

Best Practices for Organizing Volunteers

Many events need a lot of volunteers – or even just a few – to run successfully. As you organize volunteers for your next Ag Day, here are a few best practices to keep in mind.

A Larger Mission: Creating Purposeful Work for Volunteers

- Identify a key mission or message that guides your event or organization.
- How do your volunteers fit into the larger picture of that mission?
- How can you effectively share with them how their role contributes to that mission?

A Cooperative Community: Ensuring Volunteers Feel Utilized

- Volunteers come because they want to be involved. Make sure you have the right number of volunteers – too few, and it could cause stress; too many, and they may leave wondering if they were even needed. To avoid this, think about how many people you will need for each part of the event. For example:
 - 1 person reading in each classroom x 5 classrooms = 5 volunteers each class period
 - 2 people visiting each representative x 40 representatives / 4 visits each = 20 volunteers
 - 1 person for each type of food being served (6) + 2 people to replenish food + 2 people to clean tables = 10 volunteers
- Make it easy for volunteers to sign up or schedule themselves to work. Consider your target demographic of volunteers and what the best method of signing up is for them (online, over the phone, etc.).
- As volunteers arrive, make it clear where they should report to get instructions for how to help. This could be in the form of large signage or in communication prior to the event.
- Create a welcoming environment for new volunteers and returning volunteers alike and be sure to thank them for their time before they leave.

A Positive Outcome: Benefitting Your Cause and Your Volunteers

- What is your ideal outcome for the event? For the volunteers?
- Who benefits from your event?
- Consider collecting feedback on the experience and contact information from volunteers so that you can improve future events and include volunteers again.

Keep in mind how you can create a larger mission, a cooperative community, and a positive outcome for your volunteers. This way, you can ensure that volunteers leave your events feeling fulfilled and looking forward to staying engaged with your mission, community, and organization.