



IQ SERVICE REPORT

(formerly MIS Reports)

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VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS IN CITIES AND COUNTIES

Almost every department in local government can use volunteers: police, fire, social services, parks and recreation, even finance and administration and public works, can find opportunities for citizens to contribute time and skills. For every \$1 that a local government invests in volunteers, it can realize as much as \$10 in benefits. And volunteers become better citizens, concerned and involved in their local community and its government.

This report describes the hallmarks of a successful volunteer program, the unique challenges facing volunteer coordinators in local government, and strategies for building a strong, community-based volunteer program. It provides ideas for marketing the program, using volunteer talents, and helping staff manage volunteers.

Numerous examples from local governments across the United States are presented, and case studies of volunteer programs in the following jurisdictions are included:

- Virginia Beach, Virginia
- Plano, Texas
- Boulder County, Colorado
- Chesterfield County, Virginia



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These reports are intended primarily to provide timely information on subjects of practical interest to local government administrators, department heads, budget and research analysts, administrative assistants, and others responsible for and concerned with operational aspects of local government.

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Volunteer Programs in Cities and Counties

This report was written by Christine Ulrich, a senior editor with ICMA's publications and data services department. She thanks the many volunteer coordinators across the United States who provided her with information and ideas.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

According to the National Association of Counties, for every \$1 that a county invests in a volunteer program, it reaps over \$10 in benefits. The hallmarks of successful community volunteer programs, whether run by a local government or contracted out to a nonprofit organization, are effective marketing and recruitment, skillful matching of volunteer skills and interests with community needs, and training and support for both volunteers and supervising staff. Managing recruitment, skill matching, and training and support requires careful organization, and in many cases this is best handled from a central office. A successful volunteer program will also work with departments to design volunteer jobs, measure its own performance and the performance of volunteers, and create inexpensive but effective ways to recognize the work of volunteers.

Marketing and Recruitment

Traditionally, volunteers gravitate to services in which they have a personal interest: parents tutoring in their children's school and coaching youth sports are the most obvious examples. More recently, local governments are reaching out to new groups of citizens—the young retired population, the able elderly, teenagers, professionals temporarily unemployed—to find volunteers who can take on less traditional responsibilities. In addition, some cities are nurturing volunteerism as a neighborhood activity, to build civic participation and healthier neighborhoods.

However, unlike volunteer programs organized around particular causes (humane societies, health-related associations), local governments have a particular challenge in overcoming stereotypes about government. Many people's first reaction to the idea of volunteering for the local government may be "Why would anyone do that?!" Volunteer coordina-

tors have to work very hard to get citizens passionately committed to working for the local government. They do this primarily by taking a personal interest in volunteers, by helping them find the right niche for their skills and personality, and by encouraging them and recognizing their work.

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To get volunteers in the door, most local government programs use radio, television, and newspaper advertising to let citizens know about the need for volunteers and some of the advantages of volunteering. A weekly column in the newspaper may be one of the most effective ways to reach interested citizens in many communities: the column can highlight volunteer opportunities as well as the activities and accomplishments of current volunteers. In Boulder, Colorado, a series of articles about welfare reform and implications for the local population attracted volunteers for a new mentoring program that paired volunteers with welfare recipients trying to enter the workforce. Sponsorship of visible community events, such as Christmas in April, is another way to get the local volunteer bureau or office noticed and remembered by people looking for something useful to do.

The location and physical appearance of the volunteer office is important in building a community-based program. Coral Springs, Florida, negotiated with a local shopping mall to allow its volunteer office to locate in a mall storefront rent-free. Mall patrons see an attractive, welcoming space filled with pictures and plants, a space that is easily accessible to the elderly, the handicapped, and teenagers.

A growing trend that some local governments have benefited from is corporate volunteering. A group of employees from a local business may com-

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Types of volunteers

Like many successful volunteer programs, the volunteer program of Los Altos, California, employs volunteers to do a variety of jobs. The city's description of the types of assignment available follows:

Occasional. A volunteer project that is usually for one time and takes a few hours or a few days to complete. This type of assignment would include working at a special event or in small teams. Often, the need for these positions arises quickly with rapid recruitment.

Special project. An assignment for a period of at least three months that completes a specific set of tasks. Small teams of volunteers may work with staff to complete a special project.

Intern. Students required to complete practical experience as part of a course assignment are welcome. Staff will work with the student and his or her instructor to satisfy course requirements within the volunteer assignment.

Ongoing. Volunteer positions that are needed indefinitely and are usually a regular part of a department's normal operations. Occasionally, more than one volunteer may be assigned to the work on a rotating schedule.

Civic training attracts volunteers

Many local governments offer citizen academies, usually sponsored and run by the police department, that teach citizens about the law and about law enforcement. Quite often, graduates of these programs become resources for the departments involved. In Lakewood, Colorado, for example, graduates of the local citizen academy volunteer at the police department in various capacities, from doing office work to helping search for evidence. Graduates of the citizens academy in Huntington Beach, California, provide invaluable help to police officers, for example, helping with the paper work and "people work" involved in enforcing the juvenile curfew on weekends.

Hampton, Virginia, introduced a Neighborhood College—twelve sessions offered twice a year for anyone engaged in or curious about their neighborhood and community. The curriculum covers city government and how citizens can affect it, what is involved in making changes in neighborhoods, and how to form partnerships. The sessions are taught by community leaders in various locations throughout Hampton. The Neighborhood College Alumni Association supports the college and also supports neighborhood leaders who are putting their training to work in their neighborhoods.

mit to accomplishing a particular job, or to providing volunteers over a defined period. For example, in San Carlos, California (in Silicon Valley), technology corporations cooperated with the city to wire city schools for Internet access. Reaching out to local businesses and designing projects for their employees can bring in many new volunteers.

Placement, Orientation, and Training

The typical volunteer coordinator or manager meets with every person who inquires about volunteering opportunities to explore interests and skills. The coordinator asks about the volunteer's reasons for volunteering and, most important, what the volunteer enjoys doing most. Since volunteers as a group tend to be honest and open, establishing their motivations and true interests usually takes only a few minutes. It is often a matter of helping them reflect on their past life experiences and their present needs. The coordinator also asks about the volunteer's time commitment and concerns about transportation and other matters. The coordinator, who is familiar with opportunities throughout the local government organization, can then make a match that is likely to be satisfactory for the volunteer and the employer.

It is worth noting that the coordinator's job does not end with the initial interview and placement. The coordinator will spend many hours cheerleading the efforts of volunteers and staff alike. Since many people volunteer in order to form connections in the community, it is important for the coordinator to foster these connections to assure a good experience for the volunteer.

Orientation about the local government and the volunteer program can be handled by a central volunteer office, perhaps in the initial interview, but training in specific duties is usually provided by a supervisor in the department where the volunteer is assigned. Some of the more successful programs in larger local governments provide staff with comprehensive support in training and managing volunteers (see the case study on Virginia Beach, Virginia).

Recognition

All volunteer programs place special emphasis on recognizing the people who work without pay, often over many years. A wealth of creative ideas for recognizing volunteers is available on the Internet (see, for example, <http://www.energizeinc.com/ideas/success3.html>).

Recognition should be planned to increase volunteers' feeling of belonging, being connected, and doing important work. Large dinners for hundreds of volunteers may be less appreciated than small luncheons for staff and volunteers who work together, for example. Boulder County, Colorado, rewards volunteers by giving them a chance to win grants for their program (see case study on Boulder County, page 12).

In local government, recognizing volunteers is especially important because it is an opportunity for the program to market itself to the community. Permanent additions to the community's environment serve to publicize the volunteer program. For example, Virginia Beach, Virginia, recently dedicated a garden near city hall to honor volunteers. Other local governments use engraved paving bricks to commemorate the work of individual volunteers. One local government combined a volunteer recognition event with a tour of a neighborhood being revitalized with volunteer help.

Centralized Coordination

Many local governments have found that a centralized approach enhances and expands volunteer service. Central coordination of the volunteer program has three major benefits: First, it provides a central point of access for citizens wanting information on volunteer opportunities, for agencies and schools referring willing volunteers, and for departments that want to fill new volunteer positions.

Second, a centralized office of volunteer services can promote the local government's volunteer program to the community, through media contacts, community groups, agencies, and schools. A centralized office can develop and distribute promotional materials, including statistical and anecdotal information that demonstrates the value of volunteer service.

Finally, a centralized office can support local government departments that use volunteers, by developing and distributing administrative forms and materials, training staff to recruit and supervise volunteers effectively, providing networking opportunities for volunteer coordinators and supervisors, and organizing recognition events.

A Comprehensive Approach: Promoting Neighborhood Volunteerism

In several local governments, volunteerism is considered an important form of alternative service delivery. To encourage citizens to take responsibility for their neighborhoods and to see themselves as partners with the local government rather than as customers at best or adversaries at worst, Cincinnati, Ohio; Tucson, Arizona; and Hampton, Virginia—to name just three cities—have restructured their approach to dealing with residents in a way that is meant to encourage citizen participation in decision making and problem solving.

Cincinnati's Neighborhood Action Strategy (CNAS) is an initiative of the city manager to foster collaboration at the front end of projects between citizens and city staff. In response to neighborhood problems such as deteriorating housing, drug trafficking, or teen loitering, CNAS brings together a multidepartmental team of staff to meet with con-

A code of ethics for technology volunteers

The Tech Corps New Jersey recruits, places, and supports volunteers from the technology community who advise and assist schools in the introduction and integration of new technologies. Volunteers provide assistance with local planning, technical support and advice, staff training, mentoring and classroom interactions. The organization asks volunteers to abide by the following code of ethics:

As a Tech Corps New Jersey volunteer, to the best of my ability, I agree to

- Keep the interest of the school or district foremost in mind when providing assistance and avoid any and all conflicts of interest.
- Strive to achieve the highest quality, effectiveness, and dignity in both the process and products of volunteer work without promoting self-interests.
- Give, to the best of my knowledge, comprehensive and thorough evaluations of technology systems and their impacts, including analysis of possible risks.
- Improve educators' understanding of technology and its impact.
- Acknowledge and support proper and authorized uses of a school's computing and communications resources.
- Thoroughly understand the needs of the computer system users and the requirements of the school or district before proceeding with recommendations.
- Honor property rights including copyrights and patents and honor confidentiality.
- Give proper credit for intellectual property.
- Contribute positively to society and the well-being of all people.
- Avoid harm to others.
- Be honest and trustworthy.
- Be fair and not discriminate.
- Respect the privacy of others.

Source: Tech Corps of New Jersey Web site, <http://www.tcnj.org/volunteers/>

cerned citizens. Staff from housing, the health department, and the police department, might meet, for example, to discuss a problem with an abandoned house. As a result of their participation in these early planning discussion, the citizens involved become more aware of their city government and more willing to participate in discussion of other city problems, for instance, on city-wide committees that need citizen input.

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Tucson, Arizona, in another city manager initiative, has gone a step farther to recruit volunteers from the city's own workforce. Of 5,000 city employees, approximately 140 currently participate as volunteers on NETeams—Neighborhood Enhancement Teams—that work with citizens to revitalize urban neighborhoods. NETeams comprise managerial, trades, and custodial staff all working side by side with residents to clean up neighborhoods, remodel homes, hold fundraisers, and build pocket parks and sun shelters. The city's strategy is to show citizens that the city "is on their team," to provide leadership, and to demonstrate that with planning and hard work, citizens can solve neighborhood problems. NETeam members do not receive extra compensation for their participation, but their activity becomes part of their evaluation process and in many cases leads to more responsibility in their city jobs.

Hampton, Virginia, opened The Neighborhood Office, a city department that provides management and staffing to focus on neighborhoods. Staff are consultants and coaches to neighborhood leaders and organizations as they organize, plan, and implement projects. Supported by a task force of city department heads and a commission of community representatives, neighborhoods are encouraged to define their own visions, needs, and plans for improvement. A Neighborhood College provides training for individual neighborhood leaders (see sidebar, page 2).

Case studies from four local governments with successful volunteer programs are presented on the following pages.

A CENTRALIZED VOLUNTEER PROGRAM— VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

The city council of Virginia Beach, Virginia (436,000), formed a small committee in 1977, with two volunteers, the city personnel director, the assistant to the manager, and a representative from the local United Way office, to determine how volunteers could be used more effectively in city offices. The result of the committee's work was the establishment of a citywide Volunteer Council and the appointment of a volunteer coordinator (a volunteer position). The council's mandate was to support volunteer programs in the various departments of the city.

Since 1977, the number of volunteers has grown from 1,000 to more than 10,000. Six departments and agencies had volunteer programs in 1978; in 1998, 33 departments and agencies had active volunteer programs. In fiscal year 1996-97, the city's volunteers donated 1.5 million hours in service valued at \$16.7 million. The secret of the city's success in attracting and using volunteer labor has been the collaboration of the umbrella Volunteer Council and the individual departments.

Each participating department and agency designates at least one staff member or volunteer to serve on the Volunteer Council and serve as the department's volunteer coordinator. The council has two co-leaders: a volunteer appointed by the city council and a member of the city manager's staff. Each person on the Volunteer Council serves on at least one of eight standing committees, whose chairs

Exhibit 1 Volunteer Council Organizational Chart—Virginia Beach, Virginia

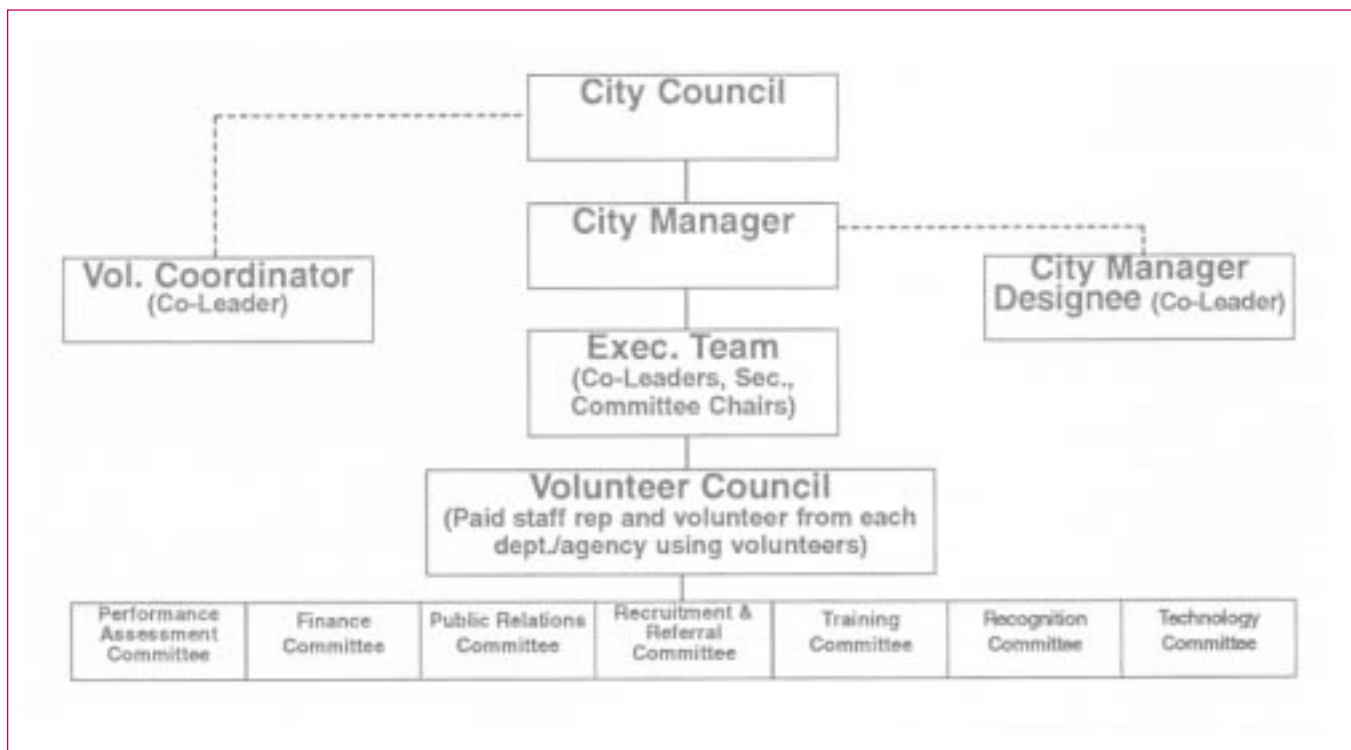


Exhibit 2 Volunteer Job Description—Virginia Beach, Virginia



	Public Library
DEPARTMENT:	Public Library
JOB TITLE:	Book Repairer
GOAL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To repair damaged materials in order to reduce replacement costs and make the library materials as attractive and functional as possible.
DUTIES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assist the library staff in repairing materials (books, cassette cases, compact disc cases).
QUALIFICATIONS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy the challenge of repairing materials. • Ability to follow oral and written instructions. • Dependable.
TIME COMMITMENT:	Minimum two hours a week on a regular basis anytime the library is open.
TRAINING & BENEFITS:	(2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction and pride in completed work. • Flexible hours
	Police Department
DEPARTMENT:	Police Department
JOB TITLE:	Transportation Aide
GOAL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables the department to service equipment without using police officers.
DUTIES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport cars to dealerships, City Garage, radio shop, car washes. • Maintains portable radios, shotguns and other equipment.
QUALIFICATIONS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid Virginia operators license • Completion of city's safe driving course. • Ability to work with people. • Basic knowledge of police duties and police car operations. • Good driving record.
TIME COMMITMENT:	Approximately 4 hours each day-Monday thru Friday.

Exhibit 3 Volunteer Performance Review Feedback Form—
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Sample
**Volunteer Performance Review
Feedback Form**
(To be completed by the supervisor and the volunteer together)

Name _____ Social Security # _____
 Department _____ Supervisor _____
 For Period From _____ To _____

- Performance Overview

- Efforts toward addressing department/division's mission

- Areas of Strength

- Areas of Improvement

- Self-Development Plan

- Volunteer Comments

Supervisor's Signature _____ Job Title _____ Date _____
This volunteer's signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the performance appraisal. It indicates only that the volunteer has seen the appraisal and has had an interview with his/her supervisor concerning the appraisal.

Volunteer's Signature _____ Date _____

Exhibit 4 Volunteer Experience Feedback Form—
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Sample
Volunteer Experience Feedback Form
(To be completed by the Volunteer)

Agency _____ Volunteer _____ Date _____

Please complete this form before your scheduled appointment on _____ at _____ with _____

1. Have your instructions/directions been specific enough?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you understand your responsibilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Have I (your supervisor) and other library staff been responsive to your requests for help, instruction, and information?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Is your work satisfying or meeting your expectations as a volunteer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Have we utilized the skills that you wanted to utilize here?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Have you learned new skills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you want a change in your responsibilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you feel a part of the organization by being:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a) included in the staff meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) "heard" when you make suggestions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Informed of plans in progress/changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overall Comments _____
 Recommendations (if applicable) _____
 Supervisor's Signature _____ Date _____
 Volunteer's Signature _____ Date _____

Exhibit 5 Volunteer Value Plan (a partial list)—Virginia Beach, Virginia

Each Volunteer Position Title is aligned with a current Job Title on the City's Pay Plan. All volunteer position titles/descriptions were reviewed by the Volunteer Coordinators and the closest match of a city job title/description was compared to the volunteer position. The hourly salary assigned to the City Job Title was assigned to the comparable volunteer job title. Three categories of positions were used to incorporate all volunteer position titles: Management, Professional and Support Services. Three levels of hourly pay were assigned: a beginning range, a medium range and a high range.

Each volunteer will be able to achieve a higher level of assigned pay based on number of hours volunteered. The City's Pay Plan is based on merit pay system where the employee moves up the pay scale based on a performance appraisal process. Volunteers will be elevated to the next level based on the following criteria of hours volunteered:

- Level I = up to 500 hours
- Level II = 501 to 2,500 hours
- Level III = 2,501 hours and up

The Volunteer Position Value Plan will be adjusted in accordance with the City's Pay Plan as a result of future market salary adjustments.

Position Type and Department	Volunteer Title	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Professional				
Human Resources	Volunteer Recruitment Coordinator	12.96	15.88	18.79
Circuit Court	Computer Technician/Network Administrator	12.96	15.88	18.79
Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court	Concerned Lawyers Advocating Spousal Safety (CLASS)	25.87	32.34	38.81
	Crisis Home/Facilities Interviewer	12.96	15.88	18.79
	Family Advocacy Network Services Coordinator (FANS)	18.31	22.43	26.55
	Group Leader/Co-Facilitator (Street Law & Parent Nurturing)	12.96	15.88	18.79
Commonwealth's Attorney	Library Technician	9.64	11.81	13.97
	Victim Witness Caseworker	12.96	15.88	18.79
Sheriff	Deputy Sheriff	11.17	13.68	16.21
Social Services	Social Worker Coordinator	18.31	22.43	26.55
	Social Worker I	13.61	16.68	19.74
Pendleton Child Service Center	Mental Health Clinician	14.30	17.52	20.74
	Teacher/Recreation Aide	12.33	15.11	17.89
Parks and Recreation	Adult Activity Leader	11.74	14.38	17.03

Creative recognition ideas

For two months before the recognition event, the director of volunteers of a mental health center took photographs of volunteers while they were “on the job.” The volunteers thought this was for public relations purposes. At the event, each volunteer received a photo of him or herself in a matte frame imprinted with a thank you message.

Graduating student volunteers in a justice setting were given a special seminar on resume writing, with emphasis on how they could describe their volunteer work as a credential that would impress prospective employers or university admissions officers.

When one city began a construction project by putting up a rather ugly protective wall around an entire downtown block, the volunteer center got permission to paint the wall. A volunteer artist painted an outline all around it of people of every description tugging together on a rope. Local agencies were asked to submit photographs of a representative volunteer. The photos were blown up and placed on the faces of the figures in the mural. And then, on a designated day, all the volunteers from all the agencies were invited to come out and paint in the rest of the mural with all sorts of colors! The mural itself generated publicity that day (and new knowledge of volunteering in the community) and stayed up for the duration of the construction project.

Source: Posted to the Energize Web site (www.energizeinc.com) by Susan J. Ellis, president of Energize, Inc., and reproduced with permission.

serve as the council’s steering committee (an organizational chart is shown in Exhibit 1). The steering committee develops and revises “desired outcomes” for two- or three-year periods, creates annual work plans, and monitors progress.

With an annual budget of \$49,000, the Volunteer Council provides support to the departments in recruitment and placement of volunteers, training of staff and volunteers, public relations, recognition, performance assessment, mentoring, and the use of technology. The council published a staff manual that covers everything city employees need to know about recruiting, placing, training, and managing volunteers. (The manual is available from ICMA—see sidebar on resources, page 11). It also provides departments with a supervisor’s manual for staff who supervise volunteers, covering such subjects as instructions and work plans for volunteers’ tasks and orientation for volunteers.

Departments are responsible for writing job descriptions for every position they identify to be filled by a volunteer (see Exhibit 2 for examples of job descriptions).

Virginia Beach takes seriously performance measurement for volunteer service, both in terms of quality and quantity. Volunteers are “certified” when they take at least 8 of 24 classes offered during a two-year period. Supervisors are trained to appraise the performance of volunteers and give regular feedback, using a form that supervisor and volunteer fill out together (Exhibit 3). Volunteers are also given an opportunity to evaluate their work experience with the city (Exhibit 4). Volunteer coordinators in each department match all volunteer position titles to city job titles by comparing their job descriptions and assign each volunteer position a per-hour value based on the salary of the comparable city job (Exhibit 5). Using these values and careful records of volunteer service, each department is able to demonstrate the cumulative value of its volunteers’ work.

Recognition for volunteers is another important component of Virginia Beach’s volunteer program. One of its most creative citywide recognition efforts is the Volunteer Recognition Garden, adjacent to the city hall and the municipal center. Designed by the city’s landscape services division, the garden is being built in phases with support provided by public and corporate donations. Plantings can be donated in honor or in memory of individuals or groups of volunteers. A nearby vegetable garden has been established that is to be planted and harvested by the students and families served by the city’s child service center.

For more information about the Volunteer Council and its work, readers may contact Mary Russo, Volunteer Coordinator, Virginia Beach, Virginia; 757/427-4722.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE—PLANO, TEXAS

This case study was written by Robin Popik, program coordinator for Plano’s volunteer programs since 1990.

Recent trends in volunteer hours indicate that the number of people preferring daytime volunteer opportunities continues to decline at the same time that the number of people available for evening and weekend opportunities increases. Group projects and one-time volunteer projects also continue to grow in popularity. How do these changes affect recruiting, marketing, and the local government’s ability to obtain and retain volunteers?

According to the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas unemployment rates were between 6 and 7 percent in early 1990. Homemakers, senior citizens, and college students were generally available and easy to recruit. Many volunteers made a commitment for a year or longer. Around the country, layoffs, early retirement, and high unemployment added new sources of volunteers. Today, as we draw close to the year 2000, the availability of part-time jobs provides homemakers, teens, and retirees with the option to work for money rather than to work as a volunteer.

In October 1998, the Texas Workforce Commission reported that unemployment was at a record low of 4.5 percent in the U.S. In Plano, Texas, it has fluctuated to as low as 2 percent. This drop has impacted the volunteer community.

Changes in Worklife

In an effort to retain employees, many employers have made changes in work schedules. Many employers now allow job sharing, revamping of schedules, shorter hours, and/or work from home. This flexibility makes it easier for homemakers, parents, college students, and retirees to work. Taking into account the changes in workforce schedules, the increasing number of not-for-profit organizations performing services previously provided by government, and increased activity by faith-based and other advocacy groups, the competition to recruit and retain volunteers is fierce.

Benefits of Volunteers

Some might ask, if it is so difficult to recruit and retain volunteers to work in a local government volunteer program, why bother? A few of many reasons are highlighted here.

Customer service. Customer service is the bottom line for a city. The Volunteers In Plano (VIP) Program is an integral part of the city government's operations. The primary objective of the program is to expand services, not cut work positions. Regardless of how much money a department has available to hire paid staff, volunteers bring unique and special benefits, and they provide the opportunity to test new ideas and initiate new services that can ultimately create paid jobs. They also increase the effectiveness of existing services.

Cost savings. Saving citizen dollars is an added benefit. The VIP program has resulted in substantial dollar savings in day-to-day municipal operations. Our annual VIP Report shows that in 1998 volunteers contributed 62,727 hours, with a dollar value of \$593,214. This is a return of \$10 for every \$1 spent on the program.

Adapting to Trends: A Position for Every Volunteer

Teenagers. A 1996 study found that the total number of teenage volunteers increased by 7 percent between 1992 and 1996, jumping from 12.4 million to 13.3 million for volunteers between the ages of 12 and 17. In addition, there was a 17 percent increase during that period of the total number of hours young people volunteered. The result of this study has implications for the future. Often when people start volunteering at a young age they continue to

volunteer as they grow older. Plano has responded to these demographics by offering many types of programs for teens.

Teen activities are available all year long, from Plano's Circle of Success Homework Center, to special projects and library and office work. Opportunities are designed to give teens new experiences, while using their skills and abilities. The goal is to empower teens and show them how they can contribute to the community. In 1998 over 100 teens participated in city operations. They helped in the library and with park programs, filing, entering data, recycling paint, and doing bulk mailings.

Short-term volunteers. There are many short-term volunteer positions. Print shop volunteers collate, fold, laminate, and cut flyers, mailings, and newsletters allowing materials to reach customers faster. Volunteers help the health, development services, and fire departments with filing and microfilm set-up, permitting staff to work on other projects. Two individuals man the composting bins on weekends throughout the summer, reducing the labor cost of overtime.

Corporate volunteers. Corporate volunteers are gathering for one-time group projects where they can feel pride in what they have accomplished. There are opportunities to clean up neighborhoods and parks that would otherwise have to wait for city crews. One short-term assignment gave an individual the opportunity to inventory phones for telecommunications.

College interns. While two college interns were positioned in the prosecutor and judges' offices for the summer, others did filing and research projects. Two more joined forces with the neighborhood revitalization staff to learn how that office operates and if they would enjoy a career in that field.

Court-ordered community service. Adding to the increase of short-term volunteering, many states have laws requiring community service instead of jail time. A Texas law requires probationers to put in community service hours as part of their probation. In Collin County, Texas, the number of offenders "working off" fines and hours through volunteering has tripled since 1995. Court-ordered volunteers are filling positions traditionally held by other volunteers, although not all positions are open to court-ordered individuals and not all offenders are accepted. Most of the offenders are committed to paying their debt to society and have had a positive impact.

Long-term volunteers. Today's long-term volunteers have also changed. They seek assignments where they can gain skills and make a difference. Volunteer managers must recognize the volunteers' need to take ownership of their work.

A sampler of effective volunteer projects

Senior services. Fremont, California, trains senior volunteers age 50 and over to work with homebound elder citizens who are grieving, anxious, or depressed because of social isolation, illness, or the loss of a loved one. Volunteers commit to a 50-hour training course designed to improve their communication skills and teach them about mental health and the psychology of aging.

Lake reclamation. Volunteers in Pulaski County, Virginia, have reclaimed a local lake that had been choked with debris and spoiled by pollution. Formed into a group called the Friends of Claytor Lake, the volunteers removed thousands of tons of debris from the lake and maintain an excellent water quality monitoring program. (See <http://www.focl.org> for the group's Web site and a report on their activities.)

Recycling. Individuals and civic and business groups in Concordia, Missouri, take turns staffing the city's recycling center. Two "permanent" volunteers line up the volunteer organizations and supervise their work during the monthly recycling event. Citizens bring their recyclables to the center, where the volunteers help unload and sort the collected items.

Auxiliary police services. Show Low, Arizona, trains volunteers ages 18 and up to assist police with report writing, traffic control, and first aid. After attending 48 hours of classroom and practical training, the members of the town's Reserve Auxiliary Patrol help police officers by taking reports of minor incidents such as misdemeanor thefts, medical assists, and animal complaints.

Disabled parking enforcement. Columbia, Missouri, has trained volunteers to ticket able-bodied drivers who park in handicapped spaces. Four volunteers, two in wheelchairs, have been trained in state and local laws, ticket writing, and conflict resolution. In addition to writing tickets, the volunteers visit businesses that have no handicapped parking spaces to advise them of state and local requirements.

Monitoring child care centers. Dade County, Florida, employs volunteers to help county staff monitor child care centers and homes for compliance with minimum standards. Volunteers receive eight hours of training, attend monthly review meetings, and commit to work ten hours per month, visiting at least two child care centers and submitting reports on their visits.

Teaching computer skills. Volunteers, most of them over 60, provide hands-on computer training in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, public library's state-of-the-art Virtual Library. Volunteers also support Charlotte's Web, a community computer network directed by the library. Volunteers do clerical work, program systems, manage content, repair computers, and do other essential tasks to keep the network functioning.

Park maintenance. Middle school students in Skowhegan, Maine, hold an annual spring cleanup at a regional 250-acre park. In preparation for the cleanup, they also raise money in pledges (\$1,000 in 1998) that is used to help operate the park.

Community library. When the small city of Shasta Lake, California, lost its county library branch, a group of volunteers formed a nonprofit organization to reopen the library in a new location, raise funds for its maintenance, and provide volunteer staffing.

Managing the New Volunteer

The success of the Volunteers in Plano program rests within the individual city departments. The support each department gives the volunteer program is crucial to the program's success.

As a result of current trends and changing positions, volunteer managers must change the way they recruit, market and interview volunteers. They need an understanding of what volunteers expect to receive in return for their time and energy.

Volunteer managers must be creative in recruitment and marketing efforts. Suggestions include speaking at newcomer meetings or bringing volunteers into the office as a group and sharing opportunities and success stories. Also effective is information placed in neighborhood newsletters, posting open opportunities at the chamber of commerce, and in newspapers, community magazines, cable channels, and on organizational Web sites.

New Recruitment Methods

In 1998, I worked with a career relocation group that helped find opportunities for spouses. In preparing for my presentation, I asked where the people came from, their interests, and why they wanted to work or volunteer. Most were from other countries and wanted a place to go to meet people and practice their English. During the meeting, they saw a video of city volunteers at work, completed applications, and received a volunteer handbook and a list of open opportunities. Then each person was asked to share his or her skills and interests. One volunteer even went through a formal interviewing process. In two hours, five out of eight interested people were placed; four stayed with the program for six months and one is still active after a year.

Additional areas from which to draw volunteers as individuals or groups include senior centers and community groups, colleges, high schools, and cor-

porations. Place an ad or list a few positions in newsletters or magazines.

For specialized needs, it is most effective to go straight to the expertise. For interpreters, go to international corporations; for graphic artists, ask local college art or computer departments; for reference librarians, call universities that teach library science. Keep names and contacts, so you can ask for them by name the next time you need them.

There are also opportunities for special needs groups and individuals from rehabilitation centers. One man disabled by a head injury was placed in the city's purchasing department. The match was mutually beneficial: the city gained a valuable worker who donates over 60 hours per month, and the volunteer appreciates the opportunity to work in a business situation.

Volunteer coordinators must work with groups available and their time schedules. Eighth-graders in Piano need to volunteer three hours every semester. So during fall, spring, and summer breaks, the city has a program that allows teens 13 to 15 years old to volunteer for short periods of time. E-mail goes out two or three weeks before each break, asking departments to identify tasks that can be accomplished with 10 minutes or less training. A one-time evening orientation is held, at which the program is explained to interested students and their parents and appropriate permission slips are signed. Cards are given out, each showing a supervisor's name, phone number, and location, and on the back a special "Thank You" for answering the call to volunteer. Last year students cleaned up activity closets; sharpened 700 pencils; collated, stuffed, and sorted 1,600 insurance packets; and more.

Marketing to Staff

Marketing the volunteer program to local government staff is very important. Share trends and successes with department heads through organization newsletters or over e-mail to help them and other managers imagine how they can use volunteers.

Interviewing and Placement

There is no one best way to conduct an interview, but it is the place where the manager and the volunteer make their initial impressions. The goal is to identify the true reason a volunteer is there, his or her skills and personality type, and the best match available.

This can be done through a series of questions:

- Tell me a little about yourself?
- What type of work have you done in the past?
- What would you like to do in the future?
- What's fun for you?

Many people call or come in asking about clerical or library positions, but after a few probing ques-

Resources for volunteer coordinators

The National Association of Volunteer Programs in Local Government (NAVPLG) is an affiliate of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the Association for Volunteer Administration (AVA). It is the only national association for volunteer coordinators in towns, cities, and counties. Members correspond by e-mail and conference call and meet once a year in conjunction with the AVA annual conference. For information about NAVPLG, readers may contact Dawn Matheny, Sonoma County, California, 707/527-2317, dmatheny@sonoma-county.org; or Kim Sanecki, City of Coral Springs, Florida, 954/346-4430, kms@ci.coral-springs.fl.us. The NAVPLG Web page can be found at <http://www.naco.org/affils/navplg/>.

GOV-VPM, at <http://www.cybervpm.com/gov-vpm/>, is a Web site for government volunteer program managers sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation Institute. It is designed for anyone who works with volunteers in programs, agencies, or departments of federal, state, city, county, or municipal government. Visitors will find links to many other useful sites and an online discussion group.

NACo maintains and distributes information about managing volunteer programs through its Web site. See <http://www.naco.org/programs/social/volun.cfm>.

The *Volunteer Council Staff Manual* created by Virginia Beach, Virginia, as a resource for departmental volunteer coordinators is available as an ICMA Clearinghouse Report, item number 42186. Call 800/745-8780 or visit the ICMA Bookstore at <http://bookstore.icma.org>.

tions, the manager recognizes other talents the volunteer can bring to the organization. If there is no job opening matching the volunteer's request, the manager should try to find a different job that may be suitable.

During the interview process, the manager must discuss time commitment and benefits for the volunteer and the organization. The volunteer and the manager must discuss whether the suggested position fits the volunteer's personal needs, since personal needs are the true reason for volunteering. Take into consideration the personalities of the department (the accounting department is very different from the police department).

Also keep in mind that when someone agrees to be a long-term volunteer, clarification may be necessary. Most volunteers don't mean "til death do us part" or even two or three years. Many people come in seeking volunteer opportunities for only six months to a year, or until something better comes along.

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Volunteer coordinators have the responsibility to help the prospective volunteer see both the cost and the benefit of making a commitment. Through interviewing and orientation, the volunteer should learn how the assignment will impact his or her schedule (in terms of time and commitment), as well as how his or her skills will benefit the department. Doing this keeps the volunteer both invested and committed to the organization for a longer time.

If a match is agreed upon, the department interview is set up. Ultimately it is the staff supervisor who should make the decision to accept or reject the volunteer.

Even in a perfect program, a percentage of volunteers will drop out or may not even start because of changing circumstances, schedules, or commitments. Because of this turnover, coordinators may find themselves marketing, interviewing, and placing more volunteers to cover the same positions than they might have four or five years ago.

For more information about Volunteers in Plano, readers may contact Robin Popik, VIP Coordinator, Plano, Texas; 972/941-7114.

MENTORING WELFARE-TO-WORK CLIENTS— BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO

Boulder County, Colorado, hired a volunteer initiatives coordinator to increase citizen participation in its community service programs, with a special emphasis on mentoring and intergenerational programs. Helping clients with personal and career problems is time-consuming and emotionally demanding, and volunteers are an invaluable asset.

One of the county's most successful volunteer programs is its mentoring program for welfare recipients who are trying to move into the workforce. TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) clients are paired with volunteers recruited through newspaper articles and word-of-mouth. Program director Tessa Davis feels that newspaper articles are very important because they bring in a more diverse group of volunteers than recruiting through church or civic organizations might. The mentoring program began at a time when interest was high in the federal welfare-to-work mandate, and Davis credits the timeliness of the county's program with the large number of people who have volunteered to be family support mentors.

For TANF clients who have been placed in entry-level jobs with nonprofit organizations and commercial businesses, Boulder County also recruits and supports work mentors. Each work mentor is supplied with a self-training kit developed by the county. Davis meets with each mentor and is available for phone consultation during the clients' first months on the job.

Mentors are matched with clients based primarily on demographics, location (to reduce travel), and

mutual interests. Each client is asked what he or she is hoping to find in a relationship with a mentor (a career counselor, a supportive friend, a resource person), and the answer to this question also helps the coordinator make successful assignments.

To provide some structure for the mentoring program and other volunteer activities, Diane Knudsen, the volunteer initiatives coordinator, developed a set of volunteer policies covering the relationship between volunteers and the county and between volunteers and their clients. The policies include the following:

- There is no discrimination in recruitment of volunteers by race, age, religion, gender, or ethnic background.
- All volunteers receive job descriptions.
- All volunteers are interviewed to assure suitability of placement.
- The county runs criminal history record checks on volunteers working with vulnerable populations.
- Volunteers can decline a placement or request a change of assignment.
- All volunteers receive orientation and training from the staff in the department in which they are to work.
- The county monitors and evaluates the volunteers' performance—evaluation is ongoing, non-threatening, participatory, and empowering.
- Volunteers are asked to honor their time commitment.

The county has designed a recognition project for volunteers that not only shows them they are appreciated but also gives them the satisfaction of getting more resources for their clients. Each year the county commission designates approximately \$3,000 to be used for volunteer grants. Interested volunteers apply for small grants of \$300 or \$400 for their own program, to pay for training or buy supplies, for example. The proposed expenditure must benefit the clients or the volunteers, and only volunteers can apply for the grants. The commission selects a dozen or so winners, who are then honored at a county-wide dinner. Examples of projects funded are a video on Alzheimer's, a slide show on wildflowers in the county, and yarn for a program in the county jail in which volunteers teach knitting and weaving to female inmates.

One of the advantages of this strategy is that it helps to publicize each department's projects while keeping the focus on just a few volunteers at a time. Diane Knudsen notes that, in general, most volunteers don't want to go to big, county-wide recognition ceremonies, preferring small luncheons or other events among the people with whom they work. The grants award program also brings together manageable numbers of supervisors and other county staff who learn from the volunteers and from each other.

Boulder County carries three kinds of insurance

for all volunteers working in social services: supplemental auto liability insurance, legal liability insurance, and accident insurance (again, supplemental to the volunteer's own medical insurance). The county purchases this insurance based on the average number of volunteers in service during a two-week period; in other words, it does not purchase insurance for individuals.

For more information about volunteer programs in Boulder County, readers may contact Tessa Davis or Diane Knudsen, Community Services Department, Boulder County, Colorado; 303/441-4889.

MENTORING TEEN PARENTS—CHESTERFIELD COUNTY, VIRGINIA

The Chesterfield County (Virginia) Community Services Board has been operating a volunteer program called Welcome Baby for the past 18 years. The program matches volunteers with teen parents, “to provide optimal child development and a positive relationship between parents and their babies by preventing problems with attachment, reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect, and lowering the rate of unwanted repeat pregnancies.”

The families mentored are referred to the program by the health department and county schools. Some parents are mentally disabled. All participate voluntarily. The volunteer mentors are experienced parents with adequate time to participate, good people skills, and a serious commitment to help others in the community.

Recruitment and Training

Staff of the prevention programs of the Community Services Board recruit and train volunteers. Each volunteer is carefully evaluated through lengthy telephone interviews, a face-to-face interview, a background check, and frank discussion of the problems and responsibilities that the volunteer will assume. Staff look for experienced mothers who are warm, supportive, structured, able to deal with problems well, and knowledgeable about child development. Volunteers must commit to a two-year relationship with a teen parent or family. The prevention programs staff has learned that it is important to thoroughly screen volunteers to make sure that they have the personality and temperament to stick with a long-term responsibility that can be frustrating or emotionally demanding.

New volunteers receive 24 hours of training over a four-day period in infant development, family dynamics, parent-infant relationships, the needs of adolescent parents, and communication skills, problem-solving, goal-setting, and other human services skills. During their term of service, they receive continual training and regular supervision from staff.

Many volunteers in the Welcome Baby program

are mothers of young children themselves. In recent years, a larger number have been working women. The teens being mentored are mostly single mothers, some with a male companion present, and a few are single fathers. Approximately 25 families and approximately 12 volunteers participate in the program each year (county staff provide home visits to those parents without volunteer mentors).

Following initial training, each volunteer is matched with a teen parent or family. During the first year, the volunteer visits the teen parent at home at least once a week, spending about an hour at each visit. During the second year, visits are reduced to every other week or once a month. The mentor provides a friendly resource for the teen—sharing information, providing support, answering questions, providing access to resources, and teaching about infant development. In addition to weekly or bi-weekly home visits, the teen parents can participate in periodic social events and parenting classes provided by the county.

Welcome Baby is designed to promote a warm but professional relationship between each volunteer mentor and the teen parent. Clear boundaries are established by the program to help volunteers maintain the distance necessary in any helping relationship. They are not allowed to lend money or give large gifts to their teen, for example. On the other hand, phone calls are encouraged.

Evaluation and Outcomes

During the last 10 years, CSB staff have used pre- and post-measures and parent satisfaction surveys to evaluate the success of Welcome Baby. The participating teens are tested on a variety of standardized measures of the quality of the home environment, knowledge of infant development, attitudes toward parenting (including discipline), degree of stimulation in the home and home safety, and other indicators of good parenting. The same tests are given to a control group of parents who have not been mentored.

Program parents are significantly more accurate in their knowledge of developmental milestones. They demonstrate more positive attitudes toward their infants, and their home environments are safer and more stimulating. Positive outcomes in parent-child interactions have also been documented.

Occasional lunches and small gifts for volunteers provided by the county and the satisfaction of watching the positive changes that can occur in a teenager's life as she or he learns to be a parent are the volunteers' rewards. Most complete their two-year commitment and a few sign on for another match.

For more information about Welcome Baby, readers may contact Maria Brown, Prevention Specialist, Chesterfield Community Services Board, Chesterfield County, Virginia; 804/768-7204; fax 804/768-9283.

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