

Volunteers

Recruiting, Rewarding & Retaining



Byway Leaders and Volunteers

Byway leaders must train volunteer leaders to build stronger byway organizations. A strong byway is not an end in itself. It is also community development bridging interests along the byway to the community and beyond. One of the most important things that byway leaders do is identify, recruit, train, support and reward volunteers in working to build an impactful byway. With declining public funding for local programs, the sustainability of the byway really depends on whether it is able to tap volunteers to meet its needs and create an environment visitors find interesting.

Volunteer Statistics

We start by understanding some numbers regarding volunteer service. Most if not all of our byways increase sustainability and impact as we rely on a strong volunteer base from within and out. Gone are the days for keeping byways and their advisory committees bolstered by governmental funding and block-buster grants. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, in 2015: 62.6 million Americans volunteered, representing 24.9% of US adults for a total of 7.9 billion hours of service representing an estimated value of \$184 billion. Volunteer impact should not be underestimated.

How can Volunteers Help Local Byway Organizations

They save money. A volunteer is a walking subsidy whose contributions would otherwise have to be paid for by the nonprofit, the people it serves, and the organizations that fund it. They may also aid in finding valuable sources of funds through their contacts.

They are conduits to the community at large.

Volunteers often have a wealth of valuable contacts that can translate into donations of goods, services, or money to the nonprofit.

They are natural goodwill ambassadors. When volunteers find service at a nonprofit rewarding, they tell others. The community support volunteers generate can be amazing. In addition to serving as goodwill ambassadors, volunteers can be valuable allies if the nonprofit becomes embroiled in a public controversy. Their reassurance can help avoid a potentially explosive situation.

They enhance the nonprofit's services. Those who use the nonprofit organization's programs and services are always pleased when their needs are met. This satisfaction can only increase when caring volunteers make the programs and services even more effective.

They lighten the staff's load. When volunteers are an extra pair of hands to augment byway leaders, they can make life easier for paid staffers — something that should not go unrecognized.

They bring needed expertise. A volunteer's occupational and other experience just might include the expertise the nonprofit needs at the moment. For example, a journalist might be ideal for training the staff in the intricacies of desktop publishing.

Benefits to Volunteers

Volunteers themselves benefit from volunteering. They often pick up valuable skills and experience they can use in some future line of work. Recognize the intangible benefits: what they get back from their contributions of time, talent, and energy is the satisfaction that they are contributing to a good cause.

What are three ways that volunteers help your byway organization?

What would you have to stop doing if you didn't have volunteers?

REFERENCE

Sara N. Di Lima and Lisa T. Johns, *Volunteerism Management*, Aspen Publishers, Gaithersburg, MD, 1996:3:76.