

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR OLDER ADULTS

Volunteerism: Readiness for Employment and Volunteer Matching



Tip Sheet No. 5, July 2024

Volunteerism as a Means of Workforce Readiness

Existing research and participant feedback indicate that volunteering can provide an opportunity for hands-on learning and skill-building to prepare older adults for workforce re-entry or to support one's existing professional career.

Volunteerism Benefits

- Professional and personal development
- Skills and knowledge
- Health and cognition
- Socialization
- Older adult value & worthiness
- Intergenerational connection
- Preparation for future employment
- Late life meaning and purpose

ELEMENTS OF VOLUNTEERISM THAT PREP INDIVIDUALS FOR EMPLOYMENT

Applied Practice	Research confirms the importance of hands-on learning and training for older adults. Volunteering offers a valuable means to retain existing skills and knowledge through practical application, while also developing new skills and knowledge.
Easing Transition	An evolving job market makes it challenging for older adults to secure stable employment. Recent, relevant volunteer experience makes candidates more attractive to employers and eases the transition to permanent employment and exposes older adults to new settings and new technologies.
Mentoring and Coaching	Mentorship and coaching is a positive aspect of volunteer experience and future work re-entry and allows individuals to learn and be guided in an intimate setting. This can improve confidence with volunteering and future employment.

Project Background

AmeriCorps Seniors funded a three-year research project of seven workforce development programs focused on older adults. These tip sheets reflect topics of interest to program staff, community partners and older workers. For more information on the project at <https://mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/workforceresearch/>

Volunteer Matching

For participants to fully engage and benefit from volunteer work, volunteer placement should match their interests, skills, and professional and personal goals.

Benefits of Volunteer Matching

- Enhances meaningful engagement with the experience
- Generates high levels of motivation and satisfaction from participants
- Increases job readiness through knowledge transfer and skill development.
- Recognizes previous work experiences, skills, and knowledge

STRATEGIES FOR MATCHING PARTICIPANTS TO VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Conduct a Volunteer Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan strategically for needs and future volunteer opportunities• Define needed volunteer roles, skills, and oversight• Set clear volunteer and program expectations
Assess To Facilitate Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss expectations with volunteers and organizations• Assess or survey for volunteer knowledge, skills, goals, and availability• Match volunteer opportunity with individuals' interests, goals, and need for flexibility in tasks or scheduling
Highlight Volunteer Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outline the benefits of each volunteer opportunity and how they can support later life interests and goals• Gauge participants' level of interest with existing benefits• Promote volunteer flexibility, often a benefit for many volunteers

Volunteer Appreciation

All organizations should incorporate some form of volunteer acknowledgement and appreciation. Recognition can be a motivating factor and increases the likelihood of satisfaction.

- Provide volunteer appreciation receptions, lunches, and expressions of gratitude
- Acknowledge and commend volunteer performance and commitment

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