



Section 6: Enlisting Partners and Recruiting Volunteers

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Enlisting Partners and Recruiting Volunteers

Importance of Partners and Volunteers

No Neighborhood Networks center has access to unlimited funds that allow it to hire a team of staff members and plan, conduct, and deliver all of the programs and services it would like. To accomplish their goals and offer residents the much-needed programs and services that will help them move toward self-sufficiency, centers rely on partners and volunteers.

Partners of Neighborhood Networks centers may lend their expertise or provide financial support that make it possible for centers to offer an array of programs. Volunteers offer their time, support, and skills to fill in any staffing gaps centers may have.

The following section discusses the roles of partners and volunteers, the benefits to enlisting their help, and how centers can successfully form partnerships and recruit volunteers.

Promoting Partnerships

Neighborhood Networks centers can increase partnerships by:

Educating the business community about the benefits of Neighborhood Networks programs and highlighting that a partnership is an investment in the community.

Informing potential partners of the benefits—tax deductions for both cash and in-kind donations—of working with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations.

Centers can enhance their programs and build sustainability through partnerships with local businesses, schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, faith-based groups, community groups, nonprofit organizations, and social service providers. For example, a center might partner with a local health clinic to offer free vaccinations to young residents. Often, the best partnership opportunities are right in a center's community.

Partnerships can range from a brief, casual relationship with a small business hosting a one-time event to multi-year agreements between numerous organizations to create a program that will last years. Partners help a center identify new opportunities to meet needs, open an avenue for increased involvement in the community, link to new markets, and meet center goals. And by collaborating with Neighborhood Networks on a local and/or national level, partners:

- Gain greater access to targeted populations.
- Improve the economic health of communities.
- Meet their philanthropic commitments.
- Train a potential labor force in skills that meet the current and future needs of area employers.
- Open new markets.

Types of Partnerships

There are various types of partnerships, and centers can establish partnerships with differing levels of commitment. Some centers contact their partners once or twice a year. Other centers work with a partner on a daily basis. Below are the different types of partners that Neighborhood Networks centers might consider contacting:

- **Local partners.** Local partners can provide many services to a Neighborhood Networks center, including:

- Volunteers to help teach classes or organize events.
- In-kind goods and services. Some centers have received free groceries, dental exams, drivers, deliveries, computers, and technical support.
- Onsite programming for residents. Local colleges and universities may help provide General Educational Development (GED) or adult learning programs at Neighborhood Networks centers.
- Financial support.

Many local organizations plan and budget for community activities and encourage their employees to volunteer with community organizations. As a result, a Neighborhood Networks center could receive hundreds of hours of no-cost volunteer support to augment programs and operations.

What Some National Partners Are Offering

Educate Online will partner with Neighborhood Networks centers to provide online tutoring to centers located in Title I school districts. Participating youth will receive Dell computers for online tutoring sessions, which they will be able to keep. To ensure the partnership's success, Educate Online has agreed to donate "Hooked on Spanish" and "Hooked on English" software to each participating center.

CVS Caremark will educate Neighborhood Networks consortia in workforce development, education, and community organizations. Selected youth and young adults will participate in job shadowing, internships, clinical experience, and mentoring. For adult residents, CVS Caremark will provide resident coordinators with job listings and resident referrals for direct job placement.

- **National partners.** To offer large-scale support, national staff members of HUD's Neighborhood Networks Initiative identify and cultivate partnerships with national organizations every day. Many of these partnerships pave the way for collaborations between local centers and the national partner's local affiliate.

For a list of Neighborhood Networks' national partners, visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

Forming Lasting, Mutually Beneficial Partnerships

Prepare Yourself

Before you can form partnerships, you should carefully research organizations in your community. Follow these basic steps to plan and implement a strategy for prospective partners:

- **Develop an information statement about your Neighborhood Networks center.** State the general goals of the center, and how it specifically serves residents and the surrounding community. Include this statement in a brochure or flyer that you can leave with each prospective partner. An example of an information statement might be: The ABC Neighborhood Networks Center helps move residents toward self-sufficiency by providing job-readiness training that includes computer skills courses, as well as classes in résumé preparation and interviewing techniques. In addition, to help residents overcome the barriers to employment, the center offers an afterschool program and many community-building activities.
- **Examine and prioritize needs.** Review your center's programs and make lists of the materials, equipment, and financial needs. Then prioritize the needs. This will help you determine which partners to target.
- **Create an asset map.** Identify all potential resources in the surrounding vicinity of your

center, including private, public, and nonprofit organizations. Mark them on an actual map to help guide your partnership research and development. This will also help you avoid duplicating services that may already be established in your area. List every organization, agency, store, and business that you can think of that is near your center. Also list all community institutions, including:

- Public and private schools: including pre-schools; elementary, middle, and high schools; and vocational/technical schools. School board members and key administrative staff, such as the computer coordinator.
- Post-secondary schools: technical, junior and community colleges, universities, or extension services that may be located nearby.
- Fraternities, sororities, or outreach programs associated with colleges and universities.
- Libraries, museums and research institutions.
- Other housing properties, including the property where the center is located.
- Local business organizations. Chambers of Commerce, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs, Veterans of Foreign Wars, professional women's organizations, and unions.
- Major manufacturers or business centers in or near your center. Restaurants, travel agencies, Internet companies, police and fire departments, data services, temporary employment agencies, bakeries, franchises, department stores, and grocery stores.

What Kind of Partnership Do You Want?

Here are four different kinds of partnerships, ranging from informal arrangements to almost complete integration between two or more organizations:

- *Networking partnerships* involve the exchange of information for the betterment of both organizations. This type of partnership could involve a center that collects the names of interested computer users and delivers the names to an organization that offers inexpensive computer classes.
- *Coordinating partnerships* occur when two or more organizations work together to ensure that activities do not overlap. A Neighborhood Networks center that offers a daycare program could partner with a local YMCA that offers an afterschool program. The two could make arrangements so that children in preschool go to the YMCA, and children in grade school go to the center. This type of partnership allows each partner to meet specific age groups' needs without overlapping daycare services.
- *Cooperating partnerships* involve the sharing of resources to achieve a common goal. For example, a center with a daycare center could partner with a church group that owns a van. The center could offer free childcare to church members during services. In return, the church could give the center assistance with transportation.
- *Collaborative partnerships* occur when two organizations work together to the extent that they share risks, responsibilities, and rewards. This type of partnership occurred at the Montgomery Townhouses Neighborhood Networks Computer Training Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This center, in partnership with Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum, prepared participants to work in childcare and other jobs and offered internship opportunities to successful participants. Residents who complete a 12-week program were eligible for a 7-week paid internship with one of several early childhood programs.

- Job training centers. Local Workforce Investment Boards and job centers.
- Religious institutions and special interest groups. Churches, temples, synagogues, and mosques.
- Community-based organizations. Hospitals. YMCAs, YWCAs, 4-H and Boys and Girls clubs, seniors centers, credit unions and banks, clinics, shelters, community action agencies, community development organizations, literacy programs, cultural or ethnic clubs, or associations and art councils.
- Press and media. Local newspapers, radio and television, Internet news pages, cable access stations and magazines.
- Local or regional telecommunication providers.

It might be helpful to do a search of these institutions in the local Yellow Pages to ensure that you have included as many organizations as possible.

- **Conduct research.** Research potential partners and learn about their products, services, operations, and ownership. Canvass staff, board members, friends, and other key contacts for the names of local business owners. An introduction from a third party can often help with meeting potential new partners.
- **Network.** Join a membership organization of community nonprofit organizations. Ask about the partnerships that others have formed. Join the local Chamber of Commerce and get involved in a working group. Go to business mixers and exchange business cards.
- **Be patient.** Recognize that building relationships takes time. Neighborhood Networks centers need to invest time in nurturing what should be a mutually beneficial relationship with a partner. Start off by asking for some needs on your list that could be met by in-kind donations.

Identify Potential Partners

Once you have completed all of the necessary internal preparations, it is time to begin identifying potential partners. Potential partners may include:

- Local government.
- Large and small businesses.
- Community and civic organizations.
- Faith-based organizations.
- Schools.
- Colleges and universities.
- State and regional government and organizations.
- National companies and organizations.

When identifying which organizations to target for partnership development, ask the following questions:

- **What are the center's goals?** Evaluate whether a partnership would help achieve center goals. For example, a goal may be to help residents learn computer skills so that they can find jobs with local employers. A partnership with a local community college to provide low-cost computer training could achieve this goal.

Effective Partnership

North Dakota Center Gained a Valuable Employee

Through a partnership between the LaGrave Learning Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and the AARP Senior Employment Program, Eleanor Jones became a valuable employee at the center. Jones joined the LaGrave staff in 1996 as an administrative assistant and later became a computer instructor. She fostered a supportive learning environment with her knack for helping first-time computer users feel comfortable.

- **What should be improved?** If assessment techniques are used to identify areas for improvement in the center, consider whether a partnership could help make these improvements. For example, partnering with a local sporting goods company and a hardware store and recruiting local volunteers could help improve a neighborhood play area at little or no cost.
- **What opportunities exist for the center?** Does another organization want to partner with the center? Did a foundation announce an initiative to donate computer software? Consider partnering and think about more ways the center can benefit from the partnership.

Do Your Research

After identifying prospective partnering organizations that would benefit residents, center staff should thoroughly research the companies/organizations. Review all available information on the partner, such as:

- Newspaper articles.
- Annual reports.
- Web sites.
- Networks of the center's supporters and friends.

Identify the Strongest Candidates

After learning about each prospective partner, select the most promising partners by evaluating:

- **Capacity.** Can the prospective partner offer what the center hopes to achieve? Does it provide a service that the center needs but has too few staff to deliver?
- **Proximity.** Is the prospective partner too far away to engage in frequent partnership activities? Is it too far away to relate to the community served by the center or too close to provide a healthy overlap of services? Does it provide similar services?
- **Level of effort.** What level of effort is required to make the center attractive to, and sustain the interest of, a prospective partner? Will the effort

required to maintain the partnership reflect the quality or quantity of services that the residents receive?

- **Reputation.** Is the prospective partner known to be receptive to partnership requests? Has it enjoyed financial success recently? Is it respected in the community? Does it have good business practices?

Initiate Contact and Showcase What You Have to Offer

Once you have identified a potential partner, contact the organization to set up an initial meeting. At an initial meeting with a prospective partner's staff members, speak informatively and sincerely about the Neighborhood Networks center, and convince them that the center has many desirable qualities. You should also take this opportunity to showcase what you have to offer the partner, including:

- **Publicity.** Organizations love positive publicity. Offer to write a press release or an article, or invite local newspapers and television news crews to report the success that the center has achieved with the support of the partner.
- **Mission fulfillment.** Many community-based organizations have missions that include community outreach. Working with the residents who

Effective Partnership

Virginia Neighborhood Networks Center Joins Forces with the FBI

The Norfolk Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) worked with the Friendship Village Neighborhood Networks Center in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Three times a week, for two hours, FBI instructors provided formal training. The training included keyboard skills, word processing, database and spreadsheet development, job searching, interviewing, and résumé writing.

use the center can fulfill this mission. Corporate philanthropy can be a mission and the center may meet the corporation's eligibility requirements.

- **Access to a specific population.** Residents who use the center may be the ideal target audience for a prospective partner. The center will provide a way to reach them.
- **Access to an active community.** Some residents are very well informed and active in the community. This can be a selling point to businesses or organizations that may be interested in feedback, involvement, or business from the center's community. Some organizations may be short-handed and willing to exchange goods or services for volunteers from the center. For example, the League of Women Voters might donate office supplies if residents help with a voter registration drive.
- **Access to meeting space.** Many community organizations simply do not have adequate space to hold meetings or activities. If the center has available space, offer it.
- **Access to computers and the Internet.** In return for volunteers, goods, or services from a partnering organization, the center could offer the organization's members or staff access to computers.
- **Ability to share staff.** If the prospective partner is short-handed and the center can help, share staff time or expertise.

A typical first meeting should include the following components:

- **Make the request.** Describe the activities that the center wants to pursue and the goods or services the prospective partner could provide.
- **Give the pitch.** Tell the prospective partner's staff how their organization and the center would each benefit from the partnership.
- **Promote the center.** Convey the strength of the center by describing it passionately, but without exaggeration.
- **Hit the hot buttons.** Many organizations have topics of interest that hit close to home. When

researching a prospective partner, identify these hot-button topics and use them during the meeting.

- **Establish credibility.** Use examples and references to demonstrate how the center would deliver on its promises and how the partnership would increase the clout and reputation of both parties.
- **Be flexible.** If a prospective partner wants to interact with the center in an unforeseen way, be flexible and negotiate a mutually beneficial arrangement.

After the meeting, it is advisable to write a thank-you note to the prospective partner. This shows that you are committed to the center and have a sincere interest in the partnership, and gives you the opportunity to provide any additional information. A few days after you send the thank-you note, follow up with a telephone call. During the call, work with the partner to create a timeline and to-do list for future activities.

Outlining Roles and Responsibilities

Once a partnership is secured, put the arrangement in writing by drafting a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). An MOU is a written agreement between

Effective Partnership

Louisville Youths Visit South Africa, Help Start Computer Center

Eight youths ages 12 to 15 from the Shawnee Gardens Computerized Neighborhood Networks Center in Louisville, Kentucky, traveled to South Africa to help start a computer center at a church in Johannesburg. The center had formed partnerships with a school system and church in South Africa, and the center's youths corresponded with their "e-pal" counterparts, sharing information about their respective countries, lives, and interests. The trip was part of a Shawnee Gardens' tutorial program.

the center and its partner. Senior staff members at both organizations sign this document, which briefly outlines the goals and objectives of the partnership and specifically outlines the roles and responsibilities of each party.

MOUs are not necessary nor are they binding agreements. Some organizations may not want to enter into an MOU with your center. This is reasonable and does not weaken the relationship. Some organizations may express concern about the commitment

inferred through the MOU. Assure your new partner that the MOU is not legally binding—it is just a written explanation of the partnership that can be used as a reference by each partner.

Following is a template for drafting an MOU. It contains standard contractual language. Fill in the portions for your center, as well as your partner. After you complete these sections, read the MOU for accuracy and clarity. Make changes to the standard language, if necessary.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

[Partner Name], [City and State]

And

[Neighborhood Networks Center Name]

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizes a partnership between the [Partner's Name Here] and [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name]. Under this partnership agreement, the [Partner's Name Here] will provide [list services and/or gifts here]. By participating in this partnership, the [Partner's Name Here] will reach its targeted constituency of underserved young adults interested in achieving greater economic opportunity and self-sufficiency.

[Partner's Name] is a no-cost education and training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) that helps disadvantaged young people ages 16 through 24 to obtain better jobs, earn more money, and take control of their lives. Funded by Congress, [Partner's Name] has trained young adults for meaningful careers since 1964. The [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name] was created in [year], to provide computer technology access and services for low-income and moderate-income residents of the [Apartment Complex Name] housing community.

The [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name] and the [Partner's Name] both believe that residents of underserved communities can achieve economic opportunity and self-sufficiency if provided proper training, access, and support. Accordingly, under this MOU, they agree as follows:

I. Purpose and Scope

To address low job skills levels of [Apartment Complex Name] housing residents by providing quarterly onsite job training presentations and initial application screening for placement at a [Partner's Name] Training Center.

II. Responsibilities

The [Partner's Name] and the [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name] together will:

- Provide quarterly onsite presentations and informal application screening that will address the residents' training and employment needs.
- Promote the partnership to residents, community stakeholders, and media outlets.
- Monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the partnership.

The [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name] will:

- Provide the meeting facility, computer hardware and software, and other equipment as needed;
- Provide outreach to secure residents and community support for scheduled onsite presentations and application screenings; and

- Offer administrative assistance with coordinating the onsite sessions.

The [Partner's Name] Outreach and Admissions Office will:

- Oversee overall management and coordination of the quarterly onsite [Partner's Name] presentations and application screenings for residents;
- Provide relevant materials and qualified staff and instructors for the quarterly onsite [Partner's Name] presentations and application screenings at the [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name] NNC;
- Advertise the availability of course(s) offered at the [Partner's Name] centers to the [Apartment Complex Name] housing community; and
- Explore additional career center involvement with the [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name].

III. Tracking and Evaluating

Before and during the partnership, the [Partner's Name] will work with the [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name] to determine the variables necessary to track and evaluate partnership activities, and identify possible outcomes and quantifiable results. Initial items to be tracked and evaluated include:

Number of residents participating per Presentation.

- Number of residents completing [Partner's Name] applications.
- Training/employment needs requested by residents.
- Number of residents referred for training/type of training.
- Number of residents completing training.
- Number of residents placed in jobs/type of jobs.

Tracking and evaluation results will be collected by [Partner's Name] and [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name] on a quarterly basis in order to meet reporting requirements, and will be available to both partnering organizations.

IV. Funding

This MOU does not constitute a fiscal or funds obligation document. Each party will direct and fund its own participation under this MOU. Any joint endeavors involving reimbursement or transfer of funds between the parties to this MOU will be handled in accordance with applicable regulations and procedures of the participating parties, and will be the subject of supplemental agreements, which shall be effected in writing by authorized representatives of the parties. The parties are not required to enter into supplemental agreements.

V. Period of Performance

The period of performance for this MOU is 2 years beginning [Date] and ending [Date]. This MOU may be extended upon written mutual agreement and will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is fulfilling its purpose and to make any necessary revisions. The agreement may be cancelled by mutual agreement of both parties through written notice to the partnership officer(s) 60 days in advance of the termination date.

VI. Partnership Officers

The persons listed below will serve as the partnership officers to coordinate the activities of each organization in carrying out this MOU:

[Partner's Name]	[Neighborhood Networks Center's Name]
[Partner's Authorized Representative's Name]	[Center Director's Name]
[Partner's Title]	[Center Director's Title]
[Partner's Name]	[Neighborhood Networks Center's Name]
[Address]	[Address]
[City], [State] [ZIP Code]	[City], [State] [ZIP Code]
[Phone Number]	[Phone Number]

VII. Authorization

The signing of this MOU implies that the signatories will strive to achieve, to the best of their ability, the stated purpose.

On behalf of the organization I represent, I wish and have the authorization to sign this MOU and contribute to its implementation and further development.

 [Partner's Authorized Representative's Name]
 [Partner's Title]
 [Partner's Company/Organization's Name]

 Date

 [Center Director's Name]
 [Center Director's Title]
 [Neighborhood Networks Center's Name]

 Date

Sustaining a Partnership

Partnerships require work and attention if they are going to continue and grow. Following are some tips you can use to sustain solid partnerships:

- **Work to increase the benefits to all parties.** Conduct ongoing assessments of the partnership to determine whether modifications could result in greater benefits for each partner.
- **Communicate.** Ongoing communication with partners will ensure that progress is made, obstacles are overcome, and no party is overlooked. The center can ensure ongoing communication by meeting with and communicating with its partners regularly and by copying partners on important letters and e-mails.
- **Establish one-on-one relationships.** Get to know your partner's staff. Effective working relationships are ultimately based on trust and mutual respect.
- **Actively involve residents and community members.** To generate interest and involvement in partnership activities, invite residents to attend partnership meetings or serve on a steering

Effective Partnership

Delaware Residents Bank on Job Training

Boasting a 98 percent job-placement rate for graduates of a comprehensive job-training program, the Neighborhood Networks center at Bethel Villa Apartments in Wilmington, Delaware, has lined up jobs for dozens of residents and community members. The center partnered with four local banks, who were happy to contribute to the center's job-training and education efforts to gain well-trained employees. Bank representatives worked one-on-one with residents to help them hone their interviewing and job skills.

committee. Residents who are aware of partnership activities can also verbally publicize upcoming events.

- **Hold joint activities.** Activities can range from celebrating a new partnership to negotiating a long-term arrangement to provide a specific service. Involving all parties in the planning of these events and activities helps to create an overall sense of ownership.
- **Be patient.** Developing strong partnerships and achieving ambitious goals often takes longer than expected. If all parties are doing their best to meet the partnership's goals, be patient and appreciate whatever progress is made.
- **Sustain momentum.** Recognize the distinction between being patient and losing momentum. If progress toward achieving goals falters, people and organizations can lose interest in the partnership. Regaining momentum can be difficult. To sustain momentum, ensure that center staff members honor their commitment to the partnership and encourage others to do so as well.
- **Help each other.** The center can strengthen a partnership by supporting the partner both inside and outside the partnership. For example, a center could mention the partner in promotional materials, thank the partner when the center receives recognition or awards, and offer to help the partner whenever possible.

The Value of Volunteers

Volunteers can provide an excellent staffing option for Neighborhood Networks centers. Whether it is a high school student providing computer expertise and earning community service hours, a retired teacher working with adults in a literacy class, or a Girl Scout working with a child in the afterschool program—volunteers can help your center's programs thrive and extend services beyond their current level.

Before You Ask for Help

Before you bring the first volunteer into a Neighborhood Networks center, determine what kind of work volunteers could do, determine how many volunteers you will need, and prepare a written job description of duties, skills, experience, and time needed. Try to design volunteer jobs for different levels of responsibility, experience, and commitment. Volunteers are not identical.

Things to consider when planning a volunteer program include:

- Are there areas with too much work where a volunteer could help, either by working with staff or alone?
- Is there work the staff cannot do because they are concentrating in other areas or they lack the time/skills to undertake?
- What work would not get done without a volunteer?
- When and where does this work need to occur? At the center? At the volunteer's home?
- What skills does a volunteer need to do these jobs?
- Will training be necessary before starting?

Develop a Project Plan

After determining your volunteer needs, the next step is to develop a project plan. A project plan outlines organizational goals and objectives and contains a prioritized job list to generate support and focus volunteer efforts. Having a written plan makes it easy to review center goals and objectives with a new volunteer and provides information that can be used in fundraising and promotional materials. It should define who will supervise and train volunteers and explain how volunteers and paid staff will be connected.

Implement the Plan to Create a Volunteer Program

Now that you have a plan, you are ready to implement your volunteer program. The following are some steps to help you ensure the success of your program:

- **Determine who will manage the program.** To make the best use of their time, it is important that volunteers know what they are expected to do when they arrive at the center. To ensure this happens, determine early in the process who will be responsible for managing volunteers. This person should:
 - Create volunteer job descriptions to help volunteers learn their roles.
 - Establish a regular volunteer schedule and timesheet to track hours and duties.
 - Get to know each volunteer by name.
 - Find ways to include volunteers in important decisions.
 - Recruit new volunteers.
 - Communicate the center's need for volunteers to the community.
 - Use incentives for people to volunteer at the center, such as discounted services from partners or college/high school credits.
 - Develop a volunteer recognition/incentive program.
- **Create and distribute an information packet** about your center to community groups, media, and other organizations. Be clear about your expectations, including skills needed, time required, and a short job description. Emphasize the benefits of volunteering in all of your printed materials. These benefits can include the acquisition of new skills, developing a sense of community, and making a difference in the lives of residents.

- **Develop an application** to match volunteers' skills and interests with jobs available within the organization. Useful information includes:
 - Name and contact information.
 - Occupation.
 - Skills and interests.
 - Languages spoken.
 - Previous volunteer activities.
 - How the volunteer learned of the center.
 - The reason(s) the volunteer wants to serve the center.
 - The amount of time the volunteer can commit to the center each week/month.

- **Develop written policies.** It is important to have written policies that govern both paid and volunteer staff. Written policies provide a sound management system for all staff and should:
 - Clarify responsibilities.
 - Define lines of communication and accountability.
 - Ensure continuity.
 - Promote standards.
 - Establish values and directions for volunteers.

- **Acknowledge volunteers** through regular feedback, recognition, and personal thanks. This is crucial to keep volunteers coming back to the center.

Recruit Volunteers

Now that you have identified your needs, developed a plan, and identified the individuals who will carry out the plan, the next step is to recruit volunteers. To do this:

- **Provide ample information.** Potential volunteers must first decide whether they want to volunteer with your center, then whether they can fit you into their schedule. Post flyers throughout

the community. Talk to groups whose members regularly participate in community activities, such as service clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and high school and college students performing community service.

- **Develop a recruitment message** that is easily understood, encourages people to take action, resonates well with potential volunteers, and provides a complete picture of what is needed. The message should include:
 - The organization's mission or focus.
 - What volunteers will be asked to do.
 - Time required.
 - Training needed.
 - Location of work.
 - A contact person's name, phone number, and e-mail.

Volunteer Commitment Form

One challenge in dealing with volunteers is setting expectations in the beginning. Many organizations that rely on volunteers have found a volunteer commitment form to be useful because it provides a written understanding of what is expected by both the volunteer and the organization. The form:

- Tells volunteers what is expected and when it needs to be done.
- Lists resources needed to do the job, including assistance from others or equipment and training.
- Establishes a volunteer's motives for volunteering and what he/she hopes to gain.
- Is signed by the volunteer and supervisors as a contract.

- **Communicate the recruitment message.** Choose presenters who are able to explain the value of your Neighborhood Networks center, what the center does, and what is needed from volunteers. When communicating the message, presenters should take brochures, job descriptions, and signup sheets to distribute. If someone expresses interest, do not leave without getting his or her name and telephone number, and be sure to follow up. Remember—after you present information about your center and what you need, ask audience members to volunteer right away.
- **Advertise volunteer opportunities** at your center in:
 - City and neighborhood newspaper volunteer listings.
 - School newspapers.
 - High school and college service-learning offices.
 - Senior center bulletins.

Why People Volunteer

- To help others.
- To do interesting work.
- To give something back to the community.
- To learn about problems within the community.
- To maintain skills.
- To make new friends or to be with old friends who already volunteer at your center.
- To feel useful.
- To make business contacts.
- To help those less fortunate.
- To gain work experience to help in securing a job.

- Faith-based organization bulletins and newsletters.
- Radio and TV public service announcements.
- Posters/flyers at the local library, grocery stores, laundromats, churches and other places of worship, community colleges, and businesses.

You should also visit open houses, community organization meetings, volunteer fairs, community education classes related to your residents, school community-service programs, volunteer hotlines, and community events.

Screen and Interview Potential Volunteers

When an individual contacts you about volunteering, follow up as soon as possible but do not rush the process or accept just anyone as a volunteer. Screening and interviewing potential volunteers is similar to the process used to hire paid staff and should include:

- A written application.
- Three or more references.
- Background checks, as required by state law.
- Personal interview.
- Training and orientation.

An interview provides an opportunity to learn more about a potential volunteer and to describe your center's programs and activities. Interviews help determine interests and abilities, suitability for a particular job, and how well that person will fit in the organization. Answer questions that volunteers may have and emphasize their ability to make valuable contributions to the Neighborhood Networks center.

An interview also allows you to explore the applicant's interests, skills, and motivation for volunteering, and discuss time commitments, training requirements, policies, confidentiality rules, and how the

job helps the center to meet its goals and objectives. At the end of the interview, if you have decided that the person is a good fit, invite him/her to join your volunteer team. Be sure to explain the next steps in the process, such as background checks (if required), orientation, and training.

Orientation and training provide a volunteer with general information about the organization and specific information about the volunteer position. They can also help a volunteer feel prepared and decrease potential problems by informing volunteers about what to expect. Training can also provide a volunteer with the skills needed to handle the job.

Supervising and Evaluating Volunteers

Like paid staff members, volunteers should be evaluated regularly. As a supervisor, you need to know if a volunteer is doing the job effectively. The volunteer, in turn, needs feedback and acknowledgment. A regular evaluation can determine how well the placement is working and if any changes would improve the volunteer's satisfaction with the job. It can also help a volunteer grow and improve on the job. During evaluations, volunteers can determine if they want to continue in the job or move to another

Recruiting Volunteers on the Internet

Many organizations now use the Internet to recruit volunteers for their programs. Listed below are Web sites where organizations can post requests for volunteers or locate groups in their community.

Points of Light Institute
www.pointsoflight.org

This organization helps to mobilize millions of volunteers who are helping to solve serious social problems in communities throughout the country.

servenet.org
<http://servenet.org>

Launched in 1996, servenet.org mobilizes and empowers the volunteer service community to tackle some of the toughest challenges facing local communities. Users can enter their zip code, city, state, skills, interests, and availability, and be matched with organizations needing help.

Idealist and Action Without Borders
www.idealists.org

The Idealist.org Web site is an online resource for those interested in nonprofit careers and social justice work. It has links to volunteer opportunities for children, teens, and adults.

VolunteerMatch
www.volunteermatch.org

This nonprofit online service helps interested volunteers get involved with community service organizations throughout the United States. Volunteers enter their zip code to quickly find local volunteer opportunities that match individual interests and schedules.

1-800-VOLUNTEER.org
www.1-800-VOLUNTEER.org

This Web site provides volunteers with a direct connection to local volunteer opportunities that match interests, skills, and a common desire to serve others.

position. They can also offer input on areas that they would like to change or improve.

A written evaluation form can be easily developed. It should begin with a detailed description of the position and include goals to be accomplished. The volunteer supervisor can rate performance in each area and indicate whether the volunteer has met his or her goals during the evaluation period. If not, what were the reasons? Each volunteer should write a short self-appraisal about his/her work. Together, the supervisor and the volunteer can develop an action plan for the coming year that lists goals and objectives for both the program and the volunteer.

Terminating the Volunteer Agreement

It is never easy to tell someone their support and services are no longer needed—especially a volunteer who truly wants to contribute to a cause. However, if a job is not getting done correctly or if the volunteer is not connecting with residents or disrupting center operation, you must take corrective action.

When terminating a volunteer agreement, it might be useful to review the job description with the volunteer. The description should outline roles, expectations, and stipulations for remaining a volunteer. A job description “de-personalizes” the situation and makes it more apparent to the volunteer why they are being dismissed.

Retaining and Supporting Volunteers

Active, committed volunteers are key to the success of any community program. Experienced volunteers are familiar with program goals and objectives and can provide mentoring and inspiration to new volunteers. Keep volunteers coming back by:

- Creating a sense of belonging.
- Making volunteers feel valued and respected.
- Allowing volunteers to help choose their role.
- Having flexible expectations.

It is not unusual for the number of volunteers to fluctuate. Over time, people move or change jobs or develop new interests. If volunteers are leaving in large numbers, however, especially after they have been with you for some time, they may be suffering from burnout. A good manager can help prevent burnout by:

- Keeping the workload manageable.
- Ensuring that goals are realistic and achievable.
- Promoting a sense of accomplishment.
- Managing a volunteer’s time efficiently.
- Letting volunteers take a break from work, if needed, or say no to an assignment.
- Making volunteer work enjoyable.

Recognizing the Work of Volunteers

Volunteer recognition is an important part of the management process. Acknowledgment indicates that staff members, whether paid or volunteer, are respected and valued members of the group. There are many ways to recognize volunteers for their service to your center. Send a welcome letter to a new volunteer to show your appreciation of their time. Thank volunteers frequently—at the end of a project, at staff meetings, or at formal recognition ceremony. Present a certificate and a letter of recommendation to departing volunteers. To show appreciation for volunteers:

- Acknowledge the volunteer’s contribution in a timely manner.
- Recognize the person and what they did specifically to get the job done.
- Applaud effort as well as job completion.
- Acknowledge behavior you would like to see repeated.
- Provide additional opportunities for leadership or training.