



Building Your Volunteer Pipeline

Turning Prospects into Volunteers

Finding New Volunteers

Corporate volunteer programs

Retirees/empty nesters

College/service-learning students

Faith communities

Skilled professionals

Micro volunteers (limited time helpers)

People with disabilities

Families wanting to volunteer together



Why people volunteer: Key Motivators

**Purpose and
impact**

**Social
connections**

Skill building

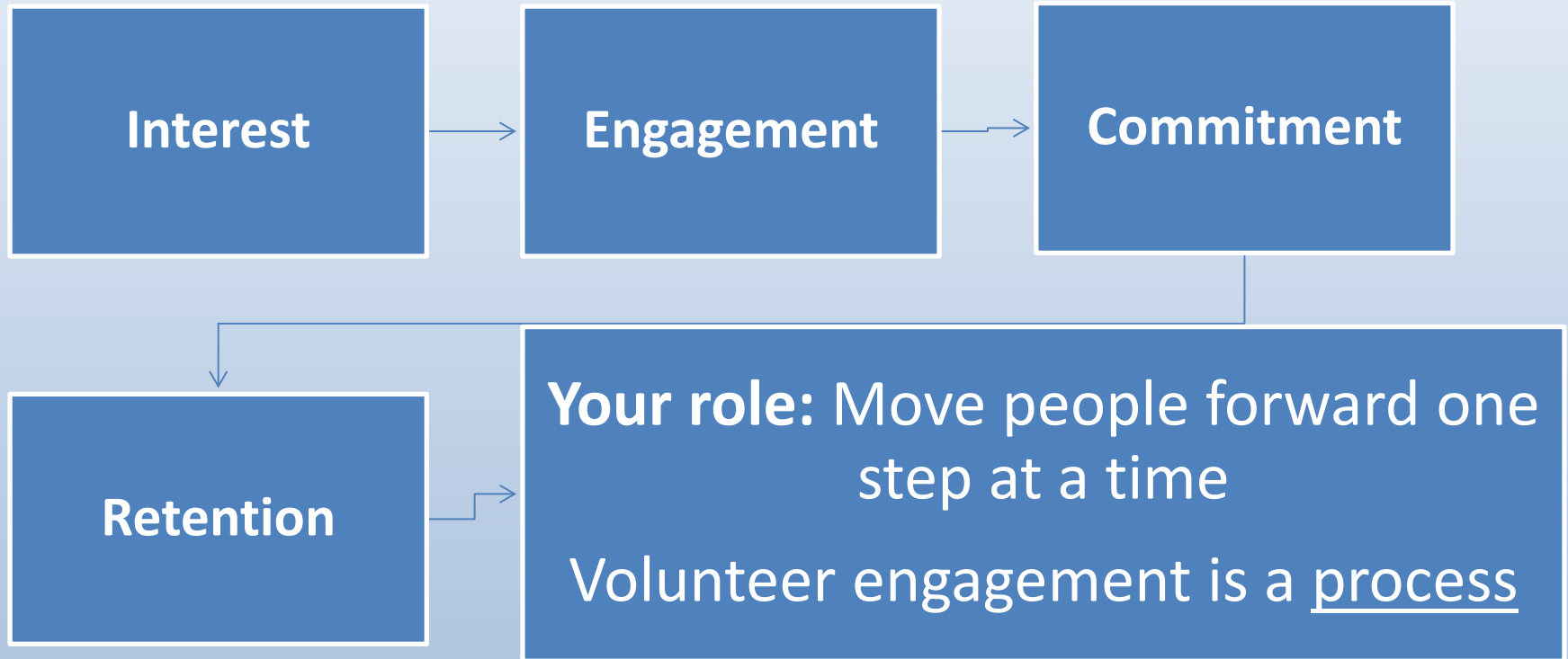
**Exploring a
new career**

**Personal
connection to
a cause**

**Spend time as
a family**



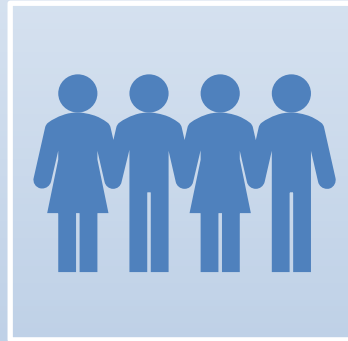
What Is a Volunteer Pipeline?



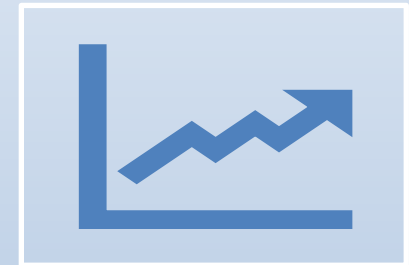
Why is the Pipeline important?



**More efficient
than constant
recruiting**



**Improves
volunteer
experience**



**Strengthens
retention and
impact**

The Core Problem

Many
volunteers
quit before
they even
start

If you were a new
volunteer, what
would frustrate you
in your own
process?

Some simply don't
return

Pipeline Problems

No clear next step

Too many steps

Slow or no follow-up

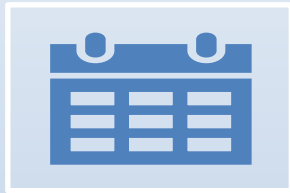
Too many barriers

Poor first experience

No ongoing communication



Step 1: Capturing Interest



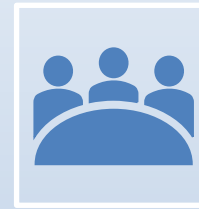
Events



Social media



**Community
partnerships**



**Corporate
partnerships**



**Word of
mouth**



**Lead with
impact, not
just tasks**

**like
Volunteer
Center**



The 10-Second Hook

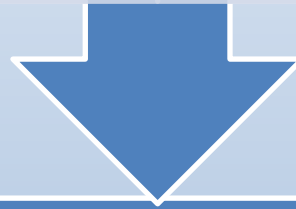
Create a simple recruitment pitch

Problem

Impact

Role

**Time
commitment**

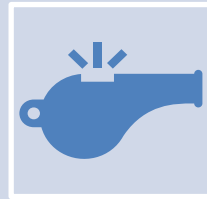


**We help XXXX by XXX. Volunteers can help by
XXX just XXX hours per month.**

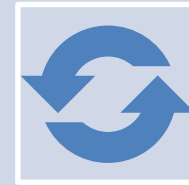
Recruiting in the age of short attention spans



**INTEREST HAS A
SHORT SHELF LIFE**



**CAPTURE IT
IMMEDIATELY**



24/7 CYCLE



Useful Tips



QR codes and simple forms

Text based sign ups

Keep sign-up simple

Consider an *Interest Form* as a first step in place of a Volunteer Application

Make it more personal

Call to action



Step 2: Engagement



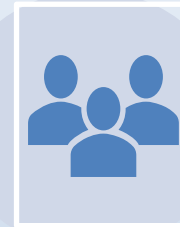
**FOLLOW UP
WITHIN 24-
48 HOURS**



**SAY THANK
YOU**



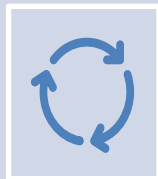
**PROVIDE A
CLEAR NEXT
STEP**



**CONSIDER
GROUP
VOLUNTEER
DAYS**



**OFFER
SPECIFIC
WAYS TO
HELP**



**“HERE ARE 3 WAYS
TO GET STARTED
THIS MONTH”**

Why This Matters

People return to
*experiences- not
organizations*

A positive first
shift drives
retention

A poor one ends
the relationship



First Experience Checklist

- ✓ Greet them by name
- ✓ Be prepared with materials
- ✓ Explain their role clearly
- ✓ Introduce them to others (Staff & volunteers)
- ✓ Ensure they feel useful; Value their time
- ✓ Thank them



Step 3: Commitment

Removing barriers:

How can we simplify the process?



- Long applications
- Too many steps
- Too long of an intake process
- Unclear expectations
- Delays before starting



Offer Flexible Entry Points

One-time opportunities/Projects

- Lets them meet you, learn about your mission
- “Dip your toes in the ocean” moment

Group options

Flexible scheduling

Adapt opportunities to busy lifestyles

Step 5: Retention

Invite

Invite them back right away

Share

**Share impact/
results**

Communicate

Communicate regularly

Recognize

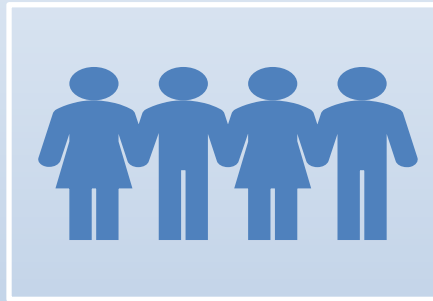
Recognize contributions



Putting It All Together



**Retention is your
most efficient
recruitment
strategy**



**Engaged
volunteers bring
others with them**



**Let volunteers
amplify your
agency's mission**



Group Activity

1. Map your current pipeline

- First by yourself
- Then in small groups

2. Identify where potential volunteers drop off

3. Note one improvement per stage



Discussion Questions

Where does your pipeline break down?

What is one barrier you can remove?

What is one thing you do well?



Final Message

- Every person who shows interest is raising their hand to help
- Our job is to make sure we don't lose them
- Build a system that moves people to action





Building Your Volunteer Pipeline: Turning Prospects into Volunteers

COMPANION WORKSHEET

1 PART 1: YOUR CURRENT PIPELINE (QUICK SNAPSHOT)

Think about your current process. What actually happens from first contact to first volunteer experience?

Fill in your steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Where do people most often drop off?

- After initial interest
- Before first shift
- After first experience
- Not sure

2 PART 2: PIPELINE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Rate your organization in each area:

Stage	Strong	Needs Work
Awareness (people finding you)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interest capture (easy sign-up)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow-up speed (24–48 hrs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clear next steps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of getting started	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
First volunteer experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ongoing communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Where is your biggest opportunity?

3 PART 3: FOLLOW-UP CHECK

When someone expresses interest...

How quickly do you respond?

- Same day
- 1–2 days
- 3+ days
- Not consistent

What do you typically send?

- General thank you
- Clear next steps
- Specific opportunities
- Nothing yet

One improvement I can make to follow-up:

4 PART 4: BARRIERS TO ENTRY

What might make it hard for someone to say “yes”?

- Long application process
- Limited opportunities
- Too many steps
- Scheduling challenges
- Unclear expectations
- Other: _____

One barrier I can remove or reduce:

5 PART 5: FIRST EXPERIENCE CHECK

Think about a volunteer’s first day.

Do you currently:

- Greet them by name
- Clearly explain their role
- Introduce them to others
- Check in during the shift
- Thank them before they leave

One thing I can improve about the first experience:

6 PART 6: RETENTION & RE-ENGAGEMENT

After someone volunteers...

- We invite them back right away
- We send a thank-you message
- We share impact/results
- We offer next opportunities
- We stay in touch regularly

One way I can better re-engage volunteers:

7 PART 7: YOUR ACTION PLAN

What is ONE change you will implement in the next 30 days?

When will you start? _____

★ FINAL REFLECTION

“Every person who shows interest is already raising their hand.”

What will you do differently to make sure you don’t lose them?



Volunteer Onboarding Checklist

- A simple, consistent process to create a positive first volunteer experience
- You can customize the process to fit your specific agency needs

Before the First Shift

- Send confirmation email with date, time, location, and contact person
- Provide clear directions/parking information
- Share what to expect (role, attire, arrival time)
- Confirm any required forms or background checks (if applicable)
- Provide contact info for day-of questions

Day Of (Arrival & Welcome)

- Greet the volunteer by name
- Introduce them to staff/team
- Provide a brief overview of the organization/mission
- Clearly explain their role and expectations
- Provide any materials or supplies needed

During the Shift

- Check in briefly to ensure understanding
- Answer questions and offer support
- Ensure the volunteer feels useful and engaged

End of Shift

- Thank the volunteer personally
- Share the immediate impact of their work
- Ask for quick feedback (optional)

After the Shift (Follow-Up)

- Send a thank-you email within 24–48 hours
- Share impact/results when available
- Invite them back with a specific upcoming opportunity
- Add them to ongoing communication (newsletter, alerts)

Notes & Improvements

- What went well?
- What could be improved?
- Any follow-up needed with this volunteer?

Volunteer Recruitment Ideas



Community-Based Outreach

- Participate in **volunteer fairs, expos, festivals, job fairs, and community events**
- Set up recruitment tables at **farmers markets, malls, county fairs, trails, and parks**
- Post flyers at **libraries, community centers, food banks, and local businesses**
- Use **bulletin boards** (physical + digital platforms)
- Distribute **door hangers, bookmarks, and handouts**
- Provide **goodie bags or promotional items**
- Send volunteers into the community to **engage and share information**
- Conduct **community service projects** to increase visibility
- Use **Connect Allen** as a resource to distribute information on your volunteer program

Digital & Media Outreach

- Maintain an updated **website/landing page** with easy sign-up
- Send **email newsletters** with volunteer opportunities and stories
- Use **social media** (posts, groups, and targeted ads)
- Share **impact stories, testimonials, and “day in the life” features**
- Post **specific, urgent volunteer needs**
- Pitch **local news and human-interest stories**
- Explore **PSA opportunities**

Partnerships & Recruitment

- Partner with **businesses for team volunteer days**
- Build relationships with **HR/community outreach leaders**
- Connect with **schools, colleges, and universities** (career fairs, service lists)
- Offer **service hours, internships, or scholarships**
- Engage **churches, youth groups, scouts, and service clubs**
- Tap into **professional organizations and networks**
- Work with **employment offices** for resume-building opportunities
- Recruit **retirees and service-minded individuals**

Events & Experiential Recruitment

- Host a **Volunteer Open House or info session**
- Organize **“Bring a Friend” days**
- Create **themed or seasonal events** (family-friendly)
- Set up recruitment at **events you host or attend**
- Offer **micro-volunteering opportunities**
- Use **gamification** (challenges, milestones)

Creative & Unusual Ideas

- Partner with **gyms, hobby groups, coworking spaces, trivia nights, or escape rooms**
- Recruit through **identity-based roles** (e.g., “Dog Lovers,” “DIY Crew”)
- Offer **skill-based pop-up projects** (photography, gardening, tech help)
- Create a **Volunteer Bingo, Passport, or scavenger hunt**
- Recruit in **unexpected places** (travel hubs, waiting areas)

Everyday-Life Integration

- Partner with businesses for **coffee sleeves, placemats, or receipt messaging**
- Place messaging in **parking areas, waiting rooms, or checkout lines**
- Include recruitment materials in **bags, deliveries, or shared spaces**

Advertising & Promotion

- Use **banners and signage** in high-traffic areas
- Yard signs **Thank you volunteers!**
- Partner with businesses for **in-store promotions**
- Place ads in **church bulletins, free magazines, and local publications**
- Promote during **meaningful dates or community events**
- Create **eye-catching visuals, displays, or characters**

Internal & Relationship-Based Recruitment

- Encourage volunteers to **invite friends**
- Create a volunteer commitment to evaluate volunteer application process
- Host structured **“bring a friend” initiatives**
- Reconnect with **former volunteers**
- Engage **board members in outreach**
- Recruit **family members, donors, and event attendees**

“Try Before You Commit”

- Offer **1-hour or short-term volunteer shifts**
- Create **pop-up volunteer stations**
- Allow people to **try tasks on the spot**
- Provide **shadowing opportunities**

Accessibility & Support

- Offer **flexible scheduling and micro-roles**
- Provide **transportation support when possible**
- Keep onboarding **simple and quick**
- Clearly communicate **expectations and impact**
- Your yes’s are your yes’s and your no’s are your no’s – This assures volunteers that you will not ask them to take on a volunteer role they are not comfortable with

Behavioral Nudges That Work

- Use **default sign-ups** (e.g., “You’re tentatively scheduled—confirm here”)
- Offer **limited spots** (“Only 6 openings left this Saturday”)
- Frame volunteering as a **social norm** (“Join 200 neighbors already helping”)
- Give **instant gratification** (quick thank-you + visible impact immediately)

Reverse Recruitment

- Ask **clients/beneficiaries** to become volunteers when ready
- Invite **event attendees** to help run the *next* event
- Turn **one-time donors** into hands-on supporters
- Recruit **family members of current volunteers**

Storytelling & Immersive Recruitment

- Start a **short podcast or audio stories** featuring volunteers and impact
- Create a **mini documentary or video series** people can share
- Design a **self-guided “experience tour”** of your work (QR codes, audio stops)
- Host a **live storytelling night** where volunteers share real experiences

Gamified & Interactive Ideas

- Create a **Volunteer Bingo card** (complete tasks, win small prizes)
- Run a **community scavenger hunt** that introduces your mission
- Launch a **“Volunteer Passport”** (stamp for each activity completed)
- Build a **leaderboard or challenge month** between teams or groups

Tip: The most effective recruitment meets people where they already are, makes it easy to say “yes,” and clearly shows the impact they will make.
