

Citizenship Volunteer Evaluations:

Ideas for Volunteer Coordinators and Staff

Performing a volunteer evaluation is an opportunity to reflect on the connection between a volunteer's experience and a program's effectiveness in supporting its volunteers. A volunteer's experience is often a strong indicator of the quality of a learner's experience. Gauging volunteer satisfaction through a questionnaire, or a person-to-person discussion, helps in evaluating whether or not a program is meeting its goals, serving its learners, and supporting volunteers.

Getting volunteer feedback can provide insight on:

- achievements and successes of volunteers and the learners they serve
- how volunteers feel about their experience
- ways to improve the volunteers' experience that will lead to greater volunteer retention and, in turn, improved learner outcomes
- program direction and goal-setting
- how to correct problems or barriers faced by volunteers

In addition, when volunteers participate in an evaluation process, it can increase their investment in the program and help them think in terms of its long-term viability and survival. It shows volunteers that their opinions or suggestions are valued and affirms the importance of the service they provide.

Ways to use the questionnaire:

The volunteer questionnaire is a template intended to be modified by each program according to its needs. Below are a few ways that it could be used. Your program may choose to use it in a variety of ways depending on its size, available staff time, and the role(s) of volunteers.

- **Ask volunteers to complete the questionnaire by mail or email.**
 - o One option is to send it 1 to 3 months after volunteers begin service. This allows any concerns to be addressed early on and may prevent future issues. It is also a good indicator of the effectiveness of the volunteer's orientation and training experience.
 - o Another option is to send it to all volunteers at the close of each program year, or at an interval in between. This provides an avenue for any lingering concerns to be addressed. The results can be compared with previous years to gain insight on how volunteers' experiences change. Also, the questions can be modified to reflect programmatic changes from year to year. This can be helpful when evaluating these changes as a whole or how they affect volunteers.
 - o It's important to follow up after the questionnaire is returned, unless it's done anonymously. Acknowledging a volunteer's feedback, and addressing any concerns that may have been expressed, can increase the volunteer's sense of belonging and commitment to your program.
- **Conduct check-ins or interviews with each volunteer.**
 - o Meeting with volunteers one-to-one can provide a meaningful way for them to express their positive experiences and share concerns. Relating directly with the volunteer in this way can strengthen his or her relationship with staff and investment in the program. The questionnaire can be used to interview volunteers about their experience or as a general outline for the discussion.