

COLLECTING VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

WHY GATHERING VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK MATTERS

Often the best experts on an organization's volunteer program are the volunteers themselves.

Administering an occasional volunteer feedback questionnaire can have several benefits. It can help the volunteer program managers know what's working and what needs improvement, and it gives volunteers a chance to reflect and check in on their experience.

Feedback from volunteers can be gathered at any time, but often collecting feedback is most effective when a milestone is reached (e.g., the end of the school year, completion of an event or project the volunteer has worked on, etc.).

When creating a volunteer feedback questionnaire, it's best to keep the form simple so that it can be filled out in 10–15 minutes. It's also a solid strategy to blend quantitative questions (ratings using a scale) with qualitative (open-ended) questions. Quantitative questions help you identify trends in the participants' responses while qualitative ones let you hear participants' thoughts in their own voices.

The questionnaire template provided is not anonymous. As a result, some volunteers might respond with what they think the organization wants to hear rather than what they really think. By removing a few questions that relate to a volunteer's specific experience, you can adapt the questionnaire into an anonymous form.

The activity only requires you to adapt the form. Afterward, you are encouraged to put it into action. Here are some tips for using the form in the field:

- Once you have gathered your raw data, put your responses into a spreadsheet and/or text document. Identify trends and key responses to include in a written summary to give to stakeholders involved in managing the organization's volunteer program. While the qualitative answers often provide a deeper perspective on the volunteers' thoughts, they also take more time to enter into a system. If that's an issue, you might create a questionnaire with just a few, meaningful open-ended questions.
- Another strategy in gathering feedback is to email participants with a link to a feedback form using an online tool like Survey Monkey or Google forms. This will save time in data entry, but not all volunteers have the level of technological comfort that an online questionnaire requires.

Activity Steps

Adapt the volunteer feedback form template to meet the needs of your volunteer program. Here are some considerations in adapting the form and completing the assignment:

- Ask these questions of yourself and others involved in the volunteer program: What is helpful for us to know from our volunteers? What areas do we most want to improve?

- Use your responses to the above questions to adapt the form. Feel free to add or remove questions and sections based on your answers.
- Who is our volunteer audience? This form is highly general, and you might word items differently and focus on different elements based on volunteers' age, background, or other factors.
- You may have to consult staff from your organization before finalizing your form.

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK FORM

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION HERE]

We need your ideas to help us improve our volunteer program. Please give us the benefit of your frank opinion in answering these questions. You may sign the form or remain anonymous, as you prefer. Please be sure to give your best answer for ALL questions on the form.

How long have you been volunteering with us?

Please describe briefly your volunteer assignment(s) here.

Would you like to make any changes in your volunteer responsibilities at this time? If so, please describe.

On average, how many hours do you spend per month volunteering with us?

Would you like to add or subtract hours from your current tasks? If so, in what way?

Do you want to establish an end point to your volunteer commitment? If so, what would be your preferred end date?

What are the main reasons you joined us as a volunteer?

What satisfaction are you receiving from your volunteer experience with us?

What are some of the main frustrations?

What do you see as some of the good things about this volunteer program?

What do you see as things that could be improved?

Please describe any suggestions you have on useful new roles volunteers might fill in this organization.

Thinking of your volunteer experience with this organization, please rate these factors on a scale of 0 to 5, with zero being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree."

- 0 1 2 3 4 5—Volunteers are adequately oriented and trained here.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—I feel accepted and supported by the staff.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—The level of recognition given to volunteers is appropriate.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—Volunteers are trusted to do important things.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—My work is contributing to the mission of the organization.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—My skills are valued and put to good use to benefit the organization.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—I am made to feel a part of the team in accomplishing the work of the organization.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—I am provided the resources and access to staff needed to complete my projects.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—I would recommend volunteering with this organization to my friends and family.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—I am pleased with the training and self-improvement opportunities available to me.
- 0 1 2 3 4 5—I receive regular, sufficient feedback on my performance in this volunteer position.

Any other comments you'd care to make would be appreciated. Use a second sheet if necessary.

Signature (optional): _____ Date: _____

Adapted from Greater Cleveland Community Shares. (n.d.) *Engaging for civic change: Volunteer program model* (pp. 37–38). Retrieved from Greater Cleveland Community Shares website: http://www.communityshares.org/eccc/EECC_Best_Practices_Manual.pdf