

Shur Fellow Guidance
October 2018
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Volunteer Recruitment

Election season is an exciting time for Leagues and the various activities such as voter registration drives, candidate forums, poll observing, and others are great opportunities to attract new volunteers. Ideally these volunteers will form a relationship with the League that will extend beyond election season and become more active engagers or members.

One of the steps towards becoming a more diverse, equitable and inclusive League is to observe the volunteers we are attracting. Who are they? Do they represent our community? If not, who else do we want to engage?

The Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project offers the following on [Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Base of Volunteers](#):

Utilize Community Leaders

If you decide to do outreach in a particular community, you will frequently find that there are formal and informal leaders who play an important role in the community.

Community leaders can be helpful in recruiting volunteers and helpers of color because they usually have two important resources: information and access.

They can tell you how to work within a community and give you advice on things such as community events to attend and social and cultural centers where people congregate.

They can make introductions between your organization and other organizations and groups of potential volunteers and helpers.

Remember, though, that most community leaders take on those positions because they have a history of looking out for the people in their communities. Thus, they will be much more likely to serve as a bridge between your organization and members of the community if they believe that you have a long-term commitment to becoming more inclusive in every aspect of your work. Consider asking people in your organization - including staff, board members, current volunteers, and clients - if they know community leaders and if they would be able to make an introduction between your organization and community leaders they know.

Communicate with Potential Volunteers

It is very important that you communicate with prospective volunteers in culturally appropriate ways. As you develop materials to give to prospects, be sure that the materials reflect your commitment to inclusiveness through the use of language and images. Also, try to avoid jargon.

For example, avoid statements such as, "Facilitate interviews between executives of the organization and community members who are interested in acquiring knowledge about volunteer opportunities with the organization."

Instead, say, "We're happy to set up a time to talk with you about what we do and how we can work together to do this important work."

Avoid being patronizing; rather, keep in mind that you're selling your organization to someone who doesn't know it very well and who will be making choices about how to use his or her time. Volunteer prospects will be more likely to have an interest in volunteering or helping if your organization appears accessible and if they think they will have a positive experience working with you.

If you're not sure how your materials are perceived by communities of color, then find people who can give you some insight into this important matter. Consider asking another nonprofit organization with more experience in inclusiveness issues to give you their perspective, or ask current volunteers or clients of color. Usually people generously provide feedback if they know that you are committed to following through on changes that need to be made.

Utilizing culturally relevant media channels to communicate with communities of color can be very beneficial to your outreach efforts as well.

For example, consider pitching stories to ethnic newspapers in your targeted community, especially if you can propose a story to highlight your organization's direct relevance to their readership. If you can get articles placed, be sure to emphasize that you are looking for volunteers and give people information on how to contact the organization.

Remember to give significant consideration to translation issues as you develop materials. Some organizations are anxious to produce materials in languages other than English. However, if an organization has no way of communicating with non-English speakers, then it may not be ready to recruit non-English speaking volunteers. Be sure that you have the organizational capacity to meet the needs of these volunteers before reaching out to non-English speakers.

Exercise/Brainstorm:

What are the benefits for individuals who volunteer with League? How do those resonate with different audiences? What are barriers to individuals volunteering?
