

Meeting the Moment:

Mobilizing Volunteers

March 2026



COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

Empowering nonprofits across Colorado to identify and address community needs through connections, convenings, and capacity building.

In partnership with:



Scan to learn more about our education offerings.

Contact us at education@crcamerica.org.



Volunteers are stepping forward in powerful ways to meet today's challenges. Many people want to help their communities, learn new skills, and feel connected to something meaningful. This is a moment of opportunity for nonprofits. Volunteers can expand your reach, strengthen your programs, and bring new energy and ideas.

Community Resource Center, in partnership with Volunteer Management Consulting, designed this resource to guide nonprofits who may be experiencing an influx of volunteers and may also be facing challenges to meet increasing needs of the communities they serve. Whether you are starting a volunteer program, refreshing your systems and looking to do a full overhaul, we sincerely hope these resources are beneficial to you, your organization, and your community.

In this packet you will find reflection questions, examples, and templates to address key components of a volunteer engagement:

- Needs & Program Assessment
- Position Description & Supervision
- Recruitment
- Application & Interview
- Onboarding
- Meaningful Work & Tracking
- Retention & Recognition

Remember happy, valued volunteers stay longer, do great work, and invite others to join. A strong volunteer program is an investment in people—and in your mission.



Volunteer Needs & Program Assessment

Before recruiting volunteers, it is important to understand why your organization wants to involve them. Clear and positive reasons help attract volunteers who are motivated and committed.

Start by thinking about:

- How will volunteers make a difference here?
- Where do we have unmet needs?
- Are there services we cannot offer yet?
- Are we struggling to reach new communities?
- What dreams are on hold due to limited resources?

When designing volunteer roles, think about how their work will fit into your organization:

- Some roles may be short-term or one-time, while others may be ongoing
- Volunteers may work alone or in teams
- Some roles require general support, others need specific skills or expertise
- Work may happen onsite, offsite, or remotely
- Most importantly is that the work is meaningful and clearly connected to your mission

There are many ways to think about a volunteer's role within your organization:

- Serial: Small tasks, low responsibility
- Project-Based: Clear goal and timeline
- Sporadic: Helps with part of a task
- Task Force: Early planning and design
- Sage: Shares expertise or coaching

Volunteers bring many skills, including communication, organization, technical knowledge, and cultural experience. In return, they often gain a deeper understanding of an issue, learn new skills, build relationships, and gain experience that supports future goals.



Volunteer Positions & Supervision

Developing clear volunteer positions helps everyone succeed. Ask these key questions before developing a volunteer position description:

- What is the desired outcome?
- What resources are needed?
- What is the volunteer's role?
- What skills are required?
- When and where will the work happen?

Volunteer position descriptions clearly explain the role and expectations. A good description includes a short explanation of why the role exists, outlines the main tasks and skills needed, and the training and support provided by the organization.

Position descriptions help connect volunteer work to your mission and set clear expectations. They support better placement, stronger supervision, and more positive experiences for both volunteers and staff.

Strong supervision is essential to a successful volunteer program. Volunteer Management Includes:

- Screening and placement
- Orientation to the big picture
- Clear instructions
- Onsite or assigned supervisor
- Project-specific training
- Ongoing check-ins and feedback



Volunteer Recruitment

Recruitment is most successful when it clearly communicates the purpose and impact of the volunteer role. A strong volunteer message explains who you are, what help is needed, and how the volunteer will make a difference.

Volunteers can be recruited from many places, including:

- Colleges and service-learning programs
- Middle and high schools
- Community and faith groups
- Retirees and senior groups
- AmeriCorps members
- Families
- Businesses
- Clients and family members

Effective recruitment strategies include:

- Posting opportunities on your website
- Sharing them on social media
- Sending email newsletters
- Using volunteer job boards
- Hosting information sessions
- Partnering with other organizations
- Inviting current volunteers to spread the word.

When planning recruitment, think about who is best suited for the role, who can meet the time commitment, what motivates them, and how they prefer to be invited.

Thoughtful outreach increases success.

Sample Volunteer Ad

Do you want to help improve the lives of local seniors? A community nonprofit is seeking a volunteer to help lead a public information campaign. We need your communication skills and about 10 hours a month. Training provided. Call us to learn more.



Volunteer Application & Interview

Volunteer applications help ensure good matches between volunteers and roles. They support safety, clarity, and effective placement. Applications typically collect:

- Contact information
- Interests and availability
- Relevant skills
- References (if needed)

The volunteer interview should feel welcoming and respectful. It is a chance to learn about the volunteer's goals and interests while clearly explaining expectations. Honest conversations help prevent misunderstandings and build trust from the start.

Interviews also allow volunteers to ask questions and decide if the role is a good fit. A positive interview experience sets the tone for the entire volunteer relationship.



Volunteer Onboarding & Handbook

Onboarding helps volunteers feel prepared and connected. Orientation introduces volunteers to your organization, mission, and programs. It explains how volunteers make an impact and reviews policies, procedures, and key contacts. Some organizations use presentations, videos, or handouts to support learning.

Orientation may include:

- Welcome and introductions
- Tour of facility
- Overview of mission and programs
- How volunteers make an impact
- Policies and procedures
- Key contacts

Training should be clear, practical, and ongoing. Volunteers need task-specific information and opportunities to build confidence. Experienced volunteers can serve as mentors and trainers. Ongoing learning opportunities help volunteers grow and stay engaged.

A volunteer handbook is a helpful reference that reinforces orientation and training. It provides consistent information and answers common questions. It should be written in clear, welcoming language and reflect your organization's values and culture.

The handbook should include:

- A brief overview of the organization
- Explain volunteer roles, time commitments, and attendance expectations
- Communication guidelines, who to contact with questions, and how to report concerns or changes in availability
- Clear policies about confidentiality, safety, code of conduct, boundaries, and use of technology
- An outline of training, supervision, and evaluation as it relates to their work.



Meaningful Work & Tracking & Evaluation for Volunteers

Volunteers are more likely to stay when their work feels meaningful. Clear goals, visible impact, and respect for time help volunteers feel valued.

Tracking volunteer involvement helps organizations understand impact and improve programs. Many organizations track:

- Hours served
- Length of involvement
- Types of activities.

This information supports planning, reporting, and recognition.

Evaluation also helps programs grow. Collect feedback from volunteers and staff, and review outcome data when possible. Use this information to improve roles, strengthen supervision, and share results with leadership and stakeholders.



Retention & Recognition

Volunteer retention depends on meaningful work, supportive relationships, flexibility, and opportunities for growth. When expectations match reality and volunteers feel appreciated, they are more likely to stay.

One of the strongest motivators for volunteering is connection. Many volunteers are looking for a sense of belonging, shared purpose, and relationships with others who care about the same issues. This requires creating spaces where volunteers can connect with staff and with one another. Simple actions, such as learning volunteers' names, checking in regularly, and encouraging peer relationships, help volunteers feel seen and valued. This may include group orientations, team-based projects, reflection circles, or informal gatherings before or after volunteer shifts.

Clear communication also supports connection. Regular updates, shared success stories, and invitations to organizational events help volunteers feel informed and included. When volunteers understand how their work fits into the larger mission, they feel more connected to the organization and to each other.

Volunteers should also know what success looks like and how their work will be evaluated. Evaluation conversations should be supportive and forward-looking.

- Did the volunteer meet goals?
- What went well?
- What can improve?
- How does the volunteer feel?
- What are next goals?

Recognition is also essential. Volunteers need frequent, honest, and timely appreciation. Recognition should be fair, personal, and matched to the level of contribution. Simple thank-yous, public acknowledgment, events, and sharing impact stories all help volunteers feel valued.

Recognition works best when it is consistent, individualized, and connected to what you want more of. Volunteers who feel seen and appreciated are more likely to stay and invite others to serve.



Resources

[Community Resource Center \(CRC\)](#): stay up to date on CRC's live and virtual training offerings to support your nonprofit organization.

[Volunteer Management Consulting \(VMC\)](#): provides consultation and support for elements of volunteer engagement to help organizations build systems from the ground up or improve the effectiveness and professionalism of existing processes.

[reDirect](#): believes nonprofits are essential to building thriving communities. As a 501c3 private foundation, reDirect helps organizations build capacity through grant funding and coaching in our framework. Through this work, we envision a transformed nonprofit sector in which people flourish.

[Consultants for Good](#) [Consultants for Good \(C4G\)](#) offers different levels of support to find a consultant who meets your needs, including an online community of nonprofit consultants with varying backgrounds and expertise.

- You can preview C4G's consultants who specialize in starting a nonprofit in the [filtered directory](#) and add language, location, and other demographic information to refine your search, and explore the Consultant Match Lab for options that range from a free DIY hiring toolkit to hands-on search support. Create a free nonprofit account to access C4G's Consultant Match Lab.
- Link: <https://directory.consultants4good.com/get-matched-with-a-nonprofit-consultant>

Other resources:

[Association for Volunteer Administration](#)

[Spark the Change](#) (formerly Metro Volunteers)

[Taproot Foundation](#)



Notes