

Match Volunteers to Your Organization's Needs

Planning to match your organization's needs to the right volunteers is vital to ensure success.

How often have you found yourself running in circles because a volunteer couldn't make it to an event? Have you ever "filled in" temporarily and found yourself still doing the same thing 6 months later?

These "band aids" for immediate needs end up building up resentment and eventually lead to burnout. Pausing to plan for your needs sends the message that you care about the sustainability of your organization. Delegating and empowering others with responsibilities essential for running an organization will help build your base and strengthen your mission. Setting up a system where other volunteers are trained and supported will then make it easier to "fill in" when someone takes a break from volunteering with your NAMI.

This worksheet will help you begin the planning process. It will walk you through a process for identifying needs, finding volunteers to meet those needs, and ensure you are building strong partnerships with your volunteers.

What are your organization's needs?

Where can volunteers help you succeed and fill gaps?

For the needs you identified, think about the skills and qualities a potential volunteer will need. This will help you identify who might be interested and where you can find volunteers with those skills and qualities.

You'll need to think about hard, technical skills as well as qualities/values. For specialized skills that requires a specific talent or quality, you may benefit from more targeted recruitment efforts. You can also think about what motivates volunteers.

NEED	TECHNICAL SKILLS	SOFT SKILLS/QUALITIES	WHO MAY BE INTERESTED?	WHERE TO FIND VOLUNTEERS	MOTIVATIONS
<i>Social media content development</i>					

If you were to have to have a conversation to gauge interest or capacity, think about what types of questions would you want to ask. Use the skills, qualities, and motivations to help craft these questions. The questions will form the basis of the all-important interview process.

Examples of general questions might include:

- *Tell me about your experience with X (whatever platform, task, process you are looking to have them do).*
- *Why are you interested in this particular position, task, etc.?*
- *Would you rather be “in person” or virtual?*
- *What is your access to necessary technology?*
- *What are you passionate about?*
- *Ask them if they would be willing to build their skills in this area.*

In addition to these general questions, you’ll want to develop at least a few specific questions based on your needs and the volunteer’s interests.

After all this planning and getting to know the volunteer, it is time to do the matchmaking!

Revisit your job descriptions and needs – does the volunteer match the job? It is important to think about the volunteer’s skills as well as interests and motivations and make sure they are in line with the jobs you are trying to fill and the needs you have. Always refer to volunteer applications and conduct interviews.

Once the match is made, set volunteers up for success.

Make sure what there is a fit between needs – skills: compatibility. The chart below uses the example of a social media content need.

First Date: Both of you are testing if this is the right fit, neither ready to make full commitment.	Ask them to create a post for you on your strongest platform. You can decide if it would be a general post for engagement, promoting a program, or a call to action.
We like each other, but we need to learn more. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to their heart, find a fit, share expectations, avoid “oh, by the way” moments. • This period may be longer for positions where you need to see more of their experience before you can make the commitment (like potential support group facilitators) 	Ask for their insight on the type of communication you use. Do they have suggestions for other platforms? Or ways to incorporate new campaigns? Give them a few posts where they would need to share with you for approval before posting. Provide specific feedback about what you like about their work and any area where they will need to adjust (ex. Using stigmatizing language).

Engagement! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are all the ways they could get engaged with the organization? • Are there opportunities for them to provide feedback on changes within the position? Or pursuing another volunteer position within the organization? • Understand that “no” does not mean “never” 	<p>If things are going well, have them sign an agreement about what is allowed/not allowed for posting and how to interact with people who post or send messages. You can then give them Editor position privileges to the platforms. (Note: You should always have two individuals within your organization who have Admin privileges)</p> <p>Have them lead a campaign within the organization.</p>
Maintaining a Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are ways you can show how much you care for them? 	<p>Give them a position on the Marketing and Communications Board Committee</p> <p>Provide a good reference if solicited for another position.</p>

Consistently evaluate the match.

It is important to revisit your needs regularly and talk to your volunteers. Are they happy? Do they still feel fulfilled? Does something need to change?