



Volunteer Fairs

Tips for nonprofit organizations

BloomingtonVolunteerNetwork.org

To a Volunteer Coordinator, recruiting new volunteers through a Volunteer Fair is one approach to the ongoing challenge of marketing and recruitment.

Before the Fair:

▼ **Decide what to recruit for.**

Many people like to start out by volunteering for a special event. If the timing is right, recruit for that event, while offering specific information about the range of volunteer opportunities in your organization.

▼ **Prepare a sign-up sheet.**

Always have a sign-up sheet ready for those wanting additional information and/or for those wanting to register for a particular event or training.

▼ **Prepare materials.**

While your primary focus is recruiting new volunteers, remember that you are engaging in outreach, education and public relations for your organization as a whole. You are also networking, promoting goodwill and possibly forging alliances with other nonprofit organizations. Have materials on hand that will help you respond to questions or comments and a notebook where booth staff, or the public, can write messages and questions that are then taken back to the organization.

▼ **Decide who will work the display booth.**

First, find out the fair's target audience. Then, choose one person who fits the demographic profile of that group and one person who is a staff member, a board member, a volunteer or a member of the client population. Both must be enthusiastic and interested in maximizing this opportunity for your organization. Try to have two people, at least for part of the time, so both will have the opportunity to visit the other booths and network with other volunteer managers.

▼ **Train and orient booth staff.**

Familiarize them with your materials. Help them to realize what questions they can and cannot answer – and what to do about those they cannot answer. Inform them of your organization's biggest barriers to recruiting and/or retaining volunteers and the general profile of the people who are attending the volunteer fair (e.g., high school students, people that shop in a particular location). Encourage them to interact and to count the number of people with whom they interact. You may want additional information as well. Make sure they know what time to be there, what to wear (if applicable), and where to park. Provide them with a nametag with their names and your organization's name, and ask them to wear it. Remind them of extras they might want (sunscreen, umbrella, jacket, bottled water, snacks).

▼ **Plan your display.**

When planning your display, think vertically if your display is inside and prepare to go horizontally if it is outside, due to wind. If outside, bring weights or bungee cords for your materials and clear plastic sheeting in case of drizzling. Use lots of photos of volunteers and events. Consider using inexpensive items or candy for giveaways. Always have a sign-up sheet.

City of Bloomington Volunteer Network

City Hall • 401 N. Morton St., Suite 260, Bloomington, IN 47404 • www.bloomington.in.gov/volunteer

hrs: 8am - 5pm Monday-Friday • ph. 812.349.3433 • fax 812.349.3483 • volunteer@bloomington.in.gov



When someone is coming your way:

- 🐦 Look interested and interesting. Don't let your body language say that you are bored or tired.
- 🐦 Don't read a book -- they won't interrupt you.
- 🐦 Make eye contact, even if you're talking with someone else. Bring the new person into the conversation.
- 🐦 Smile. Be polite and friendly. Initiate a conversation.
- 🐦 Ask them if they are familiar with your organization and its volunteer positions or if they have questions.
- 🐦 Ask them if they would like more information or to sign up for an upcoming event or training.

It is also important to:

- 🐦 Visit the other displays. If necessary, ask someone from a neighboring booth to booth-sit for you.
- 🐦 Arrive on time and stay for the duration.
- 🐦 Be ready if someone wants to volunteer! That's why you're there!
- 🐦 Meet the organizers. Thank them. Request that they give you a formal opportunity for feedback.

Bring:

- 🐦 Sign-up sheet
- 🐦 If fair is outside, weights, bungees, clear plastic sheeting
- 🐦 Display, materials (general materials about the organization, specific information about volunteer needs)
- 🐦 Notebook (to record number of interactions, questions, comments)
- 🐦 Giveaways, prizes
- 🐦 Nametags for volunteers
- 🐦 Two people, if possible
- 🐦 Incidentals (sunscreen, umbrella, jacket, bottled water, snack).
- 🐦 Other:

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