**Library Volunteer Manager Peers - Notes**

**9/9/20 1:30 EST**

**Host: Wendy Johnson, Indianapolis Public Library**

**wjohnson@indypl.org**

Hello, Friends!

Thank you for this week’s discussion. I was inspired by our list of “top things” needed to create meaningful volunteer engagement in an organization, from scratch. It was great fun to think about what we would do if we could start with a clean slate, and even if we couldn’t, imagine ways that we might be able to tweak our processes. (Look! Did you see how I didn’t use the word “program”? Whew, that was tough.)

Take care!

Wendy

Meetings will be held every Wednesday at 1:30 EST for an hour until further notice. We’ll use the same meeting link each week. Please share the link with fellow library volunteer leaders…the more smart people the better.

 Zoom:  <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85199850785?pwd=WHorb3h2ckgvZjhZT1BOVWxEMzhlZz09>

 Not-so-secret Access Code: Volunteer

Please add/check/update your contact information on our shared Google doc. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/19blg00lShuMShHK2ab1TGeiK6kYqGfpvxz8qO9F8nnM/edit?usp=sharing>

**Topics Discussed**

Volunteer Coordinator Position Description

* Please send the position description for your role to Jody, jlazar@wppl.org and cc: Carla for the clearinghouse, clehn@califa.org. Jody’s library has decided that they need a volunteer coordinator! (FYI, she’s in Winter Park, Florida in case you’re thinking of moving anytime soon.)
* <https://getinvolvedclearinghouse.org/> — Click on Management Tools, then select from the dropdown menu “Volunteer Coordinator Job Descriptions” - also a dropdown choice is “Volunteer Coordinator Interview Questions”.

What would you need to start a new volunteer engagement environment for your organization?

1. Before anything else:

**Staff buy in!** Everyone MUST be on-board from the board, executive team, and all staff.

* + Staff training to build a sustainable volunteer team. Volunteers are everyone’s job. (and should be on everyone’s job description)
	+ Take time to talk to staff, learn from them, identify barriers
	+ Survey the staff regarding bringing volunteers on-board: fears, concerns, issues. Have an open and honest discussion about all of these things
	+ Ask management, “What does success look like for volunteer engagement?”
	+ Address union concerns.
	+ Volunteers are not just another workforce; they are life-long library advocates, tax payers, and voters. The community wants to engage with the library, let’s help them.
	+ Be prepared to drive a cultural shift
	+ ‘Volunteers are not worse at work because they are not paid’
	+ Pay attention to the words we use…like “Program” that might imply that it’s a separate “thing”/an add on vs. Services or Resources or Engagement or Team…and watch out for… MY volunteers vs. OUR volunteers because volunteers belong to our mission
	+ Communication. Communication. Communication.

**Organizational big picture**

* + Have a volunteer engagement mission statement tied to/integrated with the organization’s mission.
	+ Be part of the strategic plan
	+ Understand the resources available: budget, time commitment from other staff, training tools, volunteer workspace, volunteer office equipment, etc.
	+ Know where the volunteer team fits in the organizational structure
	+ Expectations of the staff and the community-at-large; what are desired outcomes and impacts; will Independent Sector’s value of a volunteer hour be a problem?
1. Processes and paperwork
	* What are volunteers allowed to do? (and not allowed to do)
	* On-boarding: application, background check, commitment statement, clear volunteer job descriptions, interview format, asset liability agreement, handbook, setting clear expectations, and more
	* Volunteer training: What’s needed? What can be automated (video, Niche Academy, etc.)? What has to be done in person? Will there be a quiz? Will annual retraining be required/needed? Will you offer volunteers the opportunity to participate in staff training sessions?
	* Staff training: What’s needed? Can it count for LEUs/PDUs? Frequency?
	* Volunteer Identity: Badges, shirts, aprons, lanyards, etc.
	* Day-to-day: volunteer sign-in/out, where will they put their stuff, do they need a computer, will they have access to library assets like collection management tools that need an ID/Password, where is their information exchange (bulletin board, file folder, notebook) for important updates to procedures and kudos, and all things to make volunteers feel welcome and valued
	* Volunteer recognition: when, what, how, budget
	* Administrative stuff: tracking hours, contact information, collecting/storing paperwork, regular communications (e-news/newsletter), continual process improvement, HR functions like hiring/firing, alignment with local laws, impact measurement/reporting
2. Getting started
	* Pilot: with an end date and feedback from stakeholders
	* Tweak and refine
	* Start with something that the staff cannot do: i.e. reading to therapy dogs
	* Look for and celebrate the small wins
	* Enlist patrons and people that the staff know as your first volunteers
3. There’s lots of great literature available. Favorite authors Jayne Cravens, Susan Ellis, Beth Steinhorn and, of course, our friend Carla Campbell Lehn.

Equity Goals

* Tying volunteer goals to organizational equity goals. Staff and volunteer goals align
* Library advocates from all parts of the community
* A way of diversifying the library profession…start with a diverse group of teens and maybe they’ll want to be in the library field
* Clearinghouse “Hot Topic” for July 2020 — Diverse & Inclusive Volunteer Engagement — <https://getinvolvedclearinghouse.org/content/hot-topic-july-2020>
* Collecting demographic information:
	+ On the application (be clear that it’s optional and the “why”)
	+ On the background check release/tool
	+ Fluent languages, race, preferred pronouns, sex of all types (not just male/female), abilities, gender, zip code, age, education level, skills they would be happy to share, workplace/retired/veteran
	+ “In the interview, I ask for their birth city/state/country and add a pin to their hometown on a big map in our office. I've also used the birthplace info to share our diversity. I think it's cool that all of these people from all over the world (literally!) are all here to work together in support of their community library.” (Thank you Jennifer J)
	+ Be cautious on how and what you’re asking for…don’t set up discrimination in hiring
	+ “Our goal is for all volunteers to have the best experience possible. Understanding who volunteers helps us create that experience. We recognize that these questions may be personal information that you do not wish to share or that do not apply to you. All questions are optional.” (Thank you Liza.)
	+ Sensitivity toward appearing to on-board “the token person of color”
	+ All of the demographic questions, including pronouns, are set up so people can check as many as they need
* Make sure you’re asking things the legally accepted way…ask about any “accommodation” that they might need to help them be successful in their role. Visit with your favorite HR professional for guidance.
* Present this data along with an impact info-graphic during annual volunteer celebration and in annual reporting
* (Thank you, Sue) You wanted to know more about why our insurance carrier wanted demographic info. Here is the answer from our Risk Management team:

Insurance companies ask about number of volunteers to gauge CML’s exposure for different types of loss. Insurance underwriters typically think more volunteers equate to a larger exposure. For example, our customers may not distinguish who works for CML vs. who is volunteering and, should something happen, it’s CML’s reputation. Our Directors and Officers and Employment Practices insurance would provide some protection to volunteers should there be a lawsuit. Insurers are trying to get an idea of how big of a footprint that is. Each year, I remind our broker of the large number of young adults that support our programs and how we view our volunteers as a vital asset.

Miscellaneous

* Application/interview can also include, “How do you like to be recognized?”
* Collect Employer – for grant writing/fundraising and for “dollars for doers” type programs
* From a week or two ago, summarized by Carla: **Lit Line** -- During Covid-19 some libraries have created a volunteer program that allows volunteers to record themselves reading a story or poem, which can then be made available to people in the community who call in to hear them. Most efforts are based on the Denver Public Library’s LitLine: <https://www.denverlibrary.org/blog/books/amy/lit-line-puts-good-writing-your-fingertips> Stephanie Truax, Volunteer Coordinator at the Austin (TX) Public Library is developing such a program and shared her communications with interested volunteers. That document can be found here: <https://getinvolvedclearinghouse.org/position-descriptions/lit-line-volunteer-austin-tx>

**Resources and Training Opportunities**

* **ALIVE,** https://www.volunteeralive.org/

**Impact Awards. For volunteer engagement professionals. Due September 14, 2020.** <https://www.volunteeralive.org/alve_impact_awards_-_sponsore.php>. Alive is also hosting training sessions that are relevant for today. Membership is only $50/yr.

* Sustaining and Adapting Volunteer Engagement in our New Reality - FreeDate: Thursday, September 17, 2020, 11:00am PT | 2:00pm ET

**Presented by:**

Beth Steinhorn, President of VQ Volunteer Strategies



* Volgistics National Peer Group – on-line – 2nd Tuesday of the Month – free!

FMI contact Jessica Link, linkj@crlibrary.org. Recordings are available.

* The Friends of Libraries Section of the New York Library Association is offering “Engaging Millennial as Friends Volunteers” as the first in a series of three webinars on September 23. Fees and registration, as well as a complete description and info about the other two future webinars available here: <https://www.nyla.org/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS_Document&DocID=3062&MenuKey=nomenucms>
* ServeOhio will be hosting [Ohio Conference on Service & Volunteerism](https://www.serve.ohio.gov/News-Events/Ohio-Conference-on-Service-Volunteerism#:~:text=Virtual%20Training%20Series%20to%20Replace,on%20Service%20%26%20Volunteerism%20this%20fall.) on-line in October – Free! Two hour sessions will allow for networking & interaction.

**Future Topics**

* Encore topic: How are we, as volunteer leaders, going to track and report on our volunteer programs during this time? What metrics or outcomes will represent our and our volunteers’ connection to the mission/strategic plan?
* Encore topic: Reinventing our programs
* Off-site hour tracking – how? Like mask making or kit assembly
* Diversity and Inclusion in our volunteer programs
* University of North Carolina – Charlotte (UNCC) Class Project Update
* Volunteer Advisory Boards