



VOLUNTEER TOOLKIT

MICHIGAN MAIN STREET



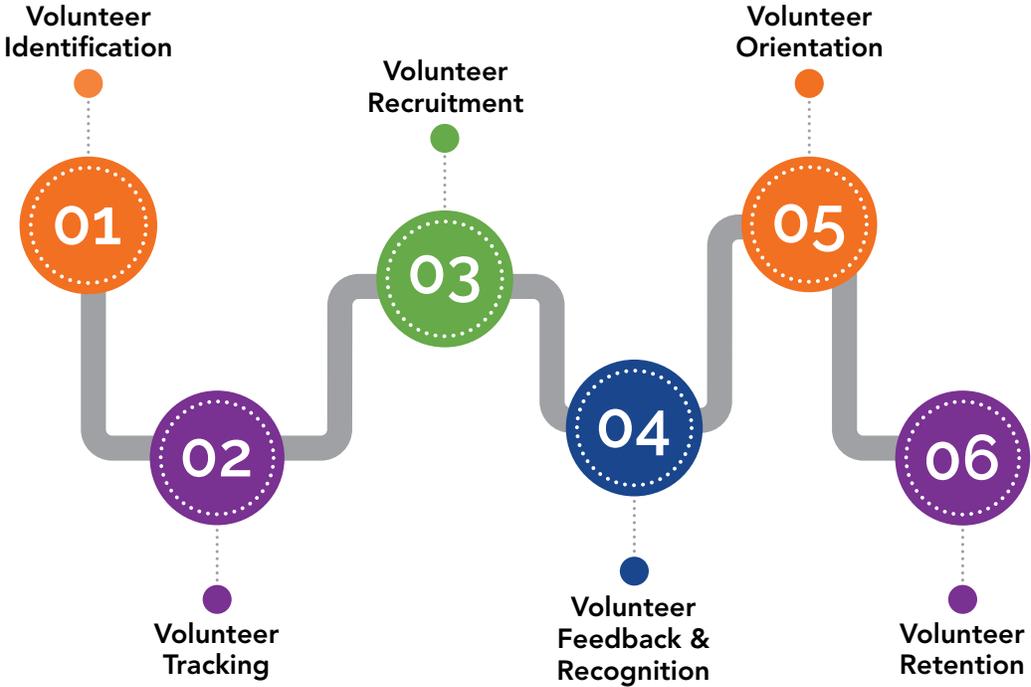
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HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit contains information that can guide your Main Street organization’s efforts for volunteer management in five key areas: identifying volunteers, recruiting volunteers, orienting volunteers, monitoring volunteer activity and retaining volunteers. Each section includes best practices and tools related to that key area.

The best practices are listed to help inform your organization’s board and committee members about volunteer management. Each tool listed has a corresponding explanation for how to use the tool and is linked (via hyperlink) to the physical worksheet or template that can be adjusted to meet your organization’s needs.



Credits
 Many of the best practices are credited to: Ken Culp, III, Ph.D., who presented a workshop entitled "Positioning Main Street Programs for 21st Century Volunteers" at the 2019 Main Street Now Conference on March 26, 2019.

Special thanks to Lindsey Dotson, executive director, Charlevoix Main Street, and Jill Tewsley, executive director, Milan Main Street, for serving on the Michigan Main Street Volunteer Toolkit Steering Committee.

The tools within this toolkit were created by and/or adapted from the "Main Street Colorado Volunteer Management 2017 Toolkit."

VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION

Best Practices

- Annually evaluate the efficiency of your organization's volunteer management program.
- Annually assess your organization's volunteer needs.
- Provide a *simple* interest form online and at events to allow prospective volunteers to contact your organization about volunteer opportunities.
- Create a readily available inquiry response email that can be sent quickly after receiving an inquiry from a prospective volunteer.

Tools

Volunteer Needs Assessment

- The Main Street Board can use this worksheet to define the overall culture of volunteerism within your Main Street program and set goals for volunteer engagement within your community.

Volunteer Program Evaluation

- The Main Street board and/or organization committee can use this tool annually to evaluate the existing conditions of your Main Street program's volunteer management program. The results of the evaluation will provide a good starting point for identifying and prioritizing areas of improvement.

Identifying Volunteer Opportunities

Worksheet Activity

- The Main Street Board and/or all your program's committees can use this worksheet annually to define their volunteer needs through outlining existing projects/programs and potential projects/programs and identifying the projects/programs that volunteers can help accomplish.

Volunteer Interest Card

- The Main Street Board and/or all of your program's committees can use this interest card at events or online to gauge interest of prospective volunteers and gather contact information from them.

New Volunteer Inquiry Reply Template

- This template can be customized and used to respond to inquiries from potential volunteers.



VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Best Practices

- After receiving an inquiry, set up an informal first date to get to know the skills and interests of the prospective volunteer and allow them to ask questions about the organization with the goal of reaching a second date.
- At the second date, discuss the volunteer needs and opportunities available within your organization. If there is a proper fit, ask the individual to volunteer and provide the position description and volunteer application.
- **Ask** people to volunteer! Shift the way your organization asks for volunteers by focusing on the **cause** and **outcomes** of your organization.
- Assume that “no” means “not right now.” Continue asking individuals to volunteer when an appropriate opportunity comes along.
- Create position descriptions with fun, exciting titles to encourage recruitment of individuals to specific roles based on their interests and skill-sets.
- Integrate flexibility into your volunteer opportunities. Recruit volunteers to short-term project teams or individual tasks rather than long-term committee commitments.
- Do not rely solely on general announcements to get results. Create a volunteer recruitment team to make personal asks.
- Allow for virtual volunteering. Identify tasks that can be accomplished off-site so that individuals can volunteer even if they do not have time to volunteer in-person.
- Develop a more detailed volunteer application and make the application available online.
- Create a volunteer waiver of liability and photo release form. Consider integrating the form into your volunteer application if possible.
- Screen volunteers if they are interacting with a vulnerable population (children, elderly, etc.) or if they are dealing with money or sensitive information.
- Consider incentivizing volunteer participation through developing a program that rewards volunteer activity with tangible incentives (apparel, gift cards, discounts, etc.)

Tools

Recruitment Concepts and Ideas

- This document provides several tips and tricks for recruiting volunteers effectively.

Finding Volunteer Worksheet

- Each board and/or committee member should complete this worksheet to help identify new volunteers. Once complete, post all the names together on a wall, develop a plan to recruit each individual and ask board members and committee members to make the volunteer requests.

Volunteer Position Description Template

- All committees should complete a position description so the organization can post and advertise all volunteer needs.

Volunteer Request Form Template (*internal* *from committees to volunteer management team*)

- This is an internal form for your organization. Any committee that is seeking a volunteer should complete this form and submit it to the organization committee or the committee in charge of volunteer management.

Volunteer Application Template

- This template can be used by your organization to develop a volunteer application that all prospective volunteers will complete.

Board Member Letter of Commitment Template

- The Main Street Board can use this template to develop an annual letter of commitment that each board member completes upon being appointed to the board and every year thereafter.

Volunteer Interview Form/Questions Template

- Your organization can use these sample interview questions throughout the process of recruiting a volunteer, starting with the informal first date to the more formal application process and assignment of the volunteer to a specific position.

Screening Concepts and Ideas

- This document provides tips and tricks for developing volunteer screening protocols and identifying the appropriate interview process.

Volunteer Reference Letter Template

- Your organization may choose to require that a reference letter be submitted along with a volunteer’s application. This could be an option for higher-level volunteer positions, committee chairs and board member positions.

Volunteer Waiver of Liability and Photo Release Template

- Your organization can use this template as a guide for developing a volunteer waiver of liability and photo release. Your insurance company and/or municipal attorney should approve the final waiver to ensure it meets their needs and standards.

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION

Best Practices

- Create a volunteer handbook that explains all the key information about your organization and volunteer must-knows. Provide the handbook to volunteers once they have completed their application and are matched with a project and/or committee.
- Conduct an individual and/or group volunteer orientation meeting. Share the focus and strategic direction of your organization to inspire volunteers and instill passion. Highlight the payoffs and outcomes of volunteer efforts.
- Demonstrate a collaborative team spirit to excite volunteers about their decision to participate.
- Develop a volunteer mentor or buddy system so that new volunteers have a contact to ask questions and can feel a connection to others within the organization.
- Host an annual meeting so that volunteers continue to feel passionate about your Main Street organization's mission and can see the overall impact of your organization's work in the community.

Tools

Main Street America Volunteer Handbook Template ▶

- Use this skeleton document to develop your organization's volunteer handbook. This document has a detailed outline of information that can be included in your handbook.

Michigan Main Street Board Performance Guidebook ▶

- This manual is designed to provide you with tools, templates and resources to guide the development of your organization's board.

Suggested Content for Board Manual ▶

- This document provides additional recommendations for information that can be included in a short manual that can be used for your organization's board member orientation.

Local Main Street Program FAQs Sheet ▶

- This sheet can serve as a template for developing a quick reference guide of answers to frequently asked questions about your Main Street organization.

Sample Volunteer Orientation Content Colorado Main Street Template (PowerPoint) ▶

- This presentation provides an outline of information that should be included when conducting an orientation session for your volunteers, no matter what form that may come in (larger presentation, individual meetings, etc.).



VOLUNTEER DATA MANAGEMENT AND TRACKING

Best Practices

- Use technology to help manage and communicate with volunteers. Examples include free or subscription-based software for management (Maestro, Volunteer Local, Sign-up Genius, etc.), text messages and email for communication and social media for connecting with volunteers.
- Create a single database to track volunteers. Microsoft Excel can be used to simply track volunteer information. Information to collect for each individual volunteer includes name, address, phone number, email, emergency contact, interests, and special skills.
- Consistently track volunteer hours. Take attendance or have a sign-in sheet at committee/project team meetings. At events/activities count the number of volunteers and multiply by the number of hours the event/activity lasted (you may need to do this several times throughout the event/activity if there are multiple volunteer shifts).
- Calculate the value of a volunteer's contribution in time and talent at \$24.85, the hourly rate for Michigan-based volunteers, which changes yearly (<https://independentsector.org/value-of-volunteer-time-2018/>).

Tools

Volunteer Database Template

- Your organization can use this template to manage your list of volunteers and track volunteer activity. This template includes recommended information your organization should collect for each individual volunteer.



VOLUNTEER RETENTION: EVALUATION, RECOGNITION and APPRECIATION

Best Practices

- Discover what motivates volunteers to participate and ensure your organization is meeting their needs for continued participation. Mobilize the volunteers to accomplish what they are passionate about.
- Become a volunteer coach: nurture and encourage the volunteers to succeed in managing their projects, events and committee. Divide big tasks for projects or events into manageable goals with multiple checkpoints.
- Empower volunteers to be decision makers through allowing them to take ownership of their project, event or committee. Allow the volunteers to make key decisions and report on the progress they are making.
- Consider redefining your organization’s meeting structure. Conduct shorter meetings that are task/project focused rather than long committee meetings with a large agenda to cover.
- Always make tasks enjoyable. Hire out the non-glamorous tasks (such as picking up garbage, emptying trash cans, setting barricades, etc.)
- Be available to volunteers to hear questions, provide feedback and listen to any concerns. Give feedback to volunteers more than once per year through regularly checking in with them individually to ask about their experience and discuss their performance.
- Hold volunteers accountable and share the impact of their efforts.
- Ask volunteers about their experiences and for feedback on improvement. Maintain high standards and expectations for your organization and volunteers.

- Appreciate and recognize your volunteers’ work through a series of gestures, both small and large. Ideas include thank you notes, coordinated social events/outings in your downtown, providing snacks, and a yearly volunteer reception.
- Provide professional development and educational opportunities to the volunteers. Send volunteers to conferences and trainings.
- Position volunteers to move up within the organization, from project volunteer to project/committee chair, and eventually to board member.



Tools

Volunteer Check-in Guideline Form Template [▶](#)

- Your organization can use these questions to informally check-in with volunteers throughout the year.

Volunteer Experience Evaluation Template [▶](#)

- Your organization can use this evaluation template to gather formal feedback about your volunteer management program and individual volunteer experiences. The results can help

inform your organization about areas needing improvement.

Appreciation and Recognition

Ideas and Suggestions [▶](#)

- This document provides tips for recognizing volunteers and provides examples your organization can use for your volunteer appreciation efforts.