewards for staff who use volunteers well
- no training in volunteer management
- no training in supervision for supervisors of volunteers
- management not using volunteers
- many staff choosing not to use volunteers
- work space not adequate for volunteers
- volunteer manager position is low level and poorly paid
- volunteers given mostly menial jobs

Do you notice any of these in your park?

When paid staff members are given an opportunity to express their feelings, they give many reasons for their lack of receptiveness to volunteers. Some are:

- fear of job replacement
- loss of control (volunteers may not do the job well)
- lack of involvement in the planning of the volunteer program
- no way to dismiss a volunteer who is not working out well
- lack of involvement in the planning of the volunteer program
- lack of clarity in paid staff and volunteer jobs
- volunteers take too much time
- no rewards for doing the job well
- volunteering is not a priority for the superintendent
- no skills to supervise volunteers
- no quality control on volunteers brought into the Park
- volunteers are too needy, take up personal time
- bad former experiences with volunteers
- others?

Methods of Promoting Good Volunteer/Staff Relations

1. Make certain there are clear written policies regarding volunteers - policies that endorse their involvement and delineate their roles and relationships with paid staff.
2. Plan with staff for the involvement of volunteers, not for them. Start small, taking care to select the best candidates available.
3. Plan common experiences for the staff and volunteers (i.e., staff meetings, social occasions, etc.) so that they will get to know one another better.
4. Have written job descriptions for volunteers that outline work to be done, reporting relationships, schedules, expectations. Make certain that both the volunteer and supervising staff member have a copy of it. It should be reviewed and may be modified as they begin to work together.
5. Allow staff to have the final say on the jobs they want the volunteers to perform, skills needed to do those jobs, and the final selection of the volunteer.
6. Orient all staff to volunteers and volunteerism. Help them understand the types of people who volunteer, their diverse motivations, range of skills, abilities, interests and needs. Let them voice their fears and reservations. Take their concerns seriously.
7. Hold an annual assessment of the volunteer program, getting input from the staff, volunteers and administration.
8. Encourage organizational recognition be given to staff people who have worked effectively with volunteers.
9. Ensure that volunteers have, or develop, the skills needed to do the job. Require training, if necessary.
10. Orient and train volunteers to what paid staff do, their skills, training, motivations, needs, and pressures.
11. Provide joint recognition of the volunteers and staff (Support the notion that, as a team, they accomplished many things.).
12. Maintain supportive relationships with all staff and teach them to trust that you're looking out for their interests. Learn to mediate without taking sides. Be a "win - win" person.
13. Let your enthusiasm, personal commitment and energy be contagious: about volunteers, about the program, about the good work paid staff do. Be a continuous promoter.
14. Keep yourself and your volunteers focused on the mission, purpose and the values of the program. "Keep the dream alive."