

## Pre-Recruitment Strategies

In order to be successful in recruiting the right people for the right job at the right time, there are two questions to ask before you begin the recruitment process.

1. **WHY** are we recruiting?
2. **WHO** are we recruiting?

Asking yourself these questions will prepare you to focus your recruitment efforts and spend your time wisely.

### Why?

Conduct an assessment to determine the needs of your C.O.P. group. This will help you answer the question “Why?”

1. Take a look at the needs of your community, your municipality’s responsibilities and law enforcement responsibilities.
2. Then take a look at your group and its existing membership. What are its capabilities?
3. Does your group’s capabilities meet the needs identified?
4. If not, then this is the need.
5. Focus your recruitment efforts to address that need.

When conducting your assessment, look beyond the traditional “law enforcement” perspective. Many other roles not only contribute to Citizens on Patrol program’s broader mission through better administration and logistical support, they can also enhance response capabilities, inspection programs and public education activities. This approach puts to use the rich resources that are available in your community.

Members of your community rely on the C.O.P. group to help them; they can do the same for you. There are many individuals in the community that, while not able to commit to long-term volunteerism, may want to share skills and knowledge that can be useful to the recruitment and retention program.

Create a list of individuals in your community that could help with short-term tasks. This list is limitless, but may include:

- Human resource professionals to develop or review your policies and related documentation and processes,
- Members of the media, graphic designers, printers for marketing and communication strategies,
- Other organizations within your mutual aid system to share documents, information and costs,
- Local volunteer centers, employment centers and other community groups to share their recruitment and retention information and;
- Local employers to pursue employer supported volunteerism.

- In order to draw from these resources, it is important to develop positive and collaborative relationships and maintain regular communications. Demonstrate the value and benefits of becoming involved with the Citizens on Patrol program and encourage their contributions to the community. Most importantly, remember to thank them for their efforts personally and publicly.

### **Who?**

In order to answer this question, you may need to know and understand the availability and characteristics of potential volunteers in your community. You also need to know some facts about volunteers in general. Completing a profile of your community will help you define the composition of your community and those most likely to volunteer. It can also provide insight regarding your group's success in attracting, using that potential and maintaining commitment from your volunteers.

Consider the expectations of your group regarding hours. The average number of volunteer hours contributed annually range from 139 to 245. How many hours is the average volunteer expected to contribute to your group? If you patrol once per week for 3 hours, that's 156 hours annually. This doesn't include expectations for calls, public education events or other requirements. Are there individuals in your community who can commit to those requirements? How can your C.O.P. group assist members to meet these expectations?

This information about the members of your community will assist you to successfully recruit for volunteers that will meet both the program needs for specific roles and the community's need to connect and collaborate for the common good. You can also conduct a profile of the employers in the community to identify potential employers that may support volunteerism and assist members to be able to meet time commitments.

### **Recruitment Strategies**

Volunteer recruitment is a necessary component of any community-based program. In today's economy it is becoming increasingly difficult to compete for individuals who want to volunteer their time. Recruiters need to be creative and determined in their pursuit of quality volunteers. No matter what recruitment method is used, the message must be compelling and convey to the audience that the opportunity is well worth their efforts.

Create a volunteer recruitment plan:

- Set realistic goals and timeframes.
- Know the role of your organization.
- Know the demographics of your targeted recruitment area.
- Evaluate the progress of the recruitment plan periodically.
- Be flexible. Recruitment needs often change for an organization.
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Organize a volunteer recruitment committee:

- Include advocate and non-advocate volunteers that are passionate about the C.O.P. mission.
- Diversify the committee to reflect the population served.
- Educate the committee on public speaking and recruitment ideas.
- Provide incentives for volunteers.
- Recognize the committee for a job well done.

## **12 creative ways to step up volunteer recruitment**

1. Call your local utility company, bank, car dealership, etc. and request they donate space at the bottom of their monthly statement for a volunteer recruitment ad.
2. Host a C.O.P. gathering or social event where the cost of admission is bringing one potential new C.O.P. volunteer.
3. Ask a local flower shop to insert a brochure with all the flowers delivered on Valentine's Day or Mother's Day, the two biggest delivery days of the year.
4. Ask your local newspaper to interview a C.O.P. volunteer. This allows readers to more easily relate to the C.O.P. cause.
5. Call your local school and request permission to place an ad in the parent newsletter.
6. Ask a local sports association to advertise the C.O.P. program on an outfield billboard or scoreboard.
7. Request that volunteer recruitment ads be posted in church bulletins.
8. Request that volunteer recruitment ads be posted in the menus of local restaurants.
9. Sponsor a youth sports team. A C.O.P. logo brings a lot of attention at sporting events.
10. Negotiate an opportunity for current C.O.P. volunteers to work a concession stand at a local event. Word of mouth is a great recruitment tool.
11. Create a social networking fan page on a site such as Facebook or Twitter.
12. Create a website for your C.O.P. program and keep it up to date with activities and announcements.

## **Speaking to Community Groups**

One of the best methods for recruitment is to arrange presentations to local clubs and other groups. Such presentations can serve both to inform the public about what your organization does and to recruit new volunteers.

Deliberately select the groups before whom you wish to speak. There are two types who are most helpful: those groups whose membership regularly participates in helping out in the community (Rotary, service clubs, etc), and those groups whose membership as individuals are likely to have a common interest with your cause. Schedule these types of groups first.

In seeking entry to speak to the group, consider going through a group member. The member can serve as your authenticator to his/her peer group, paving your way to a more receptive audience. They can also make it more likely that you will be invited to speak.

Try to time your speaking to meet with the group's processes and your needs. Find out what other projects the group is already committed to and time your talk to coincide with their need to develop a new project. Determine how much lead-time they need and make sure that your request is not too precipitous for them to meet.

Pick your presenters carefully. Make sure the person who is speaking can explain what your agency does and exactly what is needed from the group. Consider sending a volunteer who can speak forcefully about the worth of the effort.

If possible, utilize a visual presentation, with slides, pictures, etc. If your presentation is boring, the group may assume that your jobs will be too.

Be prepared for people to offer their services. Take along brochures, application forms, etc. If someone expresses interest, don't leave without their name and phone number, and commit yourself to following up with them. Follow-up as quickly as possible.

Remember that at some point during your presentation you should directly and unequivocally ask the audience to volunteer. Very few people will insist on volunteering for your program without being asked to do so.

An annual recruitment and retention plan is a cyclic, ongoing process that will assist you in planning and focusing your efforts. It should be a logical consideration of the time of the year, changing commitments throughout the seasons, weather, and psychological impact of seasons, milestones in the group, annual events and other trends. This will prevent you from coming up short in membership by not having good candidates to replace those leaving.

When you recruit, you will need to clearly communicate how volunteering with Citizens on Patrol addresses the needs of the community and of the individual. For instance, demonstrate how the Citizens on Patrol program allows people to contribute to the community. Explain how the diverse roles in the program provide opportunity to use their skills and experience.

Interactive	Media	Networks & Other Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action displays</li> <li>• Open houses</li> <li>• Public venues</li> <li>• Word of mouth</li> <li>• TV interviews</li> <li>• Membership drives</li> <li>• Person to person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web pages and email</li> <li>• Media (radio, print, TV)</li> <li>• Signs, brochures, flyers</li> <li>• Bill boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Province wide websites and networks such as those of the provincial partners ie) the COPP website, MPI website, law enforcement agency website.</li> <li>• Pre-law enforcement classes</li> <li>• Youth and School Volunteers</li> <li>• Employer Supported Volunteerism</li> </ul>

### Reflect Your Community

Involving employees that work in your community, youth, older adults, families, individuals with disabilities and various ethnic groups offers many mutual benefits. The individuals are provided with opportunities to develop skills, gain knowledge and contribute to their community in a meaningful way. The C.O.P. group benefits by having a diverse and vibrant fund of resources, knowledge, skills and perspectives that reflect the community which in turn, further strengthens the group.

### Retention Strategies

*“We the willing, led by the unknowing  
Are doing the impossible, for the ungrateful.  
We have done so much, for so long, with so little,  
We are now qualified to do anything, with nothing.”  
Anonymous*

Recruiting and training new volunteers is just the beginning. The long-term challenge will be to create an environment in which individuals want to stay because they continue to be motivated, interested, challenged and supported as valued members of the team.

### Leadership

The tools and templates in this resource provide you with some basic leadership practices that support retention efforts. They are not intended to replace the need to develop leadership practices and operating guidelines on a broader scale.

By being a proactive, involved and present leader you can put a different meaning to the above quote.

Motivate your volunteers, and they will *be willing*. Lead them to achieve your group mission and goals and you will *be knowing*. Train and challenge them to make tasks *possible*. Recognize their efforts and show you are *grateful*. Give them responsibility and provide them with the tools to do the tasks. This way they

can be *qualified to do everything, to the best of their ability.*

### **Empowerment, Involvement and Delegation**

If you have ever attended a session in stress, time or quality management, you may have heard of the Pareto Principle, or the 80/20 Principle. In many volunteer organizations, this principle is applied in two ways.

Often coordinators feel that they spend 80% of their time completing 20% of the tasks. Unfortunately, it is often those tasks that they feel are not the most important, or are tedious, or they spend their time running from one crisis to another. This may lead to frustration.

Another application of this principle that may be seen by your group is the perception that 80% of the work is only done by 20% of the people. Again, this may lead to frustration. In some cases frustration from the 20% who are perceived as doing the work, and in some cases, frustration from others who would like to be more involved but who haven't been given the opportunity.

There are several positive and proactive ways to tip the balance on this principle. If you have conducted a needs assessment for your group during pre-recruitment planning, you have already begun to identify tasks and roles that need to be filled in order to further enhance the efforts of the C.O.P. group. Look within your group to determine if any willing individuals have the skills and knowledge required to complete the tasks. If not, look externally and recruit for that purpose.

Once you have identified the tasks and the individuals assigned, then delegate the work, ensuring that you are communicating relevant expectations, timelines, authority and accountability.

In this way, you can distribute the work so that each member is contributing in a meaningful way to the goals of the group, and that each member is accountable for his or her part in achieving those results.

By tipping the balance, you have met a number of needs. You, as the leader, can focus your attention to the tasks that are most imperative. Members who may have felt they were in the 20% doing 80% of the work might feel relief. Members, who wished to be more involved, are more involved.

An aspect of volunteer management that is just as important as recruitment, but which often gets overlooked, is volunteer retention. A successful volunteer program builds a loyal cadre of individuals who, in the end, will not only provide a valuable service, but will do more for recruitment, either intentionally or accidentally, than staff ever will. Conversely, a dissatisfied volunteer could adversely affect your recruitment program.

Volunteering does not earn money and rarely provides significant prestige (the exception being volunteer board membership), but it has a powerful appeal to certain individuals nonetheless. Individuals start a volunteer job motivated by their *belief* in a

cause and their *desire* to help. A nonprofit program allows them to *act* on those beliefs. So long as the individuals see *positive results*, their beliefs will compel them to return week after week, year after year. The organization's staff must be sure to nurture the individual's inborn motivation.

In a small organization, the director of volunteers must double as the human resource manager. Does your C.O.P. group reward hard work?

### **Suggestions for Retaining Volunteers**

1. Be consistent and sincere in your expectations. Volunteers (as well as anyone) will perform better when they know what to expect, what deadlines they have to meet, who their supervisor is, etc.
2. Be receptive to new ideas and ways of doing things. You don't have to implement them, but you should at least be willing to listen to them.
3. Take every opportunity to applaud competence, punctuality, and all the other things you value. Saying "Thank you", "Good job", or "I really appreciate you coming out here/doing X on such short notice" costs nothing, but it goes a long way. At least once a year, go out of your way to recognize volunteers by holding a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner or a similar activity.
4. As volunteers prove their capabilities, give them added responsibility. Make, however, sure not to overwhelm them, or task them with more than can be reasonably expected to fulfill in the amount of time they have.
5. As much as possible, make work fun. Vary tasks, have background music, let volunteers work together, serve cookies during break. Remember that volunteers are doing this on *their own time*, and be considerate to that.
6. Use discretion. Do not criticize a volunteer in front of his or her peers. However, don't shy away from constructive criticism. Volunteers deserve as much courtesy and consideration as employees do.

Some of the information provided in this document is courtesy of the Ontario Office of the Fire Marshall, "Guidelines for Volunteer Recruitment and Retention: Strategies and Tools for a Successful Program".

For additional information on volunteer recruitment and retention, please visit [www.ofm.gov.on.ca](http://www.ofm.gov.on.ca)