



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

Large, Successful Projects Conducted by Volunteers

Objectives: Participants will comprehend effective methods for working with volunteers.

Lesson Overview/Introduction: Coordinating large projects often depends on a team effort. Certain skills are necessary to mobilize and motivate team volunteers. Leaders must work with volunteers during each step of the project to accomplish the desired outcome.

Lesson:

There are common elements that hold true for any successful project. Here are concepts that should be thought out ahead of time and a plan should be in place for each facet of the project. Successful projects that do what they intend to do are planned in advance, well monitored and well promoted.

“Say what you mean and do what you intend”

The focus of the project should be crystal clear to all involved. Before the project begins, make sure the project's core objectives have been determined as well as how those objectives will be reached (what you're trying to accomplish, how you will do it.) The project leader should be responsible for making sure all volunteers understand why the project is being conducted and how the project is being conducted plus what the intended outcome of the project will be. It is imperative that all involved are able to share the same message to the public. Consider everyone (leaders and volunteers) to be a spokesman for the project.

“I need help!”

Locating volunteers is challenging. Make it as easy as possible for volunteers to find you/your project and become involved. Here are some ideas for getting the word out when recruiting volunteers:

- Consider a newspaper article to let the public know about the project.
- Set up a booth at a large festival to share information.
- Set up a social media page for the project. This allows volunteers to learn about the project and submit their contact information via Facebook, Twitter, Email, Pinterest or phone. Social media and email distribution lists will reach hundreds/ thousands of people very quickly for essentially no cost.
- Encourage team members to share the information with all their email contacts and include a message to pass it along.
- Make sure the information you post is short, on message, and includes an incentive for volunteering. Here's an example: Habitat for Humanity needs 20 volunteers each week for the next 8 weeks to renovate a home for Mary Jane. Help one week or help 8 weeks. Work location is 123 Main Street from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Church

Groups, Civic Organizations encouraged to volunteer. \$10 gift certificate to a downtown restaurant provided each week for the first 20 to register and work one full 8 hour shift. Click here to let us know you can join our team!

“On my own time schedule”

Remember that volunteers are under no obligation to you or the project. They might be able to provide assistance for 1 hour, 1 day, 1 week or 1 year. Some people help only once, others help on an intermittent basis while others are available 7 days a week. All helpers can be utilized in a project. It is discouraged to turn away anyone wanting to provide assistance.

“Here’s your job description”

All help is valuable help, so have a plan for how people can donate their time to your project (office work, answering phones and emails, maintaining webpages, physical labor, transportation, teaching others, etc. are all great ways that volunteers can utilize their time.) Asking people to simply show up without knowing what they’re showing up to do will result in fewer volunteers and confused volunteers. Project leaders should know what jobs need doing and assign people to those jobs. This provides a well-organized, more efficient structure for volunteers to take part in.

“What are the risks?”

The project leader should consider ahead of time if there will be adequate risk to warrant insurance coverage for the volunteers or the audience.

Consider the following:

- Is anyone working with equipment that might be dangerous?
- Is anyone travelling long distances to do project work?
- Are volunteers working with groups to conduct activities that offer potential for personal danger or loss in any way?
- If volunteers are teaching others, are they required to share specific information or is there flexibility in the content they are teaching?

“Teach how to teach/ Teach how to do”

Help volunteers to share the project’s information as effectively as possible. It is a good idea to hold a training session to explain equipment, demonstrate tasks and clarify information.

Help volunteers understand how to work with different groups: children vs. adults; low income vs. adequate income; volunteer’s culture vs. audience’s culture; skilled labor vs. unskilled labor. Each of these audiences will require a different style of communication. Volunteers are most effective when they use effective communication with the audience.

“Supply the supplies”

Consider if there are special supplies required to reach the intended audience. How will volunteers get the supplies? (one set shared by the group? One set for each volunteer? Volunteers provide their own supplies?)

Each volunteer should be well versed in why to use supplies, how to use supplies and where to get the supplies. Having a plan for necessary supplies helps volunteers understand their jobs.

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“Stay in touch”

Communication among volunteers and the team leader should be easy to understand, efficient and constant. All team members should know how to reach other members (email, cell phone, house phone with answering machine.)

Do not share a volunteer’s contact information with anyone outside your group (this can lead to unwanted junk mail, junk email, and social media sponsored ads.) Explain to volunteers why they are discouraged from sharing group email lists and mailing addresses. Volunteers won’t work with you again if they get an inbox full of junk because you or someone on the team gave out their email address.

“Reward the people”

Volunteers help with projects for different reasons. But all volunteers must receive an incentive to warrant their involvement. Typical forms of reward include:

- Some people want praise/pats on the back from the project’s “authority figure.”
- Others want public recognition (picture in the newspaper.)
- Still others prefer a tangible award (plaque presented at a banquet; gift certificate.)

Recognition and reward are keys to motivation and morale. Don’t ever forget to say “Thank you” to those who give their time to the project. Volunteers who are appreciated tell their project story long after the work is finished. They are also more likely to volunteer for your future projects if they are acknowledged and know their contribution was valued.

“We did what we intended to do”

Making sure the program accomplishes the intended purpose requires book keeping. There are at least two tracks of information that will be necessary:

- did the program do what it was designed to do? and
- how can the program be improved?

To find out if the project’s objectives were met, consider tracking data such as number of people reached by volunteers, information gained by the participants, whether the audience used the new information, and whether they felt the information was effective for them.

To find out if the project could be improved in any way, consider tracking data such as the amount of time volunteers contributed to the project, if volunteers felt there might be a way to reduce duplication of effort or eliminate steps; if they noted any teaching methods that were especially successful and could be expanded; what changes volunteers witnessed with the participants; whether new or different equipment is needed to conduct the project.

These kinds of information should be considered as a whole to help the group improve the project in the future plus it makes it easy for volunteers to share the success of the project.

Collect this information regularly and efficiently. Here are some examples of how to collect information:

- a weekly 3 question email survey to volunteers

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- a short paper/pencil evaluation at the end of an audience's training session. Make sure to ask only for information that is essential. Open ended questions often yield the most useful information. For example, "What part of your contribution to the project do you think could be streamlined?" or "Share any differences you observed in the audience before you taught the class and after you taught the class." Or, "What changes would you make in the way the instructor shared information?"

"Tell your story"

All volunteers should be able to tell the story of the project. Volunteers should be able to fill in these blanks:

The initial idea for the project was _____; our efforts were focused on _____; my part in the project was _____; here's how things turned out _____; if we do it again, here's what we will do differently to make it even better _____. If you want to get involved next time, contact _____.

Make sure to share information with volunteers on a regular basis by giving updates to the group. When volunteers tell their story (good or bad) the word spreads quickly about your project and whether it was a success or failure. Word of mouth can be make-or-break for future projects, so make sure there is an accurate and ongoing flow of information with volunteers. Don't be afraid to share setbacks and downfalls with the group. Lack of understanding when something goes wrong on a project is often the root of speculation, rumors and gossip. Mistakes should be shared so the group can learn from the error and the project can advance. Likewise, successes and victories should be shared so effective strategies can be repeated.

Lesson Summary: Working with volunteers to complete projects requires the ability to communicate, motivate and evaluate.

Suggested Activities:

- Have a group/club project such as Water Around the World, canned food drive, community garden or club fundraiser. Any of these projects will utilize the concepts in this lesson.
- Share experiences with the club about projects you have taken part in or led.

Suggested Materials: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/volunteer.html>
<http://www.slideshare.net/volunteermatch/engaging-the-volunteer-of-the-future>

Lesson Prepared by: Rhonda Matthews, Regional Food Safety and Nutrition Agent; 2013 Recipient of the Buff Swicegood Travel Study Award

Lesson Review by: Susan Barefoot, Ph.D., Food Microbiology Professor Emerita and former Extension Program Team Leader, Food Safety & Nutrition

Sources/References: www.masterFCSvolunteerprogram.info: Master Family and Consumer Sciences Volunteer Program: Toolkit for Volunteer Development

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