

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

for Older Adult Virtual Volunteering

Tips for Managers and Directors of Volunteer Programs



To recruit and retain virtual volunteers, programs should diversify outreach through online channels such as online fairs and social media while leveraging existing volunteers as ambassadors to share their experiences. Managers must prioritize strategic matching by aligning tasks with a volunteer's tech skills and interests, while also providing regular check-ins to ensure roles remain meaningful and volunteers feel engaged. Finally, fostering a sense of community through virtual social hours and inclusive appreciation events is essential for preventing isolation and maintaining long-term engagement.

RECRUITMENT TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Volunteers are the driving force behind the success of many organizations, and recruiting and retaining them is a high priority. In rapidly changing times, organizations may choose to use a variety of methods for volunteer recruitment and retention.

Diversify Outreach and Plan Ahead	Use a variety of communication methods to promote virtual volunteer opportunities across multiple platforms, including methods already used for in-person role recruitment. Recruitment via online events, such as virtual fairs and Facebook groups, will help you to connect with potential volunteers who are already comfortable using remote and online technologies.
Market the Volunteer Opportunity	Attract prospective volunteers by highlighting the flexibility and accessibility of remote service. Emphasize that a hybrid model, combining in-person and virtual tasks, is also available to suit different volunteer needs and preferences.
Volunteers as Ambassadors	Existing volunteers are excellent ambassadors to recruit others. Word-of-mouth can be a powerful tool for virtual volunteering recruitment; encourage existing volunteers to share their experiences with their networks.
Accommodate Volunteer Needs	Strategically match volunteers by balancing organizational needs with their individual preferences, technology interests, and potential barriers to participation. By tailoring assignments to their specific skills and circumstances, you create an environment where volunteers can truly thrive.
Leverage Existing Tools	Utilize existing virtual platforms and social media to recruit, such as Facebook, Idealist, and AARP's Create the Good®, to give visibility to your organization and connect volunteers with open virtual volunteering roles.

RETENTION TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Show Your Appreciation and Incentivize Participation	Ensure all volunteers feel valued by offering a mix of in-person and virtual appreciation events that everyone can attend. Boost engagement and keep the program exciting by providing incentives like gift cards or group meals to recognize their contributions.
Foster Community	Schedule time for volunteers to connect with each other, whether in-person or virtually. Examples of virtual team events might include hosting a coffee hour via Zoom or scheduling a drop-in social hour.
Keep Checking In	Keep virtual volunteers engaged with your organization by ensuring that the tasks assigned to them are important and meaningful. Check in with them on a regular schedule to build rapport, provide updates, and strengthen connection to your program.

"It would be nice to be able to get together, online in a meeting, and just chat...and see everybody's face again. I would love for that...I would love to say, 'hey, on this date, I'm going to open up [a Zoom] and whoever wants to join me for some coffee and chats, come in;' because sometimes holidays can be lonely for [the volunteers]."

Foster Grandparent
Program Director

VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CONSIDERATIONS

- ✔ **Outreach:** Relying solely on word-of-mouth may limit the ability to recruit potential virtual volunteers; targeted outreach is essential. To find those already engaged with technology, look to online venues. If there is a local technology training center or local tech classes for older adults, create a partnership that would allow you to highlight your volunteer offerings to older adult trainees.
- ✔ **Tap Existing Volunteers:** Some programs recruit virtual volunteers from their existing volunteer base by identifying volunteers with strong tech skills or those with a desire to learn and do more with technology.
- ✔ **Virtual and Offline Recognition:** Not all volunteers will attend volunteer retention and celebration events. Consider other forms of recognition that honor their contributions such as a Facebook posting, or newsletter feature. Whether serving virtually or in-person, most volunteers appreciate personalized touches like thank-you notes and birthday cards.



To learn more and view study findings, visit www.mainecenteronaging.umaine.edu/vvstudy

The University of Maine is an equal opportunity institution committed to nondiscrimination. This tip sheet is based on research by the University of Maine Center on Aging, which surveyed and interviewed technology experts, volunteerism specialists, and AmeriCorps Seniors staff and volunteers across the U.S.

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