An A-to-Z of Best Practices:

Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Volunteers for Large Group Processing Workshops

- Ask participants who come to a workshop for naturalization assistance to volunteer at the next one.
- Buy permanent name tags for regular or long-term volunteers.
- Centralize your collaboration’s volunteer database via Google docs.
- Develop a media recognition strategy to honor volunteers.
- Establish relationships with local professors at community colleges and other schools. Ask professors to give extra credit for volunteering.
- Feed your volunteers well.
- Find a corporate sponsor to cover the costs of acknowledgement/recognition materials.
- Give a volunteer the job of creating and keeping a centralized volunteer database and acting as volunteer coordinator.
- Hire a collaboration-wide volunteer recruitment coordinator (e.g., from AmeriCorps).
- Invite each month’s the 5 most active volunteers to a monthly dinner.
- Joint schedules of workshops and events across your collaboration and let volunteers see all upcoming local events and sign up for the ones that fit their schedule best.
- Keep volunteers in the loop: for BIA accredited organizations, let a volunteer know when someone they helped becomes a citizen.
- Learning and leadership opportunities: Inspire volunteers to keep coming back by assigning them to different roles and empowering them to work their way up to volunteer leader.
- Make exclusive t-shirts that are ONLY available to volunteers; not even staff or leadership can get them unless they volunteer.
- Network through local Bar associations and tap into corporate law firms’ pro bono work.
- Offer CLE for non-immigration attorneys and proof of pro-bono work for all volunteer attorneys.
- Partner with local law schools; offer internships or credits to law students.
- Quickly provide positive reinforcement to volunteers and help them get better at their assigned task so they feel empowered to keep volunteering.
- Recruit high school students who need community service hours to help with set-up, childcare, administrative tasks.
- Request elected officials your collaboration partners to give commendations to volunteers and volunteer attorneys.
- Select a community-based honorary advisory board for the NAC with a minimum time commitment.
- Standardize the training process across your collaboration and use the same training tools and content.
- Survey your volunteers about what they need to keep coming back.
- Take the time to show your volunteers love and developing personal connections at events.
- Use social media to build an online volunteer community: create a Facebook page, upload and tag pictures.
- Write and distribute a quarterly volunteer newsletter highlighting recent events and publishing a calendar of upcoming volunteer opportunities.
- eXtend invitations to volunteer recognition event to people the volunteers helped become citizens, so they see their fruit of their labor.
- Yearly celebration where volunteers can meet one another and share stories – and encourage them to bring 3 people (new volunteers!) with them.
- Zillions and zillions of thank-yous from staff!!!