Volunteers and staff working together

Working with a volunteer can be a challenge for the best volunteer coordinator. A volunteer is motivated by something different than a paycheck and may have ideas about what he/she wants to do that are not quite what you had in mind or maybe they want to do more. A key term to remember is trust — trust that the volunteer wants to be there and make a great contribution and trust yourself that each volunteer only wants to support the volunteer program and do good things.

Delegation involves clarifying your goal and what a successful outcome will look like. Many coordinators as well as organization’s are reluctant to delegate tasks or program decisions to volunteers. When used in an efficient way, volunteer program participants can expand an organizations outreach and program outcomes. Learning how to delegate and how to give and get feedback to and from volunteers is a necessary skill for any volunteer coordinator. Remember, volunteers expect to help, do not waste their time with mundane tasks.

**How to delegate:**

- Define the end result, then give the volunteer the authority to carry it out.
- Define how much control the volunteer(s) will have in the process.
- Give any guidelines and then be available as a resource.

Easier to do it yourself? Maybe, but volunteers can contribute more, claim ownership and add their expertise. You as the coordinator can spend more time developing, expanding and evaluating the bigger picture.

Occasionally individual volunteers will not agree with your direction or will try to travel in a direction of their own. This challenging behavior will affect you as the manager, other volunteers, the organization and the population served. How can you turn this challenging behavior or even anger into a positive direction? Can the behavior always be re-directed or is it sometimes a better idea to have the volunteer dismissed from the organization? If this conflict is ignored the consequences can escalate.

**Resolving conflict:**

- Find a non-threatening location to have the conversation
- State what you see happening, use I messages and documented occurrences
- Ask for feedback from the volunteer
- Listen and avoid arguing
- Decide together on the best solution

**Alaskan concerns:**

- Veteran volunteers refuse to change and prevent new volunteers from contributing
- “We’ve always done it this way”
- I can’t seem to get the volunteers to agree on the direction of the program

Learn more about these topics at Everyone Ready

**VNG-Volunteerism for the Next Generation:**

- Sustainability of Volunteer Efforts: “Dealing with Another’s Anger” “Effective Delegation”

**Everyone Ready:**

- Handling Challenging Behavior by Volunteers
- Effective Delegation Skills