



# The Ultimate Guide to Volunteer Recruitment in 2025

Learn the top volunteer trends, common challenges, and best tips for creating a solid and sustainable volunteer recruitment strategy.

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Volunteerism has always been an essential piece of successful nonprofit work. In fact, about one-third of the nonprofit workforce is volunteers! Even beyond assisting nonprofits in carrying out their missions and visions with their time and skills, volunteers are also generous donors, too: 85% of volunteers donate to the nonprofits they volunteer for.

But despite how important volunteers are to nonprofit missions across the world, today, organizations are faced with a dilemma. In 2022:

- **Two-thirds of nonprofits reported an increase in demand for their services**
- **About half of nonprofits increased the delivery of services**
- **About half of nonprofits increased staff workloads to help meet demand**
- **About one-third of nonprofits are operating with less funding and paid staff**

Here's what this means: Our communities are in need more than ever, yet nonprofits have fewer resources than ever before.

Among these limited resources are volunteers. Why? Nonprofits struggle to recruit — and engage and retain — solid supporters year after year.

In this guide, we'll cover the state of volunteer recruitment today, including the most common obstacles that nonprofits face, new trends in recruitment, and the top recruitment strategies for building a solid volunteer base. Plus, we'll cover how you can evaluate your current recruitment strategy in order to find areas for improvement.

# 1 Understanding the Volunteer Landscape

Before we jump into the top recruitment strategies, let's cover the current landscape of volunteering — both the top trends that are emerging and the most common challenges nonprofits are facing in building their volunteer bases.

## Top 8 Volunteer Trends for Nonprofits to Know

### 1. Informal Volunteering

Formal volunteering — volunteer work that typically involves a more structured schedule and training process and includes oversight, like volunteering at a local food bank — is in decline.

Informal volunteering, on the other hand — which is volunteer work that is done independently, without the involvement of an organization (like engaging in spontaneous acts of service) — has become more popular. In fact, 14.3% of the global population participated in informal volunteering in 2022, while 6.5% of working-age people worldwide engage in formal volunteering via an organization or association.

Here's what this means for nonprofits: Offering volunteers more autonomy and empowering them to take action in ways that feel right for them — while under the umbrella of your mission — is key.

### 2. Virtual and Remote Volunteering

The pandemic accelerated the adoption of virtual volunteering opportunities. Organizations have realized that remote volunteering not only provides flexibility for participants but also allows for a broader geographic reach. Plus, many people now prefer volunteering from home, using digital skills, or working on projects that don't require a physical presence.

Here's what this means for nonprofits: Activities like virtual tutoring, online fundraising campaigns, or offering administrative support via digital platforms are going to be more in demand than ever.



### 3. Micro-Volunteering Opportunities

Micro-volunteering involves small, bite-sized tasks that can be completed in a short amount of time. It's a trend that appeals to busy individuals who want to contribute but can't commit to long-term projects, making volunteering accessible to people with tight schedules.



Here's what this means for nonprofits: Nonprofits will need to start considering offering opportunities with minimal time commitment, such as writing a short letter to a senior, contributing to a social media campaign, or translating documents. Here's what this means for nonprofits: Organizations need to make volunteer feedback a top priority and involve them in co-designing programs and events.



### 4. Skill-Based Volunteering

Volunteers are increasingly interested in leveraging their professional or personal skills to make a meaningful impact. Organizations that offer roles focused on specific skill sets — like marketing, data analysis, graphic design, or web development — are more likely to attract skilled volunteers who want to apply their expertise to a good cause.

Here's what this means for nonprofits: Organizations will need to invest in skill-matching processes in order to engage the right talent for the right task.

### 5. Flexible and Family-Friendly Volunteering

Flexibility is key in today's busy world. Organizations are adapting to the needs of volunteers by offering opportunities with varying levels of time commitment and activities suitable for families (youth volunteering included) or groups. This trend enables people to volunteer alongside their loved ones, making it a shared and enjoyable experience.

Here's what this means for nonprofits: Nonprofits will need to expand their considerations of their volunteer base, and create opportunities to engage all age groups.



## 6. Employee Volunteer Programs

Companies are increasingly offering employee volunteer programs as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives — programs that allow employees to volunteer during work hours or through company-sponsored events.

Here's what this means for nonprofits: Nonprofits should strategically collaborate with businesses to attract a consistent, dedicated group of volunteers.

## 7. Personalized Volunteer Experiences

Volunteers today expect more tailored and personalized experiences rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. This is particularly true for younger generations of volunteers — like millennials and Gen-Z — who want to have one-of-a-kind experiences.

Here's what this means for nonprofits: Organizations need to customize volunteer roles to fit individual interests, skills, and availability. This can help make volunteering feel more meaningful and engaging for participants.

## 8. Volunteer Feedback and Co-Design

Volunteers want to feel heard and be part of the decision-making process. This is especially true for millennials and Gen-Z, too, who are known for challenging authority and the status quo.

Here's what this means for nonprofits: Organizations need to make volunteer feedback a top priority and involve them in co-designing programs and events.



# Top 5 Challenges in Volunteer Recruitment

To understand the top recruitment tips, nonprofits have to understand the most common obstacles to solid recruitment, too.

## 1. Limited Time and Resources

Many nonprofit organizations have small staffs and limited budgets, making it difficult to dedicate significant time and resources to active volunteer recruitment. They may struggle to create compelling job postings, promote opportunities through various channels, and manage the full volunteer onboarding process efficiently.

## 2. Difficulty Promoting Volunteer Opportunities

Nonprofits often lack the marketing expertise or tools to promote their volunteer roles effectively. Crafting an engaging message, identifying the right audience, and distributing the information across relevant platforms can be a significant challenge.

## 3. Volunteer Mismatch

Sometimes, nonprofits struggle to find volunteers whose skills and interests align well with the specific tasks and responsibilities of their available roles. This can lead to volunteers feeling unsatisfied or underutilized, reducing engagement and retention.

## 4. Low Volunteer Engagement and Retention

Nonprofits often face issues with volunteers not completing the full recruitment process or disengaging shortly after starting.

## 5. Volunteers Citing Less Time & Availability

Nonprofits must compete with the demands on people's time to attract volunteers. This can be challenging, especially when volunteers have limited availability or must choose between multiple worthy opportunities.

# 2 Creating the Volunteer Program You Need

Nonprofits are faced with growing demand for impact, emerging new trends, and consistent, common challenges to volunteer recruitment. The combination of all three can often feel insurmountable.

**Here's the good news:** With the right tips, tools, and strategies, nonprofits can overcome each of these obstacles and build volunteer programs that are sustainable, and successful, and make volunteerism the strongest part of their organizations.

## The Top 11 Strategies for Volunteer Recruitment

### 1. Clarify Volunteer Roles and Expectations

As we've discussed above, volunteers are busy — they need and want flexible, time-limited volunteer opportunities, and even family friendliness.

One of the best ways to nail that flexibility is by giving prospective volunteers all the information they need, right up front, including the scope of the opportunity, responsibilities, and the difference they'll make. By clearly defining these elements, you reduce ambiguity and attract people who feel confident they can contribute meaningfully.

**To do this, be sure to:**

- **Develop specific role descriptions:** When recruiting your volunteer roles, be clear about the when, where, why, and who of the opportunity (time, place, specific impact of the program, and who you'll be helping).
- **Make the role descriptions accessible:** Volunteers should be able to view open roles and what they entail at any time. To do this, be sure to create accessible [volunteer calendars](#) that allow volunteers to easily search and filter for opportunities and view their full descriptions before committing.
- **Offer detailed training and support:** Include multiple ways for volunteers to get in touch with volunteer leaders, places where questions can be answered, and more.

## 2. Leverage Multiple Recruitment Channels

Relying on a single recruitment method limits your outreach. To attract diverse volunteers, you must promote through multiple channels, both online and offline. This approach increases visibility and connects your organization with different community segments.

To do this, be sure to leverage:

**Social media:** Launch a designated volunteer recruitment campaign that encourages followers to sign up and engage, or even post about the opportunity on their own.

**Email:** Create custom, mass emails or highly targeted email messages to your volunteer base, filtering by geographic, demographic, and action-based volunteer data.

**Text:** Reach volunteers by phone with individual or mass custom text message campaigns to invite them to sign up.

**Community organizations:** Partner with other like-minded organizations to spread the word. Using technology, you can even create private opportunities for chosen groups and select community partners.

**Landing pages:** When volunteers go to sign up for a shift — regardless of whether they found your campaign through social media, email, or another channel — be sure to direct them to a dedicated landing page for them to sign up easily and simply.





### 3. Use Skill-Based Matching

Volunteers today want a personalized, highly impactful experience when giving their time, energy, and effort to a cause.

By offering skill-based volunteer opportunities, you can attract volunteers who are excited to make a specific contribution while developing or sharing their expertise.

**To do that, be sure to:**

- **Identify areas of need:** Conduct a needs assessment within your organization to determine what skills or requirements you might need from potential volunteers like graphic design, social media management, or grant writing.
- **Create detailed descriptions:** Post detailed listings that specify the skills you're looking for and outline how volunteers will contribute meaningfully.
- **Store volunteer data:** In order to continually recruit volunteers based on their skills, and offer volunteers a highly personalized experience, be sure to store details about each volunteer in a specific volunteer profile or database.

### 4. Tap Into Volunteer Incentives

Some people volunteer for the feeling of giving back to the community — whether the commitment is short-term or long-term. But, volunteers give back for plenty of other reasons, too, and in order to effectively recruit and engage volunteers long term, nonprofits have to understand these other incentives and what roles they play in convincing someone to volunteer.

According to research, other incentives typically revolve around socialization and skill-building: 35% of individuals volunteer to socialize, and a large percentage of individuals who regularly volunteer have a 27% higher chance of finding employment.

**To tap into both incentives, be sure to:**

- **Offer volunteer resumes:** For volunteers who want to use their volunteerism as a way to showcase their skills or community investment, offer them detailed and personalized volunteer resumes composed of personal volunteer data like hours worked, impact value, and more. These can be shared with employers.

- **Offer group volunteerism:** Allow volunteers to sign up as a group or individually within a new group so schools, clubs, or other community organizations can partake in creating impact action together.
- **Leverage impact reports:** Regardless of the incentive for the volunteer, be sure to collect each person's collective impact in a personalized impact report. This will show volunteers and/or their groups exactly what kind of impact they had on your mission and even directly on beneficiaries.

## 5. Use Smart, Time-Saving Tools

Nonprofits are resource-strapped. That means your volunteer program might just have one volunteer leader in charge of recruiting, engaging, and creating an entire volunteer base.

In order to alleviate this administrative burden and allow volunteer leaders to focus on what's most important — like connecting with volunteers — volunteer leaders should utilize:

- **Automated notifications:** Welcome a new volunteer, share a follow-up survey, prompt volunteer check-in, remind volunteers of an upcoming event, or communicate cancellations.
- **Simplified volunteer scheduling:** Instead of manually scheduling volunteers with an Excel spreadsheet, use technology. This will allow you to easily and simply set the number of volunteers needed for shifts, detail skills, prerequisites, and availability-based scheduling, and schedule remote, offsite, or multi-location volunteer opportunities.



## 6. Give Volunteers Autonomy

While the increase in informal volunteering and decline in formal volunteering might raise alarm bells for some nonprofits, it doesn't have to.

In fact, informal volunteering merely suggests that volunteers are looking for more autonomy when it comes to giving back — they want to be able to engage in ways that are on their own time, and of their own doing.

**To capitalize on this, nonprofits can do several things, including offering:**

- **Self-check-in processes:** Whether you have volunteers check in for a formal volunteer opportunity or want to empower volunteers to give back on their own, give volunteers the tools they need to succeed independently with self-check-in tools. Whenever a volunteer begins their efforts, they simply can “check in” their volunteer time, automatically tracking their hours.
- **A volunteer app:** Give volunteers access to a free downloadable app that they can access right on their phones to view opportunities, check in and out of shifts, and view their impact progress.

## 7. Make onboarding simple

Volunteers are busy. They don't have time to participate in an onboarding session that is complicated, disjointed, and long. To make this process as smooth as possible — and keep volunteers engaged and excited to continue — be sure to leverage things like:

- **Liability waivers:** Offer volunteers the ability to sign waivers online. Then, manage and track waivers in one place. You might even attach documents or volunteer waiver forms to an opportunity listing so volunteers have everything they need right from the get-go.
- **Standardized training:** Create reusable training modules, videos, and resources that can be easily accessed and completed by volunteers on their own time.

- **Centralized volunteer management:** Use a dedicated [volunteer management system](#) to consolidate applicant tracking, onboarding, scheduling, and communication in one place.

## 8. Engage Your Current Volunteer Base

Your current volunteers are often your best recruiters — they already know and care about your mission, making them great advocates. Engaging them not only boosts recruitment but also enhances retention, as volunteers feel valued and part of a community.

**To engage current volunteers in order to recruit new volunteers, be sure to:**

- **Encourage volunteers to share their experiences:** Empower your volunteers to share why they decided to get involved through testimonials, social media posts, or recruiting events.
- **Leverage their networks:** Ask your current volunteers to spread the word about open roles within their personal and professional networks. Offer incentives like referral bonuses or volunteer rewards for successfully recruited volunteers.
- **Develop ambassador programs:** Identify your most engaged volunteers and train them to be official volunteer representatives and advocates for your organization.
- **Highlight volunteer impact:** Showcase the meaningful work your volunteers do and the tangible difference they make through [volunteer program reports](#). This can inspire others to get involved.

## 9. Get to Know Your Volunteers

One of the best ways to recruit volunteers is to actually understand who they are and what they're looking for in opportunities. You also want to get a sense of where your volunteer program is making a few missteps.



### To do this, you might:

- **Collect regular feedback:** Connect with volunteers through surveys in order to understand volunteers' motivations, satisfaction levels, and ideas for improvement. This helps shape the volunteer experience.
- **Host volunteer forums to discuss ideas:** Volunteer forums provide an open platform for current volunteers to share their perspectives, provide input on programs/initiatives, and collaborate on solutions.
- **Invite volunteers to join planning committees:** Including volunteers on planning committees for upcoming projects gives them a direct role in shaping the organization's work.

## 10. Invest in Volunteer Appreciation and Retention

Appreciation is a crucial component of both volunteer recruitment and retention. People who feel valued are more likely to stay engaged and become ambassadors for your organization. Regularly recognizing and celebrating volunteers' contributions fosters loyalty and encourages long-term involvement.

### To do this, be sure to:

- **Award volunteers:** Recognize volunteers with custom, shareable badges based on pre-determined benchmarks. Volunteers should be able to share them with friends and family and even online easily.
- **Provide personalized thank-you notes and small gifts:** Handwritten thank-you notes, personalized cards, or small tokens of appreciation (e.g., mugs, keychains, pens) demonstrate that the organization values each volunteer's individual contributions. This personalized recognition can boost morale and make volunteers feel appreciated.

- **Offer professional development opportunities:** Providing training, workshops, or mentorship programs allows volunteers to build new skills and knowledge. This investment in volunteers' professional growth shows that the organization cares about their development, which can improve retention and engagement.

## 11. Showcase the Impact of Volunteering

Potential volunteers are more likely to get involved when they understand the tangible impact they'll have. By showcasing how their time and efforts will make a difference, you can create a compelling reason for them to commit to your cause.

**To do this, be sure to leverage:**

- **Volunteer impact reporting:** Regularly report on the measurable impact and value that volunteers provide to the organization. This can include statistics on volunteer hours contributed, funds raised, clients served, or other quantifiable outcomes. Sharing this information helps volunteers see the difference they are making and feel proud of their contributions.
- **Volunteer program reporting:** Provide comprehensive reporting on the overall volunteer program, including recruitment numbers, retention rates, volunteer feedback, and program improvements. This data-driven approach allows the organization to continuously optimize the volunteer experience and demonstrate the program's effectiveness to stakeholders.



# How Willamalane Park & Recreation District Tripled Their Volunteer Base

Willamalane Park and Recreation District is a vital force for the community of Springfield, Oregon and the surrounding areas. Willamalane oversees five recreation facilities and 46 parks and natural areas covering over 1,500 acres.

***Despite how important this nonprofit's work is, Willamalane struggled with volunteers.***

**Their volunteer program faced obstacles around:**

**Manual processes:** Willamalane used a slow, inefficient paper-based system for recruitment and management.

**Communication:** The nonprofit had limited ways to communicate with volunteers.

**Bandwidth:** A single volunteer coordinator struggled to manage hundreds of volunteers across multiple facilities.

**Volunteer retention:** Volunteers were leaving due to slow response times and lost paperwork.

**Data collection:** Willamalane had no easy way to track volunteer interest and availability

That's when Willamalane found Get Connected — the all-in-one volunteer management platform. Since partnering together, Willamalane has tripled its pool of registered volunteers, from 150 to 550 (and counting!).

[Learn more >](#)

# 3 Bringing Your Newest Strategies to Your Volunteer Program

Now that we’ve covered all of the top strategies for creating a robust, sustainable volunteer program, it’s time to assess where your current volunteer program stands — and how you can incorporate these strategies.

## How to Evaluate Your Current Volunteer Recruitment Strategy

### 1. Analyze Volunteer Data and Metrics

First, review key performance metrics such as the number of new volunteers recruited, retention rates, the average duration of volunteer commitments, and the conversion rate from interest to active engagement.

This data will give you a clear picture of how well your recruitment efforts are working, highlighting which strategies are effective and which need refinement.

### 2. Conduct a SWOT Analysis

A comprehensive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis provides a strategic overview of your recruitment approach, helping you plan future actions with a clear understanding of your internal and external environment.

This might include a table like:

Category	Factors	Details
Strengths	Community Network	Strong local connections and reputation
Weaknesses	Technology	Outdated volunteer management software
Opportunities	Flexibility	Development of remote volunteering options
Threats	Manual Communications & Engagement Methods	Increased need for quick responses to volunteer inquiries and ongoing communication with volunteers



### 3. Gather Volunteer Feedback

Direct feedback from volunteers provides valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of your recruitment process and can inform future strategies to attract and retain more volunteers. It will inform you as to which above strategies are necessary for you to implement, and which can be deprioritized.

#### **To do this, be sure to:**

- Conduct surveys, interviews, or focus groups with both current and former volunteers. Ask about their motivations, satisfaction levels, and any barriers they faced during the recruitment process.
- Include questions like “What made you decide to volunteer with us?” and “What could we have done to make the recruitment process better for you?”
- Use feedback forms after volunteer events to understand immediate impressions and gather suggestions for improvement.

### 4. Assess Your Messaging and Outreach Methods

Optimizing your messaging ensures you are clearly communicating your organization’s mission and the impact volunteers can make, while also identifying the most effective outreach channels.

- Review the language, tone, and visuals used in your volunteer recruitment materials, such as social media posts, flyers, and website content. Ensure that they are clear, engaging, and reflect the mission of your organization.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of each outreach channel (social media, email, community events, etc.). Analyze which platforms are bringing in the most new volunteers and which are underperforming.
- Conduct A/B testing with different messaging and imagery to determine what resonates most with your target audience.

## 5. Map the Volunteer Journey

Understanding the volunteer journey from start to finish will help you pinpoint where and why potential recruits lose interest, allowing you to make targeted improvements.

### To do this, try:

- Creating a visual map of the entire volunteer recruitment journey, from initial awareness to long-term engagement. Identify all touchpoints and interactions volunteers have with your organization during the recruitment phase.
- Analyzing each step for potential drop-off points. For example, is your sign-up form too long or confusing? Do volunteers feel supported when they express interest?
- Engaging volunteers in mapping this journey to get their input on pain points or areas where the experience can be improved.

## 6. Benchmark Against Other Organizations

Benchmarking can inspire new ideas and highlight opportunities for innovation or improvement in your recruitment strategy.

- Research and compare your recruitment strategy with other similar nonprofits. Look into their volunteer programs, messaging, and how they engage with their communities.
- Reach out to peer organizations to learn about best practices or participate in volunteer management groups to exchange ideas.
- Identify areas where your organization may be falling behind or excelling compared to industry standards.



## 7. Review Volunteer Roles and Opportunities

Ensuring your roles are attractive and varied can boost interest and engagement, helping you reach a wider pool of potential volunteers.

**When looking at your current recruitment strategy, be sure to:**

- Assess the variety and appeal of your volunteer roles. Are the roles flexible and meaningful, or do they require too much commitment for most people? Are there options for both short-term and long-term engagement?
- Review role descriptions to ensure they are detailed yet easy to understand, and align them with the interests of your target volunteer base.

## 8. Evaluate Your Onboarding and Training Process

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## 9. Consider your Technology and Tools

Most importantly, nonprofits need to assess whether they have the right tools to meet volunteer demands and address some of the most common issues. The right tech stack can help streamline every part of the volunteer management process and strategy — from recruitment to ongoing retention.

**To figure out if you have the right tech stack, be sure to ask yourself questions like:**

- Are we able to post and promote volunteer opportunities across multiple channels, including social media and email, to reach a broader audience?
- Do our tech tools provide targeted recruitment capabilities, allowing us to filter and match volunteers based on specific skills, interests, and availability?
- Are we able to automate communication with prospective volunteers, ensuring timely follow-ups, reminders, and personalized engagement?
- Can we access real-time data and reports on our recruitment efforts to track which strategies or channels are most effective at attracting volunteers?
- Does our volunteer management software offer a user-friendly experience for volunteers, from application to onboarding, making it easy for them to get involved?


## Recruiting, Engaging, and Retaining Volunteers with Get Connected

With volunteers more important than ever, nonprofits are in need of a tool that will do it all — personalize recruitment efforts, award and recognize volunteers, conduct surveys, and so much more.

**With Get Connected, nonprofits can handle every part of the volunteer journey:**

- **Recruitment:** Use opportunity promotion tools, marketing and engagement tools, simple scheduling and sign-up, and more.
- **Engagement:** Automatically recognize and reward top volunteers, survey them, and give them self-service apps for sign up and check in.
- **Retention:** Create an entire volunteer journey on one single platform so volunteers feel excited and empowered to continue to support your mission.





Learn more about how volunteer-focused technology supports today's recruitment trends. [Talk to a volunteer tech advisor about your program's recruitment needs >](#)

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