|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | | image | | |  | | --- | | How to Address Staff Fears &  Misapprehensions About Volunteers | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | | One barrier to enlisting volunteers in meaningful service can be the attitudes of staff and agency leadership. Staff resistance affects volunteer retention and can have a devastating effect on morale. Volunteers need to know that they are not only welcome, but that they are a key asset in fulfilling the program's mission and are vital to your overall success.  Check out the mood in your organization - is it pro volunteer in all corners? If not, it may be time to take some proactive steps to ensure the volunteer program is understood and fully embraced.  Here are common reasons why you might not get the support you need (most are based on fears and misconceptions about volunteers), and some specific steps you can take to counteract them.   * **Volunteers will sap the agency's budget.**  \* Be transparent -- Set a realistic budget for volunteer services (and don't underestimate your true resource needs) & follow it.  \* Track volunteer donations (in-kind and cash) -- Volunteers donate 10x more than non-volunteers; they are often a "hidden asset" to organizations. * **Volunteers will sap the staff's time.**  \* Be up front - Calculate the staff time it takes to supervise volunteers and acknowledge that this task requires time and training.  \* Communicate the Return on Investment (ROI) -- Quantify the amount of hours a volunteer team might contribute and their expected output and compare this with the budget resources invested in the program. Is the time invested worth it? * **Volunteers will replace paid staff.**  \* Make sure that top leadership communicates clearly that volunteers supplement paid staff, they don't replace them.  \* Have clear program policies and procedures in writing that clearly delineate the roles of volunteers from the roles of paid staff. * **The organization will lose control or programs will not be effective.**  \* Craft volunteer position descriptions that describe clear lines of supervision and directly relate to your program's outcome goals.  \* Develop program policies and procedures that clearly outline volunteer rules of conduct (confidentiality, conflict of interest, communications, etc.) and how any performance issues will be addressed.  \* Address individual volunteer performance issues immediately, using a disciplinary process you have included in your policies and procedures and has been shared with volunteers. * **Volunteers Are More Trouble Than They're Worth**  \* Share the specifics of how volunteers enrich the organization's reach and connection to clients and supporters with leadership, your board of directors, and the public at large.  \* Point out the ways volunteers help you build capacity to advance your mission.  \* Highlight volunteer accomplishments and give concrete examples of ways they contribute that are different than paid staff.   Open up the conversation about volunteers with your co-workers. By having a candid communication with leadership and employees who work alongside volunteers, you can begin to identify which fears are impeding your progress. Then, you can start to address them in a strategic way. | |