

CCVP Meeting Notes– Designing the Ultimate Volunteer Program

Tuesday, March 7, 2017 at Chicago History Museum

Group Share of What Your Organization Does Really Well

Recruitment and Onboarding/Paperwork

History Museum - Revising a policy/creating a policy – have volunteers help and add input. People support that which they create.

Chicago Botanic Garden –get around and see them on the job after initial training. Supporting volunteers once they are here. Do team building, have mentors in place. Most volunteers stay.

Anti-Cruelty – Onboarding and grooming process. Send out quiz as part of training, learn terminology. Then listen to 2 hour training, after that they are handed off to individual trainer, then show how they can do on own and we keep eye on from there. Multi-tiered approach to onboarding. They can stay at Level 1 or grow from there if they show commitment.

Shedd – Thorough onboarding. Job description giving ahead of time. Expectations laid out very clearly. Leads to higher quality volunteers, they can weed themselves out early on.

Museum of Contemporary Art – Handbooks and handouts and FAQs and give them all they need upfront and support them along the way

Brookfield – orientation, shadowing, and training sets them up for success. It's lengthy but important.

Adler – give an activity as part of onboarding. It's fun and helps them give ideas of where to place them. Shows that they are going to facilitate an activity rather than standing on the stage and giving a presentation. Helps set the expectation of what they'll really be doing as a volunteer.

Training and Development

Lincoln Park Conservancy – content training. Build relationships with content experts. Have place to go if they have questions.

Chicago Architecture Foundation – Training and using experts to train volunteers, and housekeeping that goes along with that like using software to sign up for shifts.

Shedd – use blended approach to training, tried a lot of versions of it. Actualize mission and vision in training. Train volunteers to effectively engage and inspire our guests through training with open ended questions. Permeates learning mindset through the entire museum.

Chicago Park District – Volunteers serve as leads in different natural areas. It's just as important that you know how to communicate with the people in your area as actually knowing ecology. Giving community engagement training. Flexible with training, willing to “grandfather in” if they already have ecology background.

Evaluation

Shedd – do a lot of surveys and evaluation of program. Responsive to the feedback this produces.
Learning Programs Evaluation Group.

Communication

Anti-Cruelty – great weekly email which includes policy reminders, news, recognition pieces, photos, upcoming events, and more.

Reporting

Kohl Childrens Museum – quarterly report and statistics share out shows management the impact.
Department compete to have the most volunteers when they see how many others have. Teach people how to recruit, engage and retain volunteers.

Recognition

Forrest District of Dupage – Do press release and thank you for specific volunteers. Volunteers get recognized at banquet. Hit all different levels of recognition.

Grove –monthly newsletter, proving to be important part of recruitment and recognition. Highlight volunteers in this, foster the daily connections.

Retention

Willowbrook – Flexibility, freedom to do what you want to do when you want to do it helps with retention. Lot of interpreter volunteers who have been here for 15 years. Sometimes they get stuck in their ways but they stay a long time.

Park District – be flexible on assignments and areas, take into account what skills they want to develop.

Pleasant Home –Develop relationships with volunteers and staff and board. Get volunteers involved in more than just volunteer roles, like events and other programs.

Mayslake Peabody Estate – be personal with volunteers. You know what they want out of the program. Let them be flexible. If they want to clean kitchen, sure! Volunteers able to create own roles and we can give them the freedom to do this.

Adler – Give opportunities to grow and explore other roles. Many volunteers take on additional roles.

Management/Operations

Morton – Volunteers lead volunteers as team leads since program has grown so fast. They check in, place, oversee, and support volunteers on site. Will be expanding this to special events too. Volunteers rated at 95% satisfaction from guests. Has helped relieve staff hours of work (down from 10-12 hour workdays).

Museum of Science and Industry - Volunteers are integrated with staff and important. Have become more involved with giving feedback. They know they are just as important as any staff member to carrying out the mission and vision.

Shedd – offer a variety of roles and opportunities, creating a visible presence so people are aware how important they are. Volunteers know mission and vision just as well as employees.

Brookfield – prevent volunteers from becoming difficult. Deal with difficult situations early on, have a good system in place.

Jewish United Fund – Promote volunteer opportunities and build custom projects.

MSI – person to person volunteer relationship building. Matt knows name and one thing about all volunteers, which really helps when having to manage or implement difficult things because they respect you. Ex. A volunteer stopped doing something, he noticed it, paused and fixed the issue, and the volunteer stayed.

LPZ – Having a program designed to meet the institution’s needs. Change management. Growing the number of hours your volunteers give, without necessarily adding more people.

Group Break Outs-Best practices and ideas in various size organizations.

Small Organization

- Recruitment
 - o **Have volunteer ambassadors help recruit** (ex. Hand out business cards, brochures)
 - o Put volunteer info on company website
 - o Put info in newspapers and magazines, local gov.
 - o Phone/email chat/interview
- Training
 - o **Volunteer Lead training** (mentoring, building relationships)
 - o Need volunteer coordinator
 - o Handbook
 - o Refresher training annual for returning volunteers
 - o **Offer ongoing training**
- Retention
 - o Social events for volunteers
 - Potlucks
 - Go to people’s houses
 - o Send birthday cards
 - o Lots of thank you cards
 - o Communication – send newsletter (monthly, can include birthday wishes in this)

Medium Organization

- Set up expectations with good job descriptions
- Formal application and screening process (in person if required)
- Training
 - Blended learning, multiple ways to learn
 - Have evaluation process set up through onboarding
 - Have handbook
 - Adaptive training, have fluidity
 - Offer Cross training
 - Offer Refresher training
 - Offer Leadership Opportunities
- Building relationships between staff and volunteers
 - Have peer to peer accountability
- Tools
 - Have strong budget
 - Have software like Volgistics
 - Have physical space for volunteers and/or training
- Need recognition program in place
- Communication Strategy
 - Emails, newsletters, pre-shift meetings, bulletin boards
- HR policies
 - How to terminate a volunteer
 - Evaluation
 - Risk Management

Large Organization

- Identify needs within organization, need staff support/buy in
- Clear mission and expectations
- Clear Position Descriptions
- Develop policy and manual handbook
- Have good website
- Recruitment
 - Targeting volunteer leadership
 - Have good online application, newsletter, website
 - Ask position specific questions such as relevant experience, ask for 2 character references, background checks – best practice
 - Distinguish between rolling vs. seasonal positions
 - Screening
 - In person or on phone interview
 - Tour facility, overview of responsibility
 - Check references
 - Have time set aside for reviewing all these applications

- Acceptance
 - Final forms, policy handbook
- Orientation – have paperwork and forms completed
 - State mission again
 - Make sure staff is aware who will be doing training
 - In perfect world, volunteers start 1-2 weeks after orientation
- Day of
 - Make sure have warm welcome first day they are there
 - Mentors for new volunteers (use seasoned volunteers)
- Check in/performance management
 - have check in immediately after starting and then somewhat consistently
- Recognition and Engagement important