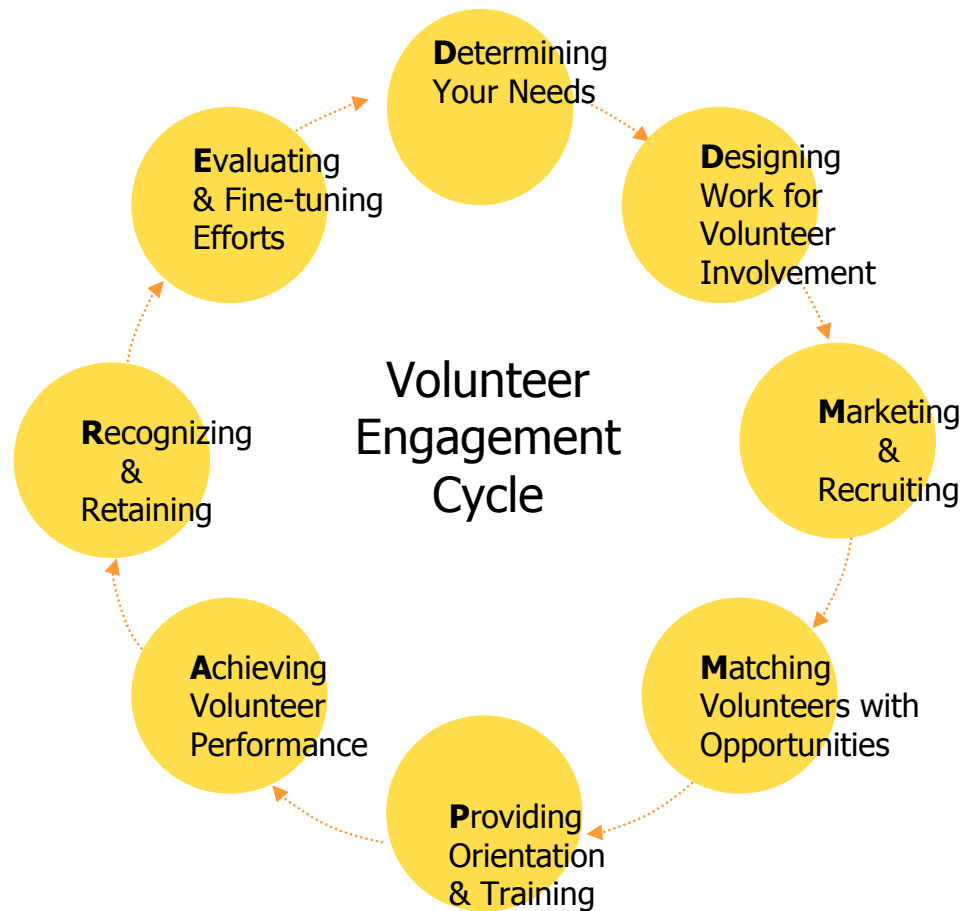


Volunteer Engagement Cycle



Explanation of each step in the Volunteer Engagement Cycle:

1. **Determining Your Volunteer Needs.** This should be the starting point for your efforts, to make sure you are matching volunteer involvement to the initiatives you want to implement as part of your organizational planning. Remember, that we are not just after volunteers for volunteers-sake, but to help us move forward on our objectives and initiatives. This step will also help you later in the cycle when you begin to design volunteer roles and target your recruitment efforts.
2. **Designing Work for Volunteer Involvement.** Some jobs are do-able by volunteers, and some must remain with staff. Look at those projects and activities that are most appropriate for volunteers and ways you can organize the work in small “chunks,” particularly for “episodic” volunteers that can give a few hours here and there, and who increasingly make up the ranks of today’s volunteers. Think outside of the norm in terms of volunteer opportunities; let your “wish list” of activities be one guide leading to new volunteer roles for your organization. A new volunteer structure may begin to emerge here.
3. **Marketing and Recruiting.** Once you’ve identified the work to be done, who do you want to do it and how will you let people know about your opportunities? Look at the various audience segments in your area that might be interested. Even create a profile of the ideal volunteer – skills, expertise, aspirations, networks, attitudes, passions – to focus on who you really want to find as a volunteer. Identify the benefits of volunteering you can offer to each segment and creative ways to structure your recruitment message that will catch their attention.
4. **Interviewing and Selecting.** Here is where you determine the right “fit” between the opportunity you have and what the potential volunteer is looking for. Sometimes this is easy and clear; other times you may need a more formalized interviewing or screening process, particularly when you are recruiting for leadership roles. Consider the criteria for “fit” as you may want to engage volunteers who will stretch the organization beyond business as usual.
5. **Providing Orientation and Training.** Just like employees coming into a new job, new volunteers need to be oriented and acclimated to their role and responsibilities. Orientation and training tend to work best when they are “just in time,” meaning that a volunteer can put the new knowledge and skills to work right away.
6. **Achieving Volunteer Performance.** Again, similar to employees, volunteers need feedback and periodic assessment on their performance. Your volunteers are smart people and using coaching techniques provides an effective way to enable them to do their best work. Likewise, you want to receive feedback from volunteers about their experience, formally and informally – create an open feedback culture. This will help you agree on ways to ensure success and make volunteering with valuable for everyone.
7. **Recognizing and Retaining Volunteers.** Recognition and retention tend to go hand in hand. Recognizing and thanking volunteers at different times and in different ways can be a strong motivator for individuals to stay involved. This includes celebrating the impact they help create. No one size fits all. Be creative.
8. **Evaluating and Fine-Tuning Your Efforts.** Take some time periodically to evaluate how well your volunteer initiatives are working and what you can do to fine-tune and improve your approach. Here is where openness to and even a hunger for innovation comes to life, creating even greater opportunities for volunteers to make a difference.