Model Volunteer Project

INFORMATIONAL SERIES NO. 4

INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVELY OPERATED VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

State of California

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MODEL VOLUNTEER PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

Model Volunteer Project staff, through extensive work with volunteer management in the California criminal justice system, have identified a number of program characteristics which seem to be associated with successful and effective programs of volunteer service. This publication summarizes these common characteristics or indicators. By providing such a measuring stick for volunteer management and by stating implicit guidelines for further program development, the Model Volunteer Project hopes to promote the growing effectiveness of volunteer services in the criminal justice system.

Managers of volunteer services may gauge the relative strengths and weaknesses of their programs by comparing individual program characteristics with the indicators explained in this publication. These indicators, collectively, describe the state of the art of volunteer management in criminal justice. By comparison, volunteer management may determine which program aspects need further development, for which areas management may congratulate itself and, in general, the current status of volunteer services as measured relative to an ideal program.

The following eight indicators are described in some detail:

1) Ongoing Planning
2) Goals, Objectives and Activities
3) Administrative Support
4) Program and Agency Staff
5) Funding
6) Program Activities
7) Community Support
8) Ongoing Evaluation

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ONGOING PLANNING

Planning is an essential and integral part of both agency and program activities, and is not simply a one-time affair. Planning is a continuous, ongoing process which constantly reflects and is responsive to new developments, new problems or solutions, and any relevant changes in the status of client, agency or community.

Elements of Ongoing Planning

1) Client, community and agency input:
It is essential that program planning be responsive to the needs of clients, agency, community and volunteers. These various elements must have free, meaningful access to the planning process to insure program support and the effectiveness of services provided to clients.

2) Identification and definition of the problem:
Problem identification can be one of the most delicate and demanding tasks in the planning process. Often symptoms are confused with the actual cause of a problem; solutions to a problem formulated in such a manner are inappropriate and generally ineffective. Upon reaching consensus on the nature of the problem, planners should clearly state the problem in writing to clarify their purpose for other parties involved in the planning process.

3) Statement of agency's goals and objectives:
Any program supported by an agency must be consistent with the goals and objectives of that agency. It is thus incumbent upon planners to be aware of agency goals and to reflect them in program plans. Agency goals and objectives should be stated in print for the information of all planners.

4) Statement of agency's goals and objectives for volunteer services:
Planners must be responsive to any goals and objectives developed by agency management for volunteer services within the agency. These goals and objectives delineate the expectations of volunteer services as defined from the perspective of agency management.

5) Identification of the available resources of the agency:
Resources provided by the agency such as funding, space, staff time, etc., are the raw materials from which an operational volunteer program will be generated. Consequently they are the raw materials with which planners will work, and should be carefully identified and defined.

6) Identification of alternative resolutions available to the agency:
By listing each possible solution to the problem and by carefully evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, planners may be relatively certain that their chosen solution is most expedient. Many ineffective programs have evolved from impulsive or careless planning.

7) Implementation plan:
A realistic implementation plan incorporates a specific time schedule for enaction of the program, and details both human and material resources which must be tapped. Although the implementation plan should be subscribed to rigorously, adequate provision for contingency is necessary.

8) Operational guidelines:
Operational guidelines delineate the procedures by which the program functions and also delegate responsibility for the operation of various program aspects. The development of operational guidelines requires considerable management expertise. Guidelines must be consistent with other agency practices and activities. See PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.

9) Monitoring, feedback, evaluation and modification:
Through responsible evaluation and analysis of relevant recorded data and feedback elicited from clients, staff and volunteers, corrective action and program improvements may be instituted with a maximum of efficacy. The evaluation loop, like planning, is an ongoing process. See ONGOING EVALUATION.

10) Recycling planning process:
Effective planning never ceases. New developments, new problems and new solutions continually arise. Effective adaptation to these new conditions means not only survival but, more importantly, success.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Every program of volunteer services has goals. However, written statements of goals have not been developed for some programs; they are consequently vaguely or incorrectly perceived, resulting in a lack of clearly defined program focus. To clarify the purpose of volunteer services, to insure smooth program operation, and to provide a gauge for the measurement of progress, planners should develop carefully written statements of goals, objectives and activities.

Goals are achieved by objectives. Activities achieve objectives. The following examples illustrate these differences:

> a sample goal: to encourage appreciation of each individual's uniqueness through interaction of wards and staff with volunteers from diverse social and cultural environments.
>
> a sample objective: to recruit, screen, train and assign fifty volunteers during the first twelve months of the operational volunteer program. These volunteers shall be representative of the ethnic/cultural composition of the community surrounding the institution.
>
> a sample activity: to arrange meetings with six local service organizations of specific ethnic composition/inclination during the first two months of the program, for the purpose of recruiting volunteers.

Elements of Goals

1) Goals are consistent with the identified needs of client, agency and community:
Goals which are not responsive to the problem or are not consistent with agency goals and objectives preordain failure. The appropriateness of goal statements is planners' top priority.

2) Goals are written and prioritized:
To avoid vagueness and consequently to clarify the purpose of volunteer services, goals should be stated in print. By listing goals in order of decreasing importance or significance, goal priorities are immediately evident.

3) Goals are accessible to clients, staff, volunteers and the community:
Goals which are not publicized and are thus unknown are useless. Statements of goals which are posted and distributed in memoranda, brochures or other printed materials insure widespread awareness of the purpose and value of volunteer services.

4) Goals are actively pursued:
It is self-evident that goals which are not pursued are meaningless.

Elements of Objectives

1) Objectives possess all qualities of goals:
Objectives are components of goals and, as such, share all the characteristics of goals. Objectives are consistent with identified needs, written and prioritized, accessible and actively pursued.

2) Objectives are specific:
Objectives describe a precise state of affairs. The specificity of objectives provides a yardstick by which progress may be measured. Example: "to recruit, screen, train and assign fifty volunteers. . ."

3) Objectives are measurable:
By measuring progress toward achievement of objectives, progress toward goal achievement is determined. The ability to measure progress enables management to institute corrective modifications or other program improvements.

4) Objectives are related to a specific time frame:
A deadline is necessary not only to encourage the desired progress in achieving objectives, but also to measure that progress. Example: "to recruit, screen, train and assign fifty volunteers during the first twelve months. . ."

5) Objectives are results-oriented:
Objectives describe the specific results which are required to achieve that objective and are consequently necessary to attain a certain goal. Goal statements likewise describe results, but in a less specific manner.

6) Objectives are realistic:
Unattainable or irrelevant objectives preclude goal achievement.

Elements of Activities

1) Activities possess all qualities of objectives and goals:
Activities are components of objectives and, as such, share all the characteristics of both objectives and goals. Activities are consistent with identified needs, written and prioritized, accessible and actively pursued. They are specific, measurable and realistic statements which are results-oriented and related to a specific time frame.

2) Activities are discrete and specific actions:
An integrated set of activities describes the action necessary to achieve an objective. An activity is one specific, discrete action. Example: objective--"to train fifty volunteers during the first month. . ."; activity--"to develop a volunteer orientation manual" by a specified date.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Volunteer services operating within an agency depend on that agency not only for fiscal needs but also for more intangible forms of support, including general agency philosophy, policies, and program staffing. A volunteer program that finds resistance or a lack of commitment in its agency's policies is severely limited.

Elements of Administrative Support

1) A statement of agency philosophy supportive of volunteer services:
Such a written statement commits the human and material resources of the agency to volunteer services, while asserting its general orientation to unpaid staff: namely, that volunteer services are a valuable, integral part of agency operations and are to receive appropriate support. A supportive philosophy statment, in addition to committing resources, provides considerable impetus to volunteer motivation and enhances relationships of volunteers with staff members. To be effective and meaningful, a philosophy statement must be written, known and practiced.

2) Procedural policies consistent with agency philosophy:
Agency policies relating to volunteer services must be written, known and practiced. They should delegate responsibility for program support by providing the leadership which:

a) supports volunteer services by providing time, attention and guidance. Volunteer management does not exist in a vacuum and requires responsible advice and direction.

b) provides material support: budget, space and services. Physical needs of the program must be met; material support should be on a level comparable to that received by other components of the agency. See FUNDING.

c) facilitates and encourages active staff involvement and cooperation. The participation and support of other agency staff is essential for the integration of volunteer services within the agency. This cooperation should be enabled by agency policy and actively encouraged by appropriate staff.

3) Assignment of paid personnel specifically responsible for volunteer services:
Volunteer management is equivalent in complexity to other management-level responsibilities. The success of a program managed in a slipshod manner is unlikely; administrators of volunteer services should therefore be managerially skilled and held accountable for program operation. See PROGRAM STAFFING.

4) Provision for staff and volunteer motivation and incentives:
The greatest incentive for persons involved in volunteer services is the opportunity to provide meaningful service in a well-run program. There are other motivators, however, which should not be overlooked. Management should create opportunities for recognition of volunteers and staff involved in the program (news articles, certificates of appreciation, letters of commendation, etc.). Training likewise is a powerful motivator for many volunteers, and enhances the quality of their services. The opportunity to take part in planning program activity is a further incentive for staff and volunteers, which encourages program support.

PROGRAM AND AGENCY STAFF

Volunteer services are, ideally, an integral part of agency activities. They should therefore be structured in the agency as one of the variety of alternatives available as resources to paid staff and clients. As a resource on a level consistent with other treatment modalities, volunteer services may be utilized either exclusively or in conjunction with other treatment alternatives. Several factors relating to program and agency staffing indicate this consistency of volunteer services with other treatment alternatives and the consequent integration of volunteer services and agency activities.

Elements of Program Staffing

1) Volunteer utilization expectation:
Job descriptions for agency staff should list the utilization of extra-agency resources, including volunteers, as a condition of employment. The use of volunteers in case services will thereby be an expectation of all staff.

2) Evaluation of staff utilization of volunteers:
Regular evaluation of staff performance should include consideration of the creative use of outside resources and unpaid staff. See PROGRAM ACTIVITIES and ONGOING EVALUATION.

3) Classification of volunteer services management:
Paid and unpaid staff responsible for management of volunteer services are, ideally, classified at levels that are comparable to those of other agency management positions and are consistent with necessary qualifications and experience, the required levels of responsibility and accountability, and the relationships with other agency staff involved. The following management hierarchy is characteristic of large programs and would apply selectively to smaller, simpler programs:

a) Director of Volunteer Services - directly accountable to the chief administrator of the agency, the Director is responsible for planning, budgeting, staff training, evaluation and supervision of other volunteer services managers.

b) Program Managers - classified at a supervisory level and supervised by the Director, the Program Manager plans and implements specialized volunteer activities or programs such as RSVP, student internships, etc.

c) Volunteer Coordinator - accountable to the Director, the Volunteer Coordinator develops resources and provides volunteers to the Program Managers. The Coordinator is

responsible for recruiting, screening, orientation, training, placement and collection of relevant data.

d) Volunteer Services Specialists - line staff designated Volunteer Services Specialists serve as resources to other line staff in addition to performing their regular duties. They advise and train their peers regarding volunteer utilization, and are accountable both to their supervisors and to the Program Manager.

FUNDING

Volunteers may work without pay, but the support of their services requires money. To be consistent with agency philosophy and policy, material program needs should be met with consideration of the dignity and value of the staff and volunteers involved. Funded elements include Personnel, Supplies, Training and Reimbursement.

Elements of Personnel Funding

1) Paid manager(s) specifically responsible for volunteer services:
Whether the position of volunteer services manager or director is full- or part-time is dependent upon the size and complexity of the program; in many cases more than one manager is necessary. Managers should receive appropriate salaries which are consistent with the required levels of responsibility. See PROGRAM AND AGENCY STAFF.

2) An even ratio of clerical staff to managerial staff:
For each full-time volunteer manager, one full-time clerical position should be funded. Clerical support consistent with required managerial responsibility is essential.

3) Commitment of supervisor's time:
The volunteer services manager will require advice, guidance and direction from his supervisor. A percentage of that supervisor's time to be devoted to volunteer services should be specified by the agency.

4) Supportive services of other agency staff:
The services of other agency staff members, such as training officers and extra clerical help, will sometimes be needed by the program manager. Agency policy and budget should provide for these needs.

Elements of Supplies, Training and Reimbursement Funding

1) Hard supplies:
Hard supplies include office furniture and equipment such as desks, typewriters, filing cabinets - the obvious needs of any office. Paper, envelopes and postage needs require adequate funding as do the printing of volunteer training materials and the brochures, flyers and posters necessary for recruitment and general public relations.

2) Soft supplies:
Soft supply funding provides for such seeming incidentals as coffee funds, meals for volunteers working in institutions and other miscellanea important for smooth program operation and volunteer satisfaction.

3) Training opportunities:
Funds should be available to finance volunteers' attendance of relevant workshops or conferences, and for occasional extra-agency trainers. Additionally training for volunteer management and staff training in volunteer utilization may occasionally be available outside the agency. See PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.

4) Volunteer reimbursement:
Volunteers work without pay; it therefore behooves the agency at least to reimburse such incidental expenses as auto mileage accrued in the performance of volunteer activities and specified out-of-pocket expenses incurred on the job. The lack of volunteer reimbursement can discourage persons characterized as "low-income" or "disadvantaged" from volunteering, even though their services may be most relevant to work in the criminal justice system. In some cases (low-income, retired or student volunteers), the agency may wish to provide a partial subsistence stipend. The option to deduct expenses from income tax in lieu of accepting reimbursement may be left to the volunteer.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Established guidelines and procedures standardize program activities and make expectations known to all staff. The development of these program management procedures and guidelines for staff involvement with volunteers requires considerable forethought and managerial expertise. These guidelines and procedures must be written, known and practiced.

Elements of Guidelines for Staff Utilization of Volunteers

1) Training in the utilization and supervision of volunteers:
All agency staff who involve the services of volunteers require adequate training in volunteer utilization and supervision, to insure the effective use of volunteer services. Such training may be provided by the agency training officer, by volunteer management, or by an extra-agency trainer.

2) Established procedures for volunteer request and referral:
Staff involving volunteers should subscribe to established procedures for requesting volunteers. These procedures should be written and detailed, and entail the approval of the staff member's supervisor and/or the volunteer management.

3) Preparation of clients to work with volunteers:
It is the responsibility of staff members involving volunteers to prepare their clients for work with volunteers. Staff should inform clients of what they may expect from volunteers, and what may be expected of clients.

4) Responsibility for volunteer supervision:
Staff responsible for the daily supervision of volunteers working with their clients should therefore be accountable for volunteer work done under their supervision.

5) On-the-job training for volunteers:
Agency staff should not only orient volunteers prior to the initial contact of a volunteer with a client, but should also provide on-the-job training relevant to the volunteer's duties.

6) Participation in evaluation of volunteers' services:
Feedback from staff is a primary source of information by which to evaluate the performance of volunteers. The active participation of staff in this process is essential for definitive evaluation.

7) Evaluation of staff involvement with volunteers:
Staff should be periodically evaluated on their supervision of volunteers by their supervisor and/or volunteer management and by clients. Staff should contribute to this evaluation and be responsive to the consequent feedback.

Elements of Program Management Procedures

1) Volunteer job descriptions:
Written and specific descriptions of volunteer jobs available to the public, to agency staff and to clients should identify all expectations from the perspectives of client, volunteer, staff and management. A well-written job description which is adhered to by all parties can solve many problems before they develop.

2) Recruitment:
Recruiting methods based on specific objectives are designed to select volunteers whose skills are most appropriate to available jobs. Media advertisements, printed recruiting material, speeches, etc., should reflect this selectivity. Recruiters should be sufficiently flexible, however, to find or create functions for volunteers with unique and relevant skills.

3) Screening:
Screening criteria based on specific objectives are designed to maintain the quality of volunteer services. However, the following considerations should not be overlooked:

a) considerate screening - those responsible for screening should be considerate of individual feelings and needs. Through selective recruiting, referrals to other agencies and opportunities for self-screening, candidates who are not accepted may maintain dignity.

b) unique volunteer skills - some potential volunteers may have highly valuable and unique skills which, although not appropriate for available jobs, may nonetheless be utilized effectively.

c) evaluation - the effectiveness and appropriateness of screening criteria and objectives should be periodically evaluated, and indicated changes instituted.

4) Orientation and training:
Adequate initial orientation and ongoing training programs based on specific learning objectives are designed to outfit volunteers with the skills needed to perform their jobs.

a) self-screening - potential volunteers should not be officially enlisted prior to orientation in order to allow opportunities for graceful self-screening, should candidates decide on the basis of orientation that they do not wish to volunteer.

b) extra-agency training - volunteer management should be aware of extra-agency training opportunities relevant to volunteers, and should make these opportunities available to volunteers.

c) library - ideally, a library of material relevant to volunteer needs is to be maintained. Such a library is also useful to staff involving volunteers.

d) evaluation - the appropriateness of learning objectives and the effectiveness of orientation and training programs should be evaluated periodically.

5) Matching and placement:
Criteria for matching or placement should be based on specific objectives. Matching may be based on intuition or on some objective criterion such as personality testing, availability or area of residence. Regardless of the criteria employed, the effectiveness of matching or placement should be evaluated by means of its impact on the client, the community and/or the agency, whichever may be appropriate.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Volunteer services rely upon the participation and supportive resources of the community. Additionally, agency support and cooperation with other agencies serving the community will enhance the effectiveness of volunteer services. These elements can, in the long run, determine the success or failure of a program.

Elements of Community Support

1) Agency support:
Agency staff should maintain a high level of awareness of community resources and needs, and actively share this information. Such awareness facilitates the capacities of volunteer services and the agency as a whole to utilize available resources and to satisfy community needs. Agency staff, by attending volunteer orientation and training sessions, will improve their working relationships with unpaid staff. See ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT.

2) Inter-agency cooperation:
The cooperation of agencies serving the same community can stimulate innovative efforts, avoid the duplication services, and enhance the general quality of services provided by each agency. Elements of such cooperation include:

a) policy of cooperation - mutually approved written policy which states the needs for and the support of inter-agency cooperation will formalize inter-agency ties.

b) staff involvement - when appropriate, staff members may be freed or assigned to work with other agencies in capacities such as board or committee members.

c) contractual agreements for services - management should not hesitate to contract with other agencies for needed services such as recruitment or training. Formal contracts are efficient, managerially sound, and indicate a firm commitment to inter-agency cooperation.

d) sharing of resources and information - the free interchange of information and the sharing of resources such as volunteer pools and funding sources should be maintained for mutual benefit.

e) joint planning - by collaborating in both long- and short-term planning, agencies may avoid duplicative efforts and improve the quality of overall services.

3) Direct community support:
Sufficient volunteer participation is most indicative of the level of community support; accurate and supportive media coverage of program needs and activities is also conducive to support from the community. Additionally, volunteer management may initiate the formation of an advisory board or committee as a forum by which to communicate both agency and community needs.

ONGOING EVALUATION

Evaluation is the foundation of program improvements. To be responsive to changing situations and to correct problem areas, management must evaluate and respond to consequent feedback. Evaluation, like planning, is an ongoing process. As volunteer services are an integral part of agency activities, any agency-wide evaluation will include consideration of the effectiveness and efficiency of volunteer services.

Elements of Ongoing Evaluation

1) Volunteer services record-keeping and monitoring system:
As a basis for accurate evaluation of the efficiency of program operation, adequate systems and procedures for record-keeping should be maintained. Such systems record the following information:

a) current totals of the number of active volunteers, the number of hours of service provided, and the costs of the program to date

b) complete files for each volunteer, consisting of applications, lists of hours served, placement information, jobs performed, etc.

c) the numbers, types and current status of volunteer requests and referrals

d) the current volunteer turnover rate, listings of reasons for the non-completion of any volunteer assignments, and listings of the numbers of volunteers successfully completing their assignments

e) the current average time lapse from volunteer recruitment through interview, orientation and training to final assignment

f) an indication of the accuracy and timeliness of reports

2) Quarterly evaluations of progress toward goals of volunteer services and the agency:
The purpose of volunteer services is defined by its goals and objectives as well as by the goals and objectives of the agency; progress toward these goals and objectives is a measure of the effectiveness of volunteer services. The means by which effectiveness is evaluated may be either subjective or objective, but should, generally, evaluate the impact of volunteer services on clients, the community, volunteers, paid staff and the agency itself.

a) subjective means to measure progress - by ascertaining the reactions of clients, volunteers, staff and the community in general to volunteer services, management may make inferences regarding the effectiveness of volunteer services.

b) objective indicators of effectiveness - evaluators should measure behavioral changes in clients, clients' successes or failures in finding and keeping employment, and requests for services by clients or their referrals of other clients to volunteer services. Some inferences based on recidivism statistics may be significant.

3) Reaction to evaluation:
Evaluation without action is pointless. The raw data obtained through evaluation should be analyzed by those responsible, and corrective action or other modifications should be planned, implemented and evaluated.

END