



## VOLUNTEERING WITH BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS – AN INTRODUCTION FOR THE CAREER LAUNCH PROGRAM

*So what is a volunteer and why does a Club need volunteers?* A Boys & Girls Club volunteer is any person who freely offers to contribute skills or services to help the Club strengthen or expand its impact on youth development, without expectation of financial or other tangible compensation from the organization. Simply put, volunteers provide services that are meaningful and essential to the operation of a Boys & Girls Club.

One of the reasons the Boys & Girls Clubs are so successful is because they have lots of help. Community members, as volunteers, have a wealth of skill, talent and energy. They help out in any number of ways: coaching, assisting at an event, spending an afternoon helping a child with their homework. Many volunteers take on the role of board or advisory committee member or community liaison, helping with policy issues. No matter what their role, volunteers play a vital part of Club operations and programs.

For the organization and its volunteers to benefit the most from each other, volunteers should be managed as part of an overall systematic program. Volunteers are a resource in and of themselves and research shows that volunteers are more likely to give financially to your organization.

By collaborating with individual volunteers or an organized volunteer group (such as Kiwanis or Rotary), your Club can achieve goals and successful initiatives. Innovative approaches to challenging issues, access to additional resources, new networks, and sharing of core competencies are some of the many reasons Clubs should consider collaborating with volunteers and other organizations. As with any partnership, the core principles of equity, transparency and mutual benefit should be present. The basic principles of relationship management, communication and expectation management should be followed to ensure a long-term and sustainable partnership.

Clubs should develop an overall strategy and plan to engage volunteers to make sure both Club and volunteer needs are being met. More than ever, companies are looking to partner with non-profits whose missions are in-line with that of their business strategies, corporate social responsibility platforms (CSRs) and issue areas (such as decreasing childhood obesity, clean water for everyone, access to technology, etc.). Therefore, companies whose CSRs have a focus on youth development, academic success, healthy lifestyles, and character and citizenship would be a good partner for Clubs.

In order to develop a strategic volunteer engagement plan, consider the following areas of focus:

**Staffing and Resource Allocation:** While volunteers may give of their time freely, volunteer engagement programs are not without cost to your organization. It is important to determine the financial, in-kind, and human resources necessary for developing and sustaining a successful program. A line-item budget for a volunteer engagement program would be a good place to start. Sample items to include in a budget would be: staff time, printing costs, cost of background checks, recruitment materials, orientation/training supplies, recognition events, etc. Staff members should be involved in designing the volunteer program as well as being trained to implement the program. Staff buy-in is critical for the success of the program as they will create a more welcoming environment for volunteers.

**Volunteer Work Design:** Developing volunteer position descriptions is a necessary step in creating a successful volunteer engagement program. Your organization will be able to recruit and retain the right volunteers if you are able to offer clearly defined roles that take into account a volunteer's needs as well as your organizations.

In order to determine which volunteer roles or positions are needed, you will have to conduct a volunteer needs assessment. Ask yourself and your staff members the following questions to determine Club goals and needs:

- In what areas are volunteers necessary in our Club?
- What specific skills do we need from volunteers in order to run certain areas of the Club?
- In what areas would volunteers be helpful but not necessary?
- How can our board members help?
- Are we willing to let volunteers participate to some extent in the planning of programs and activities they will be involved with?
- How can we best identify and make use of the skills volunteers bring to us? Do we know what skills our

volunteers have?

You should be clear about what you expect from each of your volunteers. Volunteers deserve to know what you expect from them, as well. To recruit volunteers for a specific role or job, you will need a clear job description from which to develop the advertisements and to show to any potential candidates. Therefore, each volunteer should have a job, or task, description. The description should specify whom the volunteer reports to, any general duties and responsibilities, and any specific tasks to perform. Job descriptions might include additional information, eg, level of expertise and education needed for the job, minimum requirements of expertise, time requirements, supervisor they would report to, etc.

**Volunteer and Employee Relationships:** Being clear with staff and volunteers about the purpose of the program and individual roles will go a long way toward supporting effective volunteer and staff relationships. Staff should understand that volunteers are there to support and enhance their work, not replace them.

**Volunteer Supervision and Feedback:** Volunteers need support to perform their roles. There should be a designated supervisor to whom volunteers can turn to for advice, guidance, encouragement and feedback. The supervisor should also provide the necessary materials, training and direction to the volunteer so they are successful in their assigned role. Also, the supervisor should be both willing and able to manage volunteers. The diversity of backgrounds and motivations among volunteers creates a different management challenge than that for paid part-time staff. Boys & Girls Club professionals need training to learn about the unique nature of volunteers and how to work effectively with them toward a common organizational mission. Staff needs specific training to provide them with the knowledge, skills and attitude to help them better lead volunteers.

**Record Keeping and Reporting:** Record keeping and collecting of data on volunteers and their activities has value. If volunteers are considered to be our partners in youth development and are important to the work of the Club, it is vital to know what they are doing and the results of their activities. The Club needs volunteer participation information and should have a process for collection of this data. Each Club must decide for itself what records and metrics (or performance measures) are important for documenting volunteer activities and successes as well as the methods in which the data is collected, stored and used.

**Recruitment:** Volunteer recruitment is the process for attracting and inviting people to consider becoming involved with your Club. It is important to remember to review why you are recruiting volunteers and have a plan for who you are going to recruit. This phase of implementing a volunteer program is about defining both the organization's and volunteer's expectations and determining a mutually beneficial "fit".

**Selection, Screening and Placement:** Matching potential volunteers to a volunteer position is an important indicator of your program's success. Making the match involves a series of screening techniques that allow the organization and the volunteer to get to know each other and decide whether and how to best work together. The goal of the screening process is to place the right volunteer into the right position so that the Clubs' needs are met and the volunteer's needs are met as well.

You should make every effort to place the volunteer in a position that matches their skills and interests with the roles your organization needs filled. Flexibility is key in order to make sure a good match is made.

It is important to realize that not every volunteer may be suited to your organization. It is much better to have a volunteer role unfilled than to invest time and energy in a volunteer who isn't a good fit for your organization.

Each potential candidate for a volunteer position must be screened. The extent of screening for each position depends on the nature of the tasks to be performed by the volunteer and your Club policies concerning background checks. Screening involves carefully examining each application, conducting background checks (eg, to verify information in the resume, identify any legal problems, etc.), and conducting an in-person interview with the most suitable candidates.

**Orientation and Training:** Initial orientation and training prepares volunteers to effectively and efficiently perform the duties of their volunteer position. Volunteers who understand what is expected of them do a better job and feel more satisfied.

Orientation to your Club helps volunteers see their service within the context of entire organization and its mission. Also, treating volunteers as part of your organization's staff helps them feel they are part of a team and fosters commitment and

retention. Volunteers help represent your organization to the public and the more they understand about the nature of your Club, the more they can contribute as advocates.

Orientation is an overview of your Boys & Girls Club organization that is necessary for every volunteer. It places the volunteer's work in context within the Club's mission, helping them see how they fit in and explaining the specific importance of their positions. It also allows for introduction of policies, procedures, rights and responsibilities. Orientation differs from formal training in the sense that training is job/position specific while orientation is more broad and general in nature.

Training is an important component in developing and retaining volunteers. It can begin with on-the-job, daily supervision and depending on the complexity of the volunteer's position, can take the form of in-service sessions provided within the local organization, typically by staff, for a group of volunteers. On occasion, there may be a need or benefit to involve volunteers in workshops facilitated by a trainer outside the local organization.

**Evaluation and Recognition:** Recognition is a form of compensation for the volunteer's service. A volunteer's pay, to a great extent, is recognition and assurance that they are a part of the team, providing valuable and accepted service. Demonstrating awareness of the volunteer's contribution and the practice of saying thank you are vital to the retention of volunteers. Retaining volunteers saves recruitment and training time, and builds an experienced team that can make a significant difference in the lives of Club members.

Clubs expecting volunteers to be caring and sharing with both youth and staff can model these behaviors themselves and provide various forms of recognition. While many volunteers may not outwardly seek recognition, and some may appear uncomfortable with it, feeling useful to others is a basic human need. Volunteers deserving of recognition have a right to expect it.

While an annual award program or volunteer dinner is a positive form of appreciation, recognition should not be limited to a one-time event. Daily recognition is a must and may consist of greeting volunteers with an appreciative smile, a thank you, a word of praise, or sharing a new program idea with them. All these acts become part of volunteer recognition and all are crucial to the success of your program.

A performance review is designed to help volunteers feel good about the work they do, achieve the Clubs mission and goals, and repeat good work. Performance reviews should be conducted regularly, depending on the nature of the assignment and length of the volunteer's involvement.

**Retention and Succession Planning:** Retention of your volunteers is an important aspect of your volunteer management program as keeping your current volunteers costs less than always recruiting new volunteers. Therefore, Clubs should make every effort to create and maintain positive relationships with volunteers. While not a direct activity, retention is the result of all the other volunteer management activities described above. Retention of volunteers is dependent upon all your efforts in every other area of volunteer management.

Succession planning can help you determine what to do in case a volunteer leaves his or her position or is unable to continue to volunteer. This is especially helpful if the volunteer is in a leadership role, such as leading volunteer orientations or a program for members.

### How can Clubs structure volunteer opportunities?

Boys & Girls Clubs need many types of volunteers, with various skills, to fill numerous roles. Each Club will have different needs depending on their members, programs they run, and community resources. However, there are several volunteer roles and opportunities that almost all Clubs will need filled in the academic success focus area. Examples are:












1. Homework Help / Tutoring / Power Hour program
2. Special events and projects such as School Supply Drives and College Tours
3. Skills based events such as Career Preparation and Job Shadowing and Resume Review

When working with volunteers or corporate volunteer groups, it's important to offer several levels or tiers of engagement so that volunteers can have options available to them for what role they take on and time and energy commitment they can make.

Event based volunteer opportunities typically are one-time and do not require a high level of engagement. Mentoring, on the other hand, is year round and requires a high or deep level of commitment on the part of the volunteer. Please see the tiered matrix of sample opportunities below.

Please note: 1) All volunteer opportunities can be customized depending on your Clubs' needs and event calendar, 2) Activities are examples only and volunteering opportunities presented to volunteers are not limited to these activities.

Additional ideas include: job shadowing experiences, college nights, game or field days, financial aid education nights, etc.

<b>Activity (can be changed to work with volunteer and Club needs)</b>	<b>“Tall” Level of Engagement</b>	<b>“Grande” Level of Engagement</b>	<b>“Venti” Level of Engagement</b>
<b>Back to school supply drive</b> (July – August)			
<b>Holiday Adopt a Family or other Event</b> (November – December)			
<b>College application coach</b> (September – April)			
<b>Super-volunteering</b> (Year- round volunteering)			
<b>Program co-facilitator (Academic Success, Healthy Lifestyles, or Citizenship)</b> (Year Round)			
<b>Mentoring</b> (Year Round)			

## **How Does a Club Get Started With the Volunteering Process?**

The keys to the process are:

1. Determine what needs and goals your Club has and which roles can be filled by volunteers.
2. Understand the volunteer's needs and what skills they have to offer.
3. Match your Club needs with the volunteer's needs so that volunteers are placed in positions that are meaningful to them and help the Club achieve its goals.
4. Give clear and consistent communication to volunteers and let them know you want the same from them.
5. Make sure you manage your expectations of volunteers and volunteers know what you expect of them.

### **Step One:** Introductions

A volunteer will connect with your Club via phone, email, or in person to request an application or express interest in volunteering. Please follow up and make contact with the volunteer as soon as possible to start the process. They should receive some form of communication with a Club name, location/address, and point of contact along with the next steps they need to follow.

In the case of a corporate group of volunteers, most will call the Club and ask for the CPO, volunteer coordinator or program director. They will introduce themselves and their company and probably request a time to set up a Club tour for their team.

### **Step Two:** Schedule a time to meet with the volunteer or corporate group

This may be done at the same time as the Club tour (which is *Step Three* below). If you are reaching out to a volunteer or corporate group that has contacted the Club, make sure to follow up and let the group you know are from the Boys & Girls Club and you'd like to talk with their main contact about scheduling a time to visit the Clubhouse and sit down with the primary Club staff to talk about schedules, available volunteer opportunities, and what types of volunteer opportunities should take place over the next couple of months in order to meet Club and volunteer needs.

### **Step Three:** Have the volunteer or corporate group visit the Clubhouse and have a planning meeting

Documents or information you should have on hand:

- Matrix of available volunteer activities and tiered category of commitment (see page 4)
- Planning meeting agenda – what you will talk about with the volunteer or group and what results you'd like to see
- Schedule of Club events for the next 6 months
- Prioritize your Club volunteer needs

During the planning meeting with your volunteer or corporate group, you should:

- Give a tour of the Club.
- Identify areas or programs of the Club where your Club needs volunteers (these should consistent with the tiered matrix on page 4)
- Familiarize volunteers with programs at the Club, particularly programs that are in the academic success focus area such as Career Launch.
- Help the volunteer(s) understand the Club environment and how it may be different from what they are used to at their place of employment.
- Ask the volunteers any questions you may have of them or their group and give them time to ask questions of you and the Club staff.
- Discuss any expectations you and the Club staff may have of the volunteers and expectations the volunteers may have of their experience at the Club.
- Give specific information about the roles volunteers would play over the next six months using the tiered matrix on page 4.
- It's a good idea to get at least six different times on the calendar that the volunteer would come to the Club so that a deep relationship with the volunteer can be built.
- Start the process for background checks.

### **Step Four:** Volunteers submit an application and go through a background check and interview

Clubs will need to have volunteers submit an application and then conduct a background check on each volunteer. This must be done in order to protect members and takes place prior to having volunteers interact with Club members. Each volunteer should also be interviewed in order to properly match them to a volunteer role.

Step Five: Provide a volunteer orientation

Volunteers should go through an orientation so they are properly prepared to volunteer with Club members. This may include an information session, viewing a DVD about the Club, reviewing Club policies and procedures, reviewing their role and signing off on volunteer roles and expectations. Some volunteers may have to go through additional training prior to volunteering especially if their role is more specific to a particular program.

Step Six: Prepare for the first volunteer experience

It's a good idea to keep in touch with your volunteers throughout the process so you can make sure expectations are being managed and communication is consistent regarding their first volunteer experience. Make sure to discuss any plans that were made for dates, arrival times, and any items volunteers may need to bring with them. Communicating this information to your Club staff members is also essential.

Step Seven: Start volunteering!

Once a volunteer has passed the background check, they can start volunteering!