

A Conversation With A Purpose



**A practical guide to interviewing
prospective volunteers**

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Welcome to “A Conversation With A Purpose”, a guide to interviewing prospective volunteers. As you read through the book you will discover that interviewing is both art and skill. This book contains practical advice as well as tools and techniques needed to do the job right. To help you get started with your interviews, all worksheets are included in the appendix and can be easily reproduced.

Chapter 1: Getting Started

Tell someone that they cannot volunteer until they have been interviewed and you will probably get an odd look. Think about it for a minute. Why would an interview be needed to qualify someone to donate their time for your organization? The answer is simple. Volunteering is more than a giving of someone's time. The crux of volunteerism is matching an individual's skills and knowledge to the needs of the agency's client. Volunteering is successful when both parties, the volunteer and the client, benefit from the experience.

To many, the thought of an interview is threatening. Remember the last time you went on a job interview? What went through your mind as you went into the interview? An interview is perceived by some as punitive, where being rejected is a possibility. The prospective volunteer tends to forget that s/he too has the chance to make a decision – that it is not one sided. In addition, many believe that the simple desire to volunteer should be enough. And, we know that is not true. Therefore, it is our job to organize the interview as an opportunity to learn about each other and for both parties to make a decision. The interview is a conversation with a purpose.

Interviewing is both an art and skill. It takes place between human beings who are much too individualized to be reduced to a formula. Both the interviewer and interviewee maintain a sense of insecurity – a fear that s/he might not be understood or that s/he might disclose more than intended. An interviewer worries about many things. Will s/he say the right things to put the prospective volunteer at ease? Will s/he be able to draw the person out? What will s/he do if the interviewee doesn't talk very much? What if the interviewee talks too much? Will s/he be sure to select the significant facts in the remarks? For an interview to be successful the diverse fears of both interviewer and prospective volunteer must be allayed and the diverse desires of both must be met. Rapport must be established between the two, a relationship that will enable each person to make a decision.



Interviewing is important because it demonstrates the value the organization places on the entire volunteer program. More important, an interview shows the value the volunteer has in the clients' lives. The combination of knowledge, preparation, and practice will enable the unskilled interviewer to become a skilled interviewer who can ascertain the information they need to make the right decisions for the right jobs.

The Starting Point

Certain key elements must be in place before the interview begins.

- The manager of volunteer resources must know at all times what volunteer opportunities exist in the organization. This is generally accomplished by conducting a needs assessment to determine where volunteers are needed and what tasks they will perform. In smaller organizations this will not be as complicated as in larger programs where volunteers are placed in many departments.

- A system must be in place to keep an accurate accounting of the required number of volunteers for each volunteer opportunity. The interviewer wants to avoid placing more volunteers than are needed. If this occurs you run the risk of placing volunteers with nothing to do.
- A job description and performance standards must exist for each volunteer position. This will ensure that a fit is made between the organization and the volunteer in order that both will know what they want and what is expected.
- Ensure that paid staff is ready to accept volunteers before the interview process begins. Paid staff must be able to supervise volunteers. Without proper orientation for the paid staff member in volunteer management, a good experience for the volunteer may not happen.
- Obtain a complete understanding of the exact time, location, and duration a volunteer will be needed. Communication between all staff will reduce the number of volunteers just hanging around and not being productive.
- Make sure the proper space, supplies and equipment are available for the volunteer to work. A volunteer must be able to begin to work immediately.

In addition it is important to determine the type of volunteer the organization is seeking.

- Does the organization require someone who is very creative or technically competent?
- Does the volunteer need to have a solid work ethic, good judgment, and be willing to take responsibility and follow through?
- What about motivation? Does the volunteer need to be a self-starter or does s/he need to be closely supervised?
- Does the volunteer need to be able to get along with a lot of people or have the desire to work alone on a project?

With the above in place, you are now ready to get started.



Chapter 2: The Participants

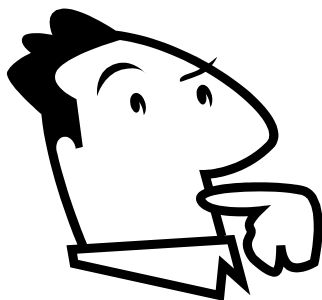
Two key individuals participate in an interview - the interviewer and the prospective volunteer. Each comes to the interview with certain expectations and needs.

Prospective volunteers will come to an interview to see what opportunities exist and where they might be of service. They also want to know the time commitment and the responsibilities required by various positions. Another consideration for the prospective volunteer is the type of working environment that exists in the organization or agency. Perhaps the most important factor that prospective volunteers will want to know is if and how they will make a difference. Keep in mind that some prospective volunteers are interviewing with the idea of a lifetime, long-term commitment. Others may be interested in volunteering for a special event and will only volunteer episodically. Either way, an interview is important to determine the prospective volunteer's time commitment.

The manager of volunteer resources enters the interview needing to learn what skills and in some cases educational background the individual possesses, his/her character, if s/he can physically do the tasks, and previous experience or if specific training will be needed. Asking good and appropriate questions are of paramount importance so the interviewer can obtain the necessary information upon which to base a good decision.

The Interviewer

Many managers of volunteer resources come to their jobs with a variety of backgrounds and skills. However, their skills may not have prepared them for interviewing prospective volunteers. As with many jobs, there are specific skills and qualities that a good interviewer possesses.



An effective interviewer has the ability to sit down and talk easily with strangers. This not only makes the interview process easier for the interviewer but, also for the prospective volunteer. This means the interviewer must have extraordinary listening skills, as well as the ability to communicate necessary information about the organization clearly and concisely.

Knowing the organization is very important. This includes knowing each volunteer position available in the organization. It also means knowing what each paid staff member expects of the volunteers with whom they will work. This takes research on the part of the manager of volunteer resources. The following questions should be considered, and addressed if necessary, before the interview process begins:

- Does the paid staff want the volunteer or has the volunteer been forced on them?
- Is the paid staff member ready to work with volunteers and do they have the knowledge to supervise a volunteer?

What are the expectations of the volunteer by the paid staff member and vice versa?

The interviewer must be able to accept and relate to a variety of people from many different backgrounds. In this chat with a purpose they must be able to recognize individual strengths and possibilities as well as the weaknesses of the prospective volunteer. This includes being skilled at observing or sensing reactions, attitudes, concerns, and personality traits of the prospective volunteer.

The successful interviewer must be able to listen very closely in order to draw out the expectations and motivations of the prospective volunteer. This will enable the interviewer to determine a suitable match between the volunteer's and organization's needs and expectations.

A good interviewer will be able to guide this chat without dominating it. It becomes a focused dialogue with a planned beginning, middle and end. They will be able to ask non-directive interviewing questions. They will have the skills of a good communicator because they will not only be an extraordinary listener but also a good questioner. Finally, they will be able to graciously reject unsuitable prospective volunteers.

One key element in an effective interview is the fact that two people are attempting to communicate. The interviewer wants to obtain information about the prospective volunteer and the prospective volunteer wants to determine if they would like to volunteer for the organization. There is stress on both sides of an interview. Consequently, it is up to the interviewer to help put the prospective volunteer at ease.

Since an interview is a two way conversation, the interviewer is concerned about:

- the fit between the prospective volunteer and the organization or agency
- the consequences if the volunteer does not work out (will they feel blamed)
- not being ready or prepared for the interview

The concerns of the interviewer will be addressed throughout this book. The concerns of the prospective volunteer will be put at ease if the interviewer follows the steps presented.

Who in the organization is involved in the interview process?

The first individual the prospective volunteer meets by phone, email, or in person, is involved in the interview process. It is said that it takes 30 seconds for someone to form a first impression and it takes a lot longer to change that first impression. Thus, when viewed in this manner, the task of interviewing becomes larger in scope. Ensuring that everyone in the agency knows that volunteers can call or walk in at anytime to ask about volunteering, will assist in guaranteeing the first impression is a good one. Thus, everyone is part of the process of interviewing.

As the manager of volunteer resources, you will probably conduct a majority of the interviews. It is recommended that you set aside specific times to conduct interviews. When a prospective volunteer makes an inquiry, an appointment can be given. Sometimes being given an appointment to interview

as a volunteer is a shock to people. It does, however, show a high level of professionalism the volunteer will appreciate. In addition, it indicates how time is valued by both parties.

The structure of your organization will drive the question about who else is involved in the process. As an example, the manager of volunteer resources may be the primary interviewer but the prospective volunteer may also need to be interviewed by the paid staff or committee chair with whom the volunteer will work. Remember the key to a successful volunteer experience is ensuring there is a match between the agency or organization's needs and the needs of the volunteer. Consequently, the interview helps staff or committee chairs to determine if they can or cannot work with the prospective volunteer.

Do not forget the possibility of having a volunteer do all the interviewing and scheduling follow up interviews with paid staff or committee chairs. Nothing precludes allowing a volunteer to take over this task. The key to interviewing is ensuring the interviewer, whether paid or volunteer, is properly trained in effective interviewing skills.

Interviewer Traps

Managers of volunteer resources are human and can fall into common traps during the interview process. The following describes the most prevalent traps:

Halo Effect: As managers of volunteer resources know, current volunteers often bring in their friends to volunteer. Sometimes a prospective volunteer may have something in common with the interviewer. The caution here is not to become trapped in the "halo effect". This effect means putting talents, expectations, and skills of the prospective volunteer based on who they know or what they have in common with you. It is transferring information that is not based on fact to the interviewee. A good interviewer will be sure to interview each person based on their own unique talents, expectations, and skills.

Another aspect of the halo effect is noting a favorable or unfavorable trait, habit, or word to influence the entire interview. Remember you are looking beyond those traits that may be caused by nerves on the part of the prospective volunteer and discover what skills, talents, and motivation the individual can bring to the organization.

Stereotyping: If we are honest, we all stereotype. Interviewers cannot allow their own individual prejudices or filters to impact the interview they are conducting. One way of limiting this all too human error is to be sure the interview is thoroughly planned and based upon identical criteria and questions. (This aspect of interviewing will be discussed later.) The hard part is ensuring that the human factor is not removed during the interview. It is vital to listen to each individual.

Stereotyping impacts many aspects of the interviewing process. Physical appearance is one that relates back to the 30 second first impression. The tendency to judge an individual based on their physical appearance (clothes, hair, clean fingernails, tattoos, piercing, etc.) is virtually universal. This also falls into the area of pre-judging an individual before they have an opportunity to answer any questions. Being aware that this may happen without the interviewer even realizing it, is key to striving toward a good interview based on what the prospective volunteer has to offer.

This aspect of stereotyping does not mean anything goes. If the appearance of the volunteer is one that would frighten clients or otherwise inhibit the volunteer's effectiveness, appearance can be discussed in terms of dress codes and expectations. This can be part of the interview process if the agency or organizations has a written dress code policy. For example: tattooing, body piercing, pastel colored hair, etc.

As stated earlier, first impressions are formed in less than 30 seconds. Often when people are being interviewed they are very nervous and anxious. Consequently, they may not present a good first impression. As the interview progresses, most people will relax and be more at ease with the interview. This is the reason interviewers sometimes fall into a trap of negative information, especially during the first 30 seconds. The key to avoiding this trap is to not allow those first 30 seconds to cloud the entire interview. Listening throughout the interview and then developing a conclusion is a key skill of an effective interviewer. A good tip to prevent this is to ask several very easy questions to start. For example: verify a phone number or address.

Language: Another common interviewing trap involves language on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee. For example, how someone speaks, phrases their sentences, or the words they use are often a pitfall for the interviewer. If the interviewer uses their internal criteria or yardstick to evaluate if someone speaks well, they can miss the opportunity of having a good volunteer or pick the wrong volunteer because they are verbally affluent. Also, if the interviewer does not ask good questions or uses too much "agency jargon", then the outcomes of the answers may not be satisfactory. A good tip here is to have the prospective volunteer talk about direct experience versus what they would do in a hypothetical situation.

Time: Interviews that are hastily put together or squeezed in between other activities are often found lacking. Taking time to ensure that you have a thorough knowledge of all the opportunities that are available and the skills needed to be a volunteer is paramount. Listening more and talking less may take more time but it will ensure a better fit between the organization and the prospective volunteer. Making a decision too early in the interview because time is short can mean more time in the long run because a good match was not made. Not taking the time to follow up on the match of volunteer and tasks will never allow the opportunity to discover where the interview went right or wrong.

A successful interviewer takes the time to conduct the interview to decrease the chances of falling into one of the many traps that await them. This is a serious undertaking and cannot be taken lightly.

The Prospective Volunteer

People are motivated to volunteer for a variety of reasons. Some want to give back to the community while others are looking for a way to make new friends. The reasons for volunteering are as numerous as the types of people who volunteer. The prospective volunteer enters the interview both nervous and curious. The notion that his/her offer to volunteer might be rejected can make the individual uncomfortable. Here the interviewer's goal is twofold: (1) immediately put the individual at ease and (2) explain the volunteer's role at the agency.

As an interview begins a prospective volunteer might be:

- concerned whether s/he will answer the questions correctly
- nervous about what questions will be asked
- unsure what the expectations of the interview are (especially if they have never been interviewed before)
- unsure about the interviewer
- unsure about the organization or agency with which s/he wants to volunteer
- unsure about if their desire to serve will be met

The prospective volunteer is also curious. S/he is there to make a decision whether this is a place where s/he wants to spend time and make a difference. This curiosity can lead the prospective volunteer to ask the following questions. The answers will help the prospective volunteer determine if this is a good fit for him/her. As an interviewer, you must be able to answer each one.

The Organization and Mission

I really want to work with this particular type of client? Will I be able to do that?
(A volunteer must believe the job they do is important to the organization's ability to provide services to its clients. The interviewer can prepare a chart that demonstrates how jobs relate to each other and how the outcomes benefit clients and the community.)

Will I be in charge of a project?
(Every volunteer program should have a career ladder where the volunteer can move to another job or obtain added responsibilities to the current job.)

Is this organization becoming more involved with ___?
(Some people need to see forward movement before deciding to get involved.)

What is the goal of that program or project?
(The answer describes how the volunteer program fits into the agency.)

The Volunteer Job

What will I be doing?
(Always provide time for the prospective volunteer to read the job description at the interview. Be prepared to describe the tasks. If the job was developed by a different staff person – that person should also participate in the interview.)

How much time will this take?
(The answer will help the individual determine if s/he can make the necessary time commitment.)

What are the toughest problems and decisions I might face?
(This will answer the questions: Am I comfortable with this? Can I handle this?)

How much variety is there in the work?
(The answer is important for someone who gets easily bored.)

How will I be helping X?
What are the major rewards for this job?
(Does this fit with their needs and motivations?)

How will I know if I have completed the task correctly?
(Are there agreed upon outcomes? Is the process objective?)

What are the expectations?
(Are the results clearly stated in the job description?)

The People

Who will I report to? What is that person like?
(Is this a person I can work for with?)

What are the other volunteers like? Who else volunteers here?
(Are these people I want to spend time with?)

What are the clients like? What types of problems do the clients have or what assistance do they come here for?
(Is this what I expected?)

Chapter 3: The Interview Process

Initial Contact

The initial contact a prospective volunteer has with the agency will help the volunteer decide whether or not to pursue that organization for volunteer placement. It is here that the volunteer asks him/herself “would I be comfortable volunteering here?” The responsibility is on the organization to answer this question. Initial contact can take place in a variety of ways. A few are described below:

1. Telephone Inquiry



Searching for a volunteer opportunity usually begins with a referral to an agency by a friend, volunteer center or colleague. The way the agency’s receptionist answers the phone tells a lot about the agency. This includes any staff member or volunteer staff member who answers the phone. Keep in mind, all the prospective volunteer has to evaluate is the voice of that person. If the voice sounds bored or dull, the volunteer may infer that agency morale is low or the work is tedious. On the other hand, a vibrant voice prompts the volunteer to want to know more and begins to get excited about his or her possible involvement. The only expectation the prospective volunteer has is that the person answering the phone knows how to find out more information about volunteer opportunities at the agency and how to sign up. The receptionist is not expected to know specifics about the volunteer program.

A sample script for a receptionist follows:

Receptionist: Good morning, ABC Agency.

Volunteer: Hello. I am interested in learning more about volunteering with your agency.

Receptionist: That sounds great. Let me help you. We are a (state mission of organization and population served). Does that sound like the type of organization you were looking for?

(Many times the prospective volunteer has been misinformed about an agency or the agency mission has changed since the person heard about it. For example, an agency served both children and adults and now only serves children. By stating the mission up front, you are checking the volunteer’s perceptions.)

Volunteer: Yes, that’s exactly what I wanted. How do I get involved?

The agency must determine what the next step should be: (a) the application (have receptionist take the volunteer’s name and address and let him/her know that a volunteer application will be mailed

out), (b) an initial telephone interview (the manager of volunteer resources takes the call), or (c) complete online (refer him/her to the website).

Unlike the receptionist, the manager of volunteer resources is expected to be able to answer specific questions about a volunteer program. The manager is not always available to answer the phone and voice mail steps in. Again, the voice on the machine must be inviting and provide just the right amount of information. Most important is that the voice mail message states when the call will be returned. Unfortunately, many prospective volunteers are lost because they got tired of waiting for a return call. And, remember, the length of time between the message and return call is relative – to one person 24-hours is too long, while another person begins to lose interest after 3 days. Therefore, knowing that the call would not be returned for 3 days puts the prospective volunteer's mind at ease.

During the initial phone contact, the manager of volunteer resources must determine how much time this call can take. If the administrator is busy and sounds rushed during the call, the volunteer may be put off and might not continue the interview process. The primary interview must be face-to-face so it is acceptable to make this a limited discussion.

A sample telephone call script for the Manager of Volunteer Resources Volunteer follows:

Manager of Volunteer Resources:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am the (title). I am very happy that you have chosen ABC Agency as a possible place to volunteer. We have a simple process to screen and place volunteers. Because volunteering is important, our process provides a way for us to learn more about each other. [Then describe the process: application, face-to-face interview, pre-service training, etc.] How does this sound?

Volunteer:

This sounds fine. But could you tell me more about the docent position. Do I have to really know every book in the library?

Manager of Volunteer Resources:

I'm sure you have a lot of questions. Rather than my trying to tell you everything over the phone, let me send you an application and schedule a time for an interview. During the interview we will sit down and go over everything.

Once you begin to describe specific features of the agency or volunteer position over the telephone you have changed the tone of the conversation from dispensing information to an interview. With that change the prospective volunteer could leave the conversation with the assumption that s/he has been accepted as a volunteer and that the interview is completed. You have now lost your ability to learn critical information needed to evaluate the prospective volunteer's ability to support your agency.

2. Web site/E-mail

When prospective volunteers log on to your website they want to see what opportunities are available, what times are available to volunteer, and an application they can complete on-line and return to you via e-mail. They also want a quick response to any inquiry. Responsiveness is a key to using the web site as an interview precursor to the face-to-face meeting.

3. Volunteer Fairs

Individuals who work at volunteer fairs need to be very open, friendly, and knowledgeable about the positions that are open in their agency. "Hi are you interested in helping some children read their first book. We have the kids, books and the location. We just need you." The key is to be engaging and upbeat about the opportunities you are offering.

When the first contact is through email or from a web site, make sure that those are checked on a regular basis so as not to leave the prospective volunteer wondering if the agency really wants volunteers. The same is true for messages left on the phone. Regardless of the means, each type of contact must contain the same qualities:

- The agency contact person must be open, friendly and inviting. This is generally the first experience the volunteer has with the organization.
- A high level of excitement must exist for the organization, volunteers in general, and the volunteer's specific assignment.
- Specific information about the tasks for volunteers to consider should be available as well as an application and reference to a website.
- Responding to the individual's inquiry must be timely, whether that inquiry is made face-to-face, by telephone or e-mail.

Volunteer Application

The volunteer application is an important step in the interview process. Think of the application as an interview on paper. This is the first concrete information the interviewer will have about the prospective volunteer.

The application process can be completed in several ways. The prospective volunteer can request an application from the agency, complete it and mail or fax it to the organization. Other options include completing it at the time of the interview or completing it online. An important factor to remember is that an application should be on file for every volunteer in the organization.

The application is important because it presents vital information about the prospective volunteer. Not only does it give the basic - name, address, and phone number, email – information, it also contains

information about the volunteer that will assist in making a placement easier. Having the application as a reference during the interview process will enable the interviewer to confirm information that the prospective volunteer can answer with ease. This will assist in putting the prospective volunteer in a more relaxed frame of mind before the more in-depth questions begin.

Each agency should design their application to best suit what they need to learn about the prospective volunteer. For example, if there are a lot of youth who volunteer, the application may be modified to “fit” their frame of reference. An example is, questions about what college they have attended could be omitted.



Volunteer Application Worksheet

Name _____

Address _____
(street or box, apartment number, city, state/province, zip/country code)

Telephone _____
(home and work; ask which number is preferred for calls)

Email _____

Date of Birth _____
(ask for month and day only; this information can be used to send a card to the volunteer; if you must report the ages of your volunteers you can ask for year of birth but must make that optional)

Occupation _____
(provides you with an idea of skills)

Employer _____
(provides information regarding prospective resources for other projects)

Educational Background _____

Previous Volunteer Experience _____

Are you fluent in other languages besides English?
Read: _____ Write: _____

Speak: _____

Will you consent to a background check through the State Police? () Yes () No
(A conviction will not necessarily disqualify someone.)

Volunteer position applied for: _____
(Use this on the application if you have more than one volunteer position. Make a list of those positions and ask the applicant to check which ones s/he wants.)

In case of emergency, who should be contacted:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

References:

Check with your human resource manager to determine if additional questions are required by your organization. You want to make sure they meet EEO standards.

Many agencies have a special section on the application form to ascertain what tasks the volunteer would like to perform and if there are tasks the volunteer would not feel comfortable performing. The prospective volunteer has the opportunity to determine if they would like to contribute skills to the agency or not. Also, in some agencies there are topics that may be discussed that the prospective volunteer does not feel comfortable addressing. An application for a youth hotline might include the following:

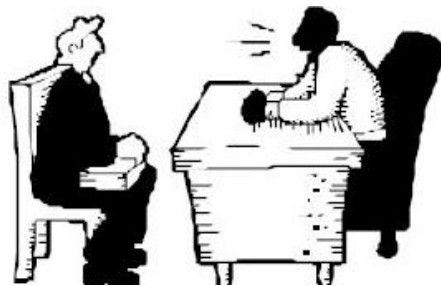
	Comfortable	Uncomfortable	Unsure
Teen pregnancy	_____	_____	_____
Child abuse	_____	_____	_____
Drugs	_____	_____	_____
Suicide	_____	_____	_____

The information gathered during the application process will help the interviewer to select the questions s/he will ask during the interview. This information also helps determine the type(s) of volunteer positions best suited for the prospective volunteer.

Face-To-Face Interviews

The objectives of the interview are:

- to inform the prospective volunteer about the organization and the volunteer jobs
- to learn about the prospective volunteer's skills/strengths, as well as, weaknesses/concerns
- to gauge prospective volunteer's effectiveness with clients, staff and other volunteers
- to understand and encourage prospective volunteer's commitment and motivation



Preparing For The Interview

The key to the face-to-face interview is that both parties are probably nervous. The prospective volunteer is wondering if s/he really wants to become a volunteer and if this is the agency to do that. The interviewer is concerned that there will be a fit with the organization and that a good match will be made between the skills and talents of the prospective volunteer and the needs of the organization.

The phrase 'be prepared' is of the utmost importance when conducting an interview. Remember, an interview is a chat with a purpose. Both parties are interviewing one another. To be prepared you must have a plan.

The following is a check list that can help you 'be prepared'.

- Who will be conducting the interview?
- When and where will the interview(s) take place?
- What information is needed from each prospective volunteer?
- What does the job entail?

How many rounds of interviews will there be? (Who must be involved? i.e., manager of volunteer resources, paid staff, committee chair, etc.)

- What purpose will each round serve?
- How will screening decisions be made?
- Do you know what questions to ask in advance?
- Are they all job related?
- What are the critical skills you need to assess in the interview?
- What skills are needed to perform this job per the job description?
- Are all the skills listed job-related?
- What are the tasks associated with this job?
- What priority does each task have? (weight in order of importance - 1 for low, 5 for critical)

Another helpful strategy is to develop a list of all the skills that an organization or specific volunteer position requires and matching them with the prospective volunteer.

Using a food bank as a model, the following are some examples of skills/tasks that might be required:

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Customer service | Data base entry | Data base manipulation |
| Phone skills | English skills | Language skills |
| Alphabetical skills | Strength | Acknowledge donors |

When considering available positions and questions to ask, it is a good idea to determine in advance what skills are being sought for which position. During the interview process you should also determine if the prospective volunteer wants to share their skills and talents or instead develop new ones. Keep in mind some prospective volunteers may have the skill of developing a data base, but that is part of their “regular” job and they do not want to do the same thing as a volunteer.

List all jobs available for volunteers at your organization. Then make a list of the skills needed to complete the job. Finally, list the major tasks of that position. This will allow prospective volunteers to self select what they are willing to give or learn.

For example:

POSITION	SKILLS REQUIRED	IS THE VOLUNTEER WILLING TO SHARE SKILL	IS THE VOLUNTEER NOT WILLING TO SHARE SKILL	SKILLS THE VOLUNTEER WOULD LIKE TO LEARN
RECEPTIONIST	Customer Service Skills			
	Phone Skills			
DATA BASE ENTRY	Develop an Excel spread sheet			
	Manipulate a Spreadsheet			

Another part of “being prepared” is to have a plan that will assist the interviewer as s/he determines what should be covered during the interview as well as the environment that should be set.

Interview Preparation Worksheet

Name of Interviewee: _____
 Interview Time: _____
 Interview Date: _____
 Interview Place: _____
 What is the purpose of the interview?

What do I know about the background or this individual? (Review Volunteer Application)

Do I have enough background information for this interview?

What information/materials do I need for this interview?

How will I open the interview and put the individual at ease:

What subjects must I cover:

Points to make:

Have I created an appropriate interviewing environment:

seating	non-threatening	refreshments
no interruptions	central location	comfortable
professional (not personal)		

How will I close the interview?

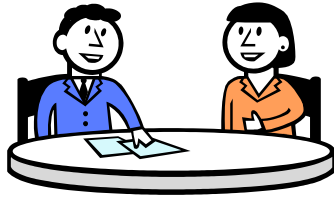
Where do you start? Interview Openers!

The first question asked sets the tone for the remainder of the interview. The following are examples that can be used either as the interview opener or interspersed with targeted questions described later in this chapter. (Remember some of the questions may or may not fit your organization or the personality and comfort level of the interviewer.)

- Given a day to yourself, what would you do?
- What kinds of things do you find frustrating?
- How can we help you gain from your volunteer experience?
- What skills do you have that you'd like me to know about?
- What are your requirements for a good experience?
- What are your best qualities as a person or as a worker?
- What is your idea of a perfect supervisor?
- What is your idea of a perfect volunteer job?

- Why are you interested in this job?
- What do you feel you can contribute to this agency's work?

How can I get more information?



During the interview process, the interviewer may need to obtain additional information from the prospective volunteer. The following are examples of phrases that can be used to assist in obtaining the needed information. These can be in response to a statement made by the prospective volunteer. They are nonjudgmental and assist the interviewer in understanding the prospective volunteer.

The following will demonstrate that the interviewer has heard what was said. They also clarify what was stated by the prospective volunteer and then ask for feedback.

- How did you come to that conclusion...
- You did not feel comfortable when...
- Sounds like it makes you anxious when....
- So when that happened you...
- If there was a problem, you suggested that...

The following statements and questions will keep the conversation moving forward. They assist in developing mutual understanding between what the prospective volunteer is trying to express and what the interviewer needs to know.

- Tell me more about...
- What happened then?
- Please explain the procedure you used when...

These phrases allow the interviewer to check for understanding about what the prospective volunteer has said.

- As I understand it, you...
- So your point is...

These phrases will assisting to clarify information for better understanding.

- Let me see if I understand...
- Is it possible that...
- What I hear you saying...

HINT: Silence allows the interviewer and the prospective volunteer to think about what is being said or has been said before moving on.

How do you ask effective questions?

It has already been established that listening is key to a good interview. Before you can listen to the prospective volunteer, you must have effective questions that they can answer. In the appendix there are many questions from which to choose.



Choosing questions means determining what information you are seeking before the interview begins. Thus, having specific questions with a goal and purpose in mind before the interview begins, is paramount to the success of the interview. As discussed earlier, the interviewer is seeking a fit between the organization or agency and the prospective volunteer. Consequently, the interviewer must possess knowledge about the organization or agency, the skills required to complete various volunteer activities, and the available job openings, as well as how to ask questions to obtain needed information.

When choosing the questions to ask, keep the following in mind:

1. Show you care and respect the other person. Remember this is not an interrogation, this is a “chat with a purpose”. Thus, make sure the questions are specific and to the point. Reference the information you have determined you need in order to see if the prospective volunteer will “fit”.
2. Use general, non-directive open ended questions versus questions that can be answered with a yes or no.
3. Questions should be used to discover feelings, as well as, facts.
4. Feedback is key for an effective interview. It will ensure that you have understood the answers that the prospective volunteer has presented.
5. Remember you are trying to confirm what you have heard, not probe into an individual’s personal life.
6. Pause when you ask a question to give the person time to think before they answer or you ask another question. Pause, also, when the person has answered a question to ensure they have finished and were not taking a breath or thinking about some other information they would like to include in their answer.
7. Be ready to answer their questions also.
8. Use direct questions to get statements of fact, ideas, plans for action, or general information.

9. Be patient and empathetic. There is stress on both sides of this process. The key to conducting a good interview is to keep an open mind and allow the prospective volunteer to talk. Being attentive and using good listening skills will assist in obtaining the necessary information. It is permissible and it should be encouraged, that the prospective volunteer asks questions. Finally, end on a positive note. As soon as the interview is over, thank the prospective volunteer for coming in, conduct an evaluation of what you did, and note your general impressions of the prospective volunteer.

Questions for Interviews

Getting To Know The Prospective Volunteer



The first question that many interviewers ask is “Tell me about yourself.” This is a good start, but there is a more specific method that is extremely successful when used. Ask the prospective volunteer to describe an experience they had that they really enjoyed doing and that they felt really good about. This can be in any part of their life. You might break the ice by describing something you really enjoyed doing. Other opening questions are:

- What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What two or three things are most important to you in a job?

As the prospective volunteer talks, the interviewer should listen for specific skills. Often the interviewer will hear things such as: organized, planned, cooperated, designed, was artistic or creative, researched, etc. This will give the interviewer a good indication of some skills that might transfer to the volunteer activities for which they are interviewing.

Once this question is complete, you need to ask some other more specific questions to check for the volunteer’s motivation, values, background, interpersonal skills, and attitude. They should be adapted to your own style and can be asked in the order and manner with which you feel most comfortable. A sampling of these questions follow.

MOTIVATION

- What interests you most about volunteer work? What made you choose our agency to do volunteer work? (This question should tell you why the person wants to volunteer for your agency.)
- What do you do in your leisure time? (By finding out the prospective volunteer’s hobbies and interests, you may have clues to their skills and talents which will help you place them in the appropriate position.)
- What would you consider the ideal volunteer job?
- Describe a high morale group in which you have worked. Who was responsible for creating the motivation? What did they do?

- What are some things that motivate you? How have you used these motivators with others?
- Are you good at figuring out what will motivate someone else? were you able to do this? When?

COMMITMENT

- Describe your time commitments. (It's important to find out if the prospective volunteer if the prospective volunteer has a realistic understanding of the time commitment needed for the volunteer job.)
- How would you prioritize work, social time, school, volunteer work and other commitments. (Again, find out what priority the prospective volunteer places on the volunteer job and evaluate if that is realistic.)
- How will volunteering with our agency affect the time balance in your life? How will you accommodate for that? (This question emphasizes the need for prospective volunteers to consider their volunteer commitment seriously and plan for the change it will create in their lives.)

WORK HABITS

- Do you like your profession (job)? What made you choose it? (The answer to this question can provide several types of information: whether or not s/he likes to work with people; let's you know how s/he might act if unhappy at your agency; relationships with others; etc.)
- Can you give an example of a difficult situation you handled on another volunteer or paid job. (Listen to the methods and attitude the prospective volunteer exercised in past situations. Ask yourself if the same approach would be effective at your agency.)
- In a group, everyone has something to contribute and each person plays a different part, such as organizer, peacemaker, motivator, to name a few. What role do you feel you play in a group (ie. motivator, organizer, dreamer, task person, connector, etc.)? (This question is intended to give the interviewer a better idea of the talents and self-perception of the prospective volunteer. Pay attention to whether the prospective volunteer seems to like who s/he is in a group. Perhaps s/he prefers to work alone. Identify how the prospective volunteer might interact with other volunteers, staff and clients.)
- What's the toughest decision you've had to make about a fellow employee? How did you go about it? How did you feel about the outcome? (Listen to what the prospective volunteer identifies as a "problem." If s/he were a volunteer at your agency, would you be happy with the way s/he handled it? This question may also tell you whether the person is able to learn from difficult experiences.)

EMOTIONAL STABILITY & VALUES

- What things have you done in your life that gave you the greatest satisfaction? (The question “behind” this question is: What do you value? You are not judging the person’s personal values except in relation to his/her ability to work well within your agency.)
- What makes you really angry—on the job or at home—and how do you deal with this anger? (Pay attention to the kinds of things that upset the prospective volunteer. Are they the same kinds of things that make the clients angry? Will the prospective volunteer increase the clients’ frustration or help them work it out positively? Is the prospective volunteer’s way of dealing with anger appropriate for your agency?)
- Do you believe in something so strongly that it might interfere with your working with our agency clients or staff? Tell me about it. (Someone who is rigid and unable to be open to the lifestyles and beliefs of other people may not be a satisfied volunteer at your agency. This may be a time for the interviewer to inform the prospective volunteer about the agency’s philosophy that staff and volunteers are to be non-judgmental towards clients so the prospective volunteer can evaluate his/her own willingness to abide by that policy.)
- When stress is high, what do you do to relax? (This question allows the interviewer to examine the stability of the prospective volunteer to a certain extent. Is the prospective volunteer’s way of relaxing appropriate and non-violent?)

LEADERSHIP & ASSERTIVENESS

- Describe a situation when you influenced a group or an individual in a positive way. (Find out what techniques the prospective volunteer used to persuade people. Would the same techniques be effective with clients, staff or other volunteers? Does the prospective volunteer seem to have persuasive leadership qualities?)
- Name someone you think is a good leader or role model? What made you name that person? (Listen for the leadership qualities that the prospective volunteer values. Do those match the leadership qualities valued at your agency? You may follow-up by asking the prospective volunteer what “role model” type qualities s/he possesses.)
- Have you ever made a decision that did not match the opinion of the group. What happened? (The prospective volunteer’s answer may help you determine his/her assertiveness and willingness to stand up for something s/he believes in, as well as, his/her ability to compromise and negotiate. It might also tell you whether the prospective volunteer would be comfortable enforcing the rules or setting limits, even if it’s an unpopular decision.)
- Are you good at figuring out what will motivate someone else? When were you able to do this? (Some volunteers may have the opportunity to lead a group. This question would assist in determining if they have the ability to motivate and encourage others.)

COMMUNICATION & INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- Has anyone ever come to you with a problem looking for help? What did you do? What are the qualities of a good listener? Do you consider yourself a skilled listener? (Find out if the prospective volunteer thinks of helping as the same thing as giving advice. If s/he does, you might say, "Sometimes our clients need a lot of help, but we have to hold our own advice to ourselves and find out what the client really wants to do. Do you think it would be hard to help by not giving your own opinion or advice? How could you still help?")
- Are there any types of people you feel you could not work with? What would you do if you found yourself working with someone like that? (The information the interviewer needs to obtain is: Is the prospective volunteer a team player with other volunteers and staff? Can the prospective volunteer work with the types of clients who come to your agency? Was the prospective volunteer's way of handling the problem effective and appropriate?)
- What would you do if you did not agree with the way another staff member or volunteer was handling a client? (This question will give you insight into how the volunteer would handle conflict and the way they would handle this issue.)

DECISION MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

- Almost all work situations will require us to interact with some people we dislike. Describe a situation like this that you have encountered and explain how you handled it. (The ability to work with others is key in many volunteer situations and it is important to determine if the volunteer has this skill.)
- Give me an example of how you handled a tense situation at work. (Many volunteer tasks require the volunteer to work with tense and sometimes life-threatening situations. This question will assist in determining if the volunteer can handle those situations.)
- Describe a situation where you demonstrated your ability to "roll with the punches." (This is will enable the interviewer to determine if the volunteer can handle setbacks when working with clients or a specific project.)
- Describe a major work problem you have faced and describe your method of dealing with it. (The ability to solve problems is a key element in many volunteer tasks.)

COMMUNICATION

- It's hard sometimes to get a new idea accepted by others. When have you had to do this? What was the outcome?
- What has been your experience in making formal recommendations and oral reports to management?

JOB RELATED QUESTIONS (The following are examples of questions related to the specific task of working with a teacher in a classroom setting. This is an illustration of job related questions.)

- As I've mentioned, ABC Organization volunteers work (in a classroom) (one-to-one) with clients in an education or training setting. Have you ever done this type of job before. Have you ever had to get up in front of a group and give a speech?
- What do you think are some of the important things for a teacher to keep in mind when teaching? What are some things a teacher shouldn't do in your opinion? (The purpose of these questions is to learn about the prospective volunteer's opinions and knowledge of teaching methods and practices.)
- In the job you will have to give feedback to the students—telling them when they have done well, have made a mistake or could have done something different or better. Do you think you would feel comfortable doing this? Why or why not? (You should learn about the prospective volunteer's confidence, assertiveness, communication skills and supervisory skills from this question.)

FOR INTERNS

- How do you see this internship fitting into your future plans?
(Understanding the interns' expectations will help the agency meet their goals while utilizing their energy and skills.)

You will find additional examples of questions in Appendix B.

Helpful phrases

During the interview process, the interviewer may need to obtain further information in reference to a question that they have asked. The following are examples of some phrases that can be used to assist in obtaining the needed information.

What do you think about...

How did you come to that conclusion...

You did not feel comfortable when...

Sounds like it makes you anxious when....

So when that happened you...

If there was a problem, you suggest that...

Tell me more about...

What happened then?

Please explain the procedure you used when...

As I understand it, you...

So your point is...

Let me see if I understand...

Is it possible that...

What I hear you saying...

These phrases will assist the interviewer in obtaining more information from the prospective volunteer without being judgmental about the response. They allow the interviewer to better understand the response. They say the interviewer heard what was said, clarify what was stated by the prospective volunteer, and ask for feedback. They assist in keeping the conversation going and help to develop a mutual understanding between what the prospective volunteer is trying to say and what the interviewer is hearing.

How do you interview individuals with disabilities?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states you must treat everyone equally. You must start from the position that the prospective volunteer can do the job. If the volunteer could perform the duties, what "reasonable" accommodations in the form of workplace changes would need to be made.

Some questions you might ask are:

"Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job?" (The interviewer must have already thoroughly described the job to the prospective volunteer.)

"Please demonstrate how you would perform the following job-related functions?"

The following is a sampling of questions prohibited by Title I of ADA:

- Have you ever been hospitalized? If so, for what condition?
- Have you ever been treated by a psychiatrist or psychologist? If so, for what condition?
- Is there any health-related reason that you may not be able to perform the job for which you are applying?
- How many days were you absent from work because of illness last year?
- Are you taking any prescribed drugs?
- Have you ever been treated for drug addiction or alcoholism?

Pre-selection questions about illness may not be asked because they may reveal the existence of a disability. However, the manager of volunteer resources may provide information about the organization's attendance requirements and ask if an applicant will be able to meet these requirements.

Interviewing a person with a disability is often harder for the interviewer than the interviewee. Many interviewers have not had the opportunity to interview an individual with a disability. First - relax! The following are helpful hints to help you to relax:

- Guide dogs are trained to wait where they are told. Never play with them.
- If an individual is hearing impaired always speak directly to the applicant and not the interpreter.
- Do not lean on a wheelchair. It is part of the person's personal space.
- Do stoop or squat down when speaking with a wheelchair user.

- Do not hover over a disabled individual. They can take care of themselves. Offer them, as you would any prospective volunteer the common question, “Is there anything you need?”.
- Ask first before you provide assistance to a person with a disability.
- Be descriptive in your communication when speaking with an individual who is visually impaired.

How do you evaluate the interview?

Evaluating the interview to determine the best-qualified person is not an easy task. Some organizations have the policy -- if they breathe, walk, talk, and want to volunteer, take them. This should not be the case -- ever! Choosing the right person to volunteer takes careful consideration. Managers of volunteer resources must have in-depth knowledge about the prospective volunteer in order to properly place them. This is accomplished through the interview process. Once that process is completed, the evaluation of the interview needs to take place.

Once the skills have been evaluated, it is time to examine other aspects of why the volunteer wants to become part your agency. Below are some examples of evaluation-type questions that examine various aspects about the volunteer. These are based upon questions the interviewer has asked and his/her thoughts about how the prospective volunteer answered the questions. Remember not all of these will fit a particular volunteer task and there are others that could be added depending on what the volunteer will be doing.

1. Was s/he at ease? Remember there will be some nervousness but note how questions are answered about qualifications and background.
2. Did s/he get points across?
3. Did s/he seem enthusiastic and committed?
4. Was s/he flexible?
5. Did s/he seem mature and stable?
6. Was the general attitude positive?
7. Was s/he confident?
8. Did s/he have a sense of humor?

The bottom line to evaluating an interview is to do it. Like all evaluations we tend to rush through them and do not give them the time they deserve. Take the time and do an evaluation of the prospective volunteer completely. It will assist you in making the right choice and reduce the risk of a poor placement and consequently losing the volunteer.

Make an evaluation sheet for each prospective volunteer. Be sure to have their name, phone number, email, position they are applying for, who interviewed them, and the date. Using the job description and based on the questions asked, rate each task or skills area from 1 as being unacceptable to 5 as being very acceptable.

Often there is no perfect match for the skills and task you need to be performed. There are two ways to make the selection. One way is to compare the top prospective volunteers with each other. The other is to compare prospective volunteers against the criteria already established based on the job description. This techniques is particularly valuable when finding a committee chair, someone to lead a special project, and recruitment of board members.

The key is to be consistent in evaluating each prospective volunteer. Matching the job criteria is not the only consideration. Areas such as - will they fit with this culture, are they a team player, - are also important considerations after the job criteria considerations have been evaluated.

The following is an example of how the manager of volunteer resources can evaluate the interview based upon the types of questions asked.

QUESTIONS ABOUT -	QUESTIONS FOR ME TO CONSIDER	THOUGHTS ON THE ANSWERS
1.) MOTIVATION	Does the prospective volunteer sound enthusiastic about this position? What is the reason they want to volunteer here?	Yes, s/he has done this type of job before. S/he experience. They heard a friend talk about the program.
2.) COMMITMENT	Will s/he be committed to do what we want a volunteer to do?	Yes, s/he can give the minimum of 5 hours a month.
3.) WORK HABITS	Has s/he volunteered before and understand what that means?	Yes, at a food drive.
4.) EMOTIONAL STABILITY & VALUES	Does s/he want to work with a lot of people in a short period of time during a food drive?	S/he has worked under stressful situations before.
5.) LEADERSHIP & ASSERTIVENESS	Has s/he been in charge of others before?	Yes, but s/he does not want to lead a group now.
6.) COMMUNICATION/ INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	How did s/he come across when working with people?	Very friendly, open, good eye contact, easy to talk with.

The following is a form you can use to write down your comments and evaluation of the prospective volunteer following the interview.

VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW EVALUATION

Name of Prospective Volunteer: _____

Date _____

Did the volunteer demonstrate the following qualities appropriately? Provide examples, where necessary.

1.) MOTIVATION

2.) COMMITMENT

3.) WORK HABITS

4.) EMOTIONAL STABILITY & VALUES

5.) LEADERSHIP & ASSERTIVENESS

6.) COMMUNICATION & INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

7.) JOB SKILLS

Prospective volunteer's name _____ Accept _____ Reject _____

Job assignment _____

Other comments:

Evaluating The Interview In Action: An Example



The following is an example of a volunteer who will be working at a food bank. The expectation of the volunteer is that s/he will be meeting and greeting customers about 30% of the time s/he is volunteering. Meeting and greeting is one of the essential duties this volunteer would perform. S/he will have other duties, including receiving and sorting food items and computer data entry. Keep in mind these essential duties could be divided among several volunteers on a shift basis.

In the interview, meeting and greeting would count as 90% of the skills the volunteer needs to possess. Note the volunteer may only meet and greet 30% of the time but customer service skills would be a more valued skill than the ability to sort food items.

Position: Food Bank Assistant Reports To: Food Bank Coordinator

Essential Duties:

Meets and greets all customers as they arrive. 30%

Receives all incoming food items. 20%

Maintains database of all donated items and who donated them. 20%

Sorts all incoming donated items by food type and storage needs. 30%

During the interview a grid will assist in keeping up with the prospective volunteer's answers to your questions. A sample grid can be found on the next page.

After the interview, you can quickly note how well the prospective volunteer answered questions about these skills. This, along with the answers to other questions you have asked during the interview, will assist you in making a good choice.

How do I grade the interview?

Below is a method using the food bank assistant example. Note how each part of the task required of the volunteer is graded on a scale of 100% down. This scoring is based on the answers to the questions the interviewer has received from the prospective volunteer.

Friendly, customer oriented - 90% - This is how you think the prospective volunteer rated in answering questions about customer service. In this example, they did well.

Computer database knowledge - 80% - You can also write notes to help you remember what the prospective volunteer has said. Knows about computers. Can use Excel. Needs in-house training on the set-up of the database.

Ability to sort items - 95% - Worked on a food drive 5 years ago and sorted items.

SKILLS	PERCENTAGE OF ANSWERS	NOTES
Friendly, customer oriented	90%	Has worked with a lot of people, seemed relaxed.
Computer database knowledge	80%	Knows about computers. Can use Excel. Needs in-house training on the set up of the database.
Ability to sort	95%	Worked on a food drive five years ago and sorted items.

Should I check references when evaluating the prospective volunteer?

Another very important part of the evaluation process is -- "To call or not to call references". This should be considered carefully. It is often dependent upon the type of work a volunteer will be doing. For example, if they are helping sort clothing or donated canned goods it may not be worth the time it would take to call references. On the other hand, if they are going to be working with a vulnerable client population, you will want to do a reference check, as well as, a criminal background check. This is time consuming but necessary and in many states and provinces mandated by law to ensure the prospective volunteer is acceptable.

In the interview stick to the legal questions and do not get into areas that are not task-related. Many references will only give the job title and length of employment of a former employee. Be sure to compare any information you receive from each reference.

Sample Questions to Check References

How long did _____ work for you?

Would you hire _____ again?

How was _____ work ethics?

What position did _____ begin in and what position did they hold when they left?

Another area to check is the validity of the credentials listed by the prospective volunteers. Do not forget to ask the school attended and graduation date. This information would only be needed in very specific cases, such as volunteers working with a debt liquidation program or a vulnerable population.

Appendix A contains a mock interview that illustrates many of the points made throughout Chapter 3.

Chapter 4: Communication

Obtaining and processing information is the most important part of the interview process. Interviewers must be able to comfortably talk with strangers, listen attentively, ask follow-up questions, and obtain the necessary information to decide if the prospective volunteer is suitable.

The key to conducting a good interview is to keep an open mind and allow the prospective volunteer to talk. Being attentive and using good listening skills will assist in obtaining the necessary information. Although it is highly encouraged that the prospective volunteer asks questions, do not allow them to take over the interview. Be sure to probe incomplete answers. Finally, end on a positive note. As soon as the interview is over, conduct an evaluation of the interview and your general impressions of the prospective volunteer.

What do I need to know about communicating with a prospective volunteer?

The most important thing to remember during the interview process is that the prospective volunteer may know nothing about your organization or agency or they have conducted a lot of research on the internet. The interview can also be a time to begin the orientation process. So, what is clear to you about what you are discussing may be clear only to you and not the prospective volunteer. An effective interviewer must know that the process of giving and receiving information during an interview is the key to a successful beginning.

The messages sent during the interview are very important. They often signal how the interview is progressing. The key for an interviewer is to have a friendly, honest, and open smile. Use an open welcoming manner when talking with a prospective volunteer. Nodding of the head signals that attention is being paid to what is said. Leaning forward, making eye contact, and using a calm, understanding, helpful tone of voice, will encourage the prospective volunteer to relax and answer questions easily. All of these non-verbal techniques lend themselves to a more successful interview.

Statistics indicate as much as 90% of human communication is non-verbal. Commonly accepted percentages about non-verbal messages indicate that people remember about 7% of what we say. A surprising 38% of individuals make conclusions based upon the sound and pitch of our voice, and our various speech patterns. Finally, 55% of the messages we send others are based on the visual image we present. Consequently, it is imperative to not allow our first impression during the interview process cloud our ability to listen.

What are some barriers an interviewer might encounter and what are some helpful hints?

The following are problems the interview might face, as well as, ways to solve those problems:

Lack of confidence as an interviewer. Practicing and being prepared will bolster competence and confidence of an interviewer.

Being afraid to ask a stranger questions. This is not a stranger; s/he is a prospective co-worker. With practice and knowledge, it does become easier.

Allowing visual and vocal messages to outweigh the content of what is being said. Understanding how these impact on the interview will assist in lessening their prospective impact upon content.

The stress of interviewing is a two-way street. The prospective volunteer may be very unsure about themselves in the interview situation. Listening is one of the best assets of a good interviewer.

Interviewing in a room where there are many distractions is a barrier. Often the luxury of a quiet place is not available. If at all possible, find as quiet a place as possible to conduct the interview. Have all calls and outside distractions put on hold until the interview is complete.

Be prepared. Do not try to conduct an interview off the cuff. It may end in an unprofessional presentation and harm your reputation and your organization.

Being under a restrictive time constraint. Sandwiching an interview in between meetings and other activities is not a good idea. It is helpful to schedule interview times just like any other important portion of your job. Allow at least 45 minutes to one hour. That breaks down to 5 minutes to review the questions and prepare the area before the interview begins, 30 - 40 minutes for the interview, and 10 minutes to make notes and evaluate the interview.

The space in which the interview takes place might hamper communication. Ideally, the space should be quiet and have no interruptions. The arrangement of the room is also important. If possible, it is best to have the interviewer and the prospective volunteer seated adjacent to one another. Also, be aware of the amount of space between you and the prospective volunteer. Ideally, there should be approximately 3 to 4 feet of space. This allows a comfort zone for the prospective volunteer. If you are too close it can be intimidating. If you are too far away you may appear uninterested.

In addition, you can help the prospective volunteer relax by having a place for their coat, purse, briefcase, or whatever they may be carrying. It is best to say, "Why don't we hang your coat here," or "Feel comfortable to leave your purse or briefcase on the chair next to you." It is not a good idea to offer refreshments such as coffee. The possibility of spilling the drink is high because of the stress factors mentioned earlier. Keeping these distractions to a minimum will assist in a more effective interview.

What are the three C's of an interview?

Being **courteous** to a prospective volunteer sounds like one of those things everyone does automatically. However, sometimes things are left out. For example putting the prospective volunteer at ease with information about where to put their coat, purse, or briefcase is a sign of being courteous.

It is a small gesture but makes a positive impression on the prospective volunteer. Having all calls held and letting people know you are conducting an interview so you will not be interrupted is important. This indicates that you are professional and that the prospective volunteer is important enough to be given your undivided attention.

The next two C's deal directly with verbal communication. Being **clear** about what you are saying will build a quick rapport between you and the prospective volunteer. Do not slip into the every day language of your organization or agency. Remember what is clear to you may not necessarily be clear to someone else. Using acronyms to describe the mission or purpose of your organization or agency will confuse someone who is not familiar with it. Being prepared to ask specific questions will keep you from beating around the bush or searching for answers. For example, having prepared questions about specific responsibilities, task descriptions, performance standards and expectations will ensure a better understanding of what the prospective volunteer will be required to do.

Furthermore, giving **complete** information about your organization or agency is essential for the prospective volunteer to make their decision about volunteering for you. Basically, the interview is orienting the prospective volunteer to your organization or agency and sets expectations for their future volunteer success.

Why is it difficult to listen during an interview?

Ideally during an interview the full attention of everyone concerned should be on the interview itself. Again, because of the human factor it often is not. Here are some of the reasons why:

- We have a lot on our minds that cannot be switched off.
- We allow ourselves to be distracted and fail to concentrate.
- We think we have heard it all before.
- We do not like the person's appearance, mannerisms, way of speaking, etc.
- We tend to discard information we do not agree with.
- We do not agree with their philosophy.
- We think they are too overbearing or not sure of themselves.
- We try so hard to hear everything they are saying we miss important information.
- We dismiss what we think is irrelevant or uninteresting.

So what can be done?

First, the interviewer should suspend judgment and not interrupt. If the interviewer allows the non-verbal behavior to influence the interview, a good volunteer may be lost.

The listener should resist any distractions - noise, visual, tattoos, body piercing, etc. and focus on the speaker.

If the room is quiet, the environment comfortable, and there are no distractions, it will be easier to focus on the conversation.

The interview should have your full attention. You should not be trying to look at what is going on elsewhere, thumbing through papers, answering phone calls, having the computer screen on, and anything else that might distract you.

The listener should paraphrase what the speaker says to ensure understanding. By paraphrasing you are closing the gap between what is being said and the possibility of misunderstanding. There will be some examples of paraphrasing later in this chapter.

The interviewer should wait before responding. The prospective volunteer may need a few moments to process a question or think about how to phrase a response. Many interviewers make the mistake of jumping in with more information or another question before the speaker has time to respond. Be patient. Your job is to obtain information not to cross-examine.

The interviewer should not stop listening if something comes up that they do not agree with. This is another pitfall that some interviewers fall into. The key is to reach understanding on areas you are not sure about rather than stop listening. The interviewer may not have heard what was said correctly or the speaker may have not phrased something in the way they intended. Paraphrase what you have heard to check for understanding.

Remember this is a two-way conversation. It is a “chat with a purpose”. Do not stop listening.

How can the interviewer be a good listener?

Listening is a form of communication and is an active process. When you listen you must get meaning from what is being said before you can respond.

We listen for different reasons:

- To take part in conversation
- For information
- For instructions
- To understand
- To get the gist of what is being said

Often, you may hear what you expect to hear, not what is actually said. Everyone brings past experience to a communication situation, even without intending to. Pressure of time and work increases the risk of doing so.

There are five steps to attentive listening:

1. Squarely face the person
2. Open your posture
3. Lean towards the sender
4. Maintain eye contact
5. Relax while attending

Many of the previous hints will help someone to become a good listener. Here are a few more.

- Paraphrase what the prospective volunteer has said to test your understanding of what you heard and to communicate that you are trying to understand what is being said. When paraphrasing you are restating the message, but usually with fewer words.

Confirm what the prospective volunteer has said to check your assumptions. For example, you might state "Let me see if I've got it straight. You said that you have a regular commitment elsewhere on Tuesdays. You have also stated that you want to volunteer on Tuesdays. Is that what you are saying?"

Clarify to bring vague statements into sharper focus. This will help you to get more information, untangle unclear statements and identify what was being said. For example, you might say "Let me make sure I understand. You can come on Tuesdays from 9 to 12?"

Summarize to pull together and organize the major aspects of the dialogue. Pay attention to various themes and emotional overtones. When you summarize do not add new ideas. For example, "We are going all over the map. If I understand you correctly"

Other phrases such as the following will help an interviewer check what they have heard.

"Can you give me an example of what you did when you volunteered for _____?"

"What is a _____?"

"I'd like to hear more about when you volunteered there."

In the case of listening and the interview process, it is imperative to concentrate on what the other person is saying, ask questions to clarify, and paraphrase to be sure you have the information correct. This will help ensure a close match between what the prospective volunteer wants and what the agency needs. Listening will assist in doing this.

What would keep you from listening to a prospective volunteer?

This will vary from interviewer to interviewer. Often what would cause someone not to listen falls into two categories -- Internal and External Barriers.

Internal barriers are those that are within ourselves. These are the prejudices that we all have about an individual. One example is the Halo Effect, discussed in Chapter 2. These usually take about 30 seconds to surface. The key is to understand that it is human nature to have these barriers but as an interviewer they must not impact on the interview process.

The second area is external barriers. These include everything from noise to the arrangement of the room in which the interview takes place. It is imperative that the interviewer ensures that the environment is conducive to a good exchange of information. Thus, the environment should be free of interruptions either by people, phones, beepers, or other distractions.

Non Verbal Communication

First impressions take less than 30 seconds. Around 55% of all information we receive is visual. It is important to understand a major part of the interview is based on nonverbal communication.

Primary areas of nonverbal behaviors to explore during the interview are:

- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Posture and body orientation
- Proximity

Eye contact:

Eye contact helps regulate the flow of communication as well as signals an interest in others. When you make eye contact you open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth and credibility.

Facial expressions:

Smiling is a powerful cue that transmits happiness, friendliness and warmth. Thus, when you smile frequently you will be perceived as more likable, friendly, warm and approachable.

Gestures:

When you gesture while speaking you capture the listener's attention. Head nods communicate positive reinforcement and indicates that you are listening.

Posture and body orientation:

You communicate numerous messages by the way you walk, stand and sit. Sitting erect, but not rigid, and leaning slightly forward communicates that you are approachable, receptive and friendly.

Proximity:

Cultural norms dictate a comfortable distance between the parties. You should look for signals of discomfort caused by invading the other person's space. These include rocking, leg swinging and finger tapping. Increasing proximity enables you to make better eye contact and increases the opportunities for the other person to speak.

The following chart can be used to prepare yourself for various nonverbal cues. Use this as a personal checklist as you prepare for the interview.

NON-VERBAL RESPONSE	POSSIBLE MEANINGS	RESPONSES BY THE INTERVIEWER
The person is sitting with open, relaxed hands, palms turned upward.		
The person avoids making eye contact.		
The person looks directly at the individual who is speaking with his head tilted.		
The speaker uses a lot of hand movements.		
The speaker sits on the edge of her seat.		
A person fidgets as s/he is speaking.		
The speaker uncrosses her legs and moves closer to the other person.		
The speaker fidgets with his watch, clothing and hair.		
The speaker fidgets with their watch, clothing, hair, glasses.		
The person's eyes become large during the interview.		
The person's hand covers part of his mouth.		
You notice raised eyebrows and the jaw dropping open slightly.		
To every statement you make there is a slight smile on the individual's face.		
The other person speaks slowly and deliberately.		

Chapter 5: Other Types of Interviews

Virtual Volunteers

Many people actively search for volunteer opportunities they can complete via home or work computers, because of time constraints, personal preference, a disability or a home-based obligation that prevents them from volunteering onsite. Such virtual volunteering allows anyone to contribute time and expertise to nonprofit organizations, schools, government offices and other agencies that utilize volunteer services, without leaving his or her home or office.

Virtual volunteering is not a replacement for face-to-face volunteering. Instead, it is an expansion of existing volunteer resources, an augmentation of an organization's off line activities, and another way for someone to help support an organization and give back to the community.

There are MANY ways people can (and do!) volunteer virtually, including:

- participate in email or chat room answer/support lines, similar to phone answer/support lines
- volunteers and/or clients working together online to create a project, such as a neighborhood newsletter, school, special interest group, etc.
- electronically "visit" with someone who is homebound, in a hospital or a retirement home
- provide online mentoring & instruction via email
- conduct online research, such as: finding information to use in an organization's upcoming grant proposal or newsletter: gathering information on a particular government program or legislation, etc.
- volunteers with a particular expertise answering staff questions via email (legal issues, etc.)
- design an organization's Website, newsletter or brochure, or copy edit a publication or proposal
- translate a document from to another language
- register an organization's World Wide Web home page and other appropriate pages with Internet search engines

(Dfld, 2004 ServiceLeader.org: Virtual Volunteering Examples of Virtual Volunteering accessed October, 2004
<http://www.serviceleader.org/new/virtual/203/04/000103/php>)

How can my agency interview for a virtual volunteer?

Virtual volunteering is become more and more popular. Virtual volunteering not only accommodates those with little time but also individuals with disabilities, home base obligations, transportation restraints, and others who cannot volunteer on site. This leads to a new dimension in interviewing.

The first step can be approached in two ways. One is to go to websites such as www.impactonline.org, www.volunteermatch.com and www.serviceleader.org. These sites specialize in virtual volunteering and will assist your agency in recruitment and screening based upon categories you submit to the website. The second is that on your agency website an area can be developed to gather information so that prospective volunteers can email their application to you and then you can set up an interview. The following is the basic information that your website should include:

- First and last name, email, telephone number, zip code
- Name of your organization, contact information (including contact title, first and last name, phone, street address and email), EIN/tax identification number (for a website other than your own), mission statement, description of services, and a minimum of one volunteer category (mentoring, tutoring, translating information into other languages, etc.), fax number, web site address, and directions to physical location (optional).
- Opportunity title, contact email, description, minimum of one volunteer category and location information (either street location or "virtual" designation). Required skills, date, time, commitment information and volunteer age/group size (optional).

The next step is for you to review the prospective volunteers sent to you via the web site and establish a second interview either by email or phone. If the second interview is conducted by email then be sure the questions are in such a format that they can be downloaded to any computer, there are not too many of them, and they are to the point. Remember many people wanting to volunteer virtually are facing time constraints. As with other interviewing, special attention would need to be paid to vulnerable client populations the volunteer would be working with.

The advantage of this method of volunteer recruiting is the volunteer has determined, based upon their research of your agency on the web, they want to volunteer for your agency. It is then up to you to ensure their placement meets their expectations and the needs of your agency.

Group Interviews

Group interviews can take several forms. The following describes two such ways.

What is a One-to-Many Interview?

In a corporate employee volunteer program a group interview could be used to bring prospective volunteers together and tell them about a project the corporation has undertaken. This would be for a group project such as a "clean up the park day." This project does not need any screening for a vulnerable population. The group interview would need to delineate the prospective hazards someone might encounter while cleaning up a park. Thus, risk management issues such as broken glass, etc., would need to be presented to the group.

Another example would be a mentoring program. In this case, there could be a group interview that would explain the skills required, responsibilities, time commitment, and benefits. Separate interviews would be scheduled at a later date for those interested in pursuing work in the mentoring program. Once again this would be a quick way to screen out anyone who would not want to participate in such a project.

What is a Many-to-One Interview?

Keep in mind group interviews can be very intimidating to the prospective volunteer, but they can also lead to a more thorough screening process. In a group setting versus a one-on-one setting more than one staff member has the opportunity to talk with the prospective volunteer. This means several different points of view about the prospective volunteer can be based on the same set of questions and answers that everyone in the group has heard.

This type of group interview also allows all staff members to see if the prospective volunteer "fits" what the organization needs in terms of assistance in their volunteer program. This type of interview will enable everyone who will be working with the volunteer an opportunity to have "input" and "buy in" to the unpaid staff members of the agency.

In each case, the group interview would serve as a step to allow those who did not want to volunteer for the particular project to opt out of the interviewing process. It does save a lot of time when this approach is used versus interviewing every prospective volunteer for every project.

Exit Interviews

Why should an exit interview be held?

Exit interviews provide the manager of volunteer resources an opportunity to discover what kind of experience the volunteer has had with the organization. It serves as a check and balance to compare what the manager of volunteer resources thinks the volunteer program is like versus what it is really like in the eyes of the volunteer. It is another form of programmatic feedback.

For a group of volunteers on a particular project, a short (and short is very important here!), survey could be distributed at the end of the project. This would be a quick way to receive feedback about that project. Individual one-on-one exit interviews could also be held at a later time either by phone or email.

Sample questions for an exit interview are:

- What did you like most about your time here as a volunteer? Can you describe a specific experience?
- What did you like least and why?
- What could I have done, as the manager of volunteer resources, that would have made your experience more of what you expected?
- What could the program do that would make the experience more rewarding?
- What could other paid staff members have done to make the experience more rewarding?
- In your experience with this agency, what ideas do you have that could make the program better in its service to its clients?
- In your experience with this agency, what could be done to make the program more effective from the standpoint of its utilization of volunteer skills and talents?

The key is to ask open-ended questions that will present information about areas in which improvement can take place. This is risky because you may not like the feedback you are receiving. But it is an excellent opportunity to learn and to make your program better. Plus, the volunteer who is leaving may come back or may recommend your agency to someone else because you do take what volunteers say seriously and act on their suggestions. It will also provide ideas about how to make the program better or more effective.

Exit Interview (An Example)

Did you enjoy the clean up the park day? YES NO

What did you enjoy most?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What did you enjoy least?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Was the length of time

Too long Too short Just right

Was information provided about your tasks and the expectations were for the day

Excellent	Why
Good	Why
Poor	Why

Would you like to volunteer for a similar project? YES NO

If you were in charge of the volunteers at the agency where you worked, what changes would you make to improve things?

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

One-on-one exit interviews should be held whenever possible when individuals volunteer in an agency. Sometimes time constraints will not allow this face-to-face process, but a phone, letter, or email format can be substituted.

It is important to conduct an exit interview because it will give the manager of volunteer resources an opportunity to check where the program needs to improve.

Chapter 6: Being Legal

In the United States illegal interview questions are those that discriminate against the person on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religion or creed. Asking a question isn't necessarily illegal. The discriminatory motive behind it is. Unknown motives are what can make any question discriminatory and an inappropriate question for interviewers to ask. The following are examples of legal and illegal questions:

Legal questions:

- What education do you have?
- What experience qualifies you for this job?
- Do you have licenses and certifications for this job?
- Are you willing to travel?
- What name(s) are your work records under?
- Do you have the legal right to work in the United States?
- Are you available for overtime?

After hiring, you legally may request:

- A copy of your birth certificate
- Affirmative action statistics
- Proof of citizenship
- Photographs
- Physical examination and drug testing
- Social Security card

Illegal questions:

- What is your age or date of birth?
- What is your sexual orientation?
- What church do you attend?
- What is your national origin?
- What is your maiden name?
- What is your marital status (Circle one: Mr, Ms, Mrs., or Miss)?
- Are you widowed, divorced, or separated?
- What is or was your spouse's name and/or job?
- Have you ever filed a workers' compensation claim?
- Do you have any physical impairments or disabilities that would prevent you from performing the job for which you are applying?

The same policies and procedures for hiring that apply to paid staff apply to volunteer staff. When you are not sure contact your human resources managers, the EEOC, or an employment lawyer.

Chapter 7: The Finishing Touch

Many agencies at the time of the interview will request that the volunteer and the paid staff sign an agreement form. The agreement can cover a variety of areas. It is best to choose one which fits the needs of the agency. Any specific agreement should be processed at the time the volunteer is hired. This may appear to be time-consuming, but the effort put forth in the application process will save time during the placement phase. Check with your Human Resources Department or organization attorney for the exact wording. The following are simply examples of what agreement forms might contain.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT- - EXAMPLE I

THE _____ AGENCY UNDERSTANDS AND AGREES TO THE FOLLOWING: To assign to the director/agency head the oversight of the volunteer's activities and have a paid staff member of volunteers appointed as the immediate volunteer supervisor of the volunteer.

To accept the volunteer as a member of the staff.

To include volunteers in all aspects of program planning.

To provide adequate working conditions and training areas that are conducive to projecting the image of a professional social service agency.

To provide the same space, equipment, working conditions and privileges as given paid staff working in similar conditions.

To provide initial orientation, on the job training, and specialized training for each volunteer.

To assign the volunteer to a position that is suitable to their personal preference, education, background and the needs of the agency.

To consult with the volunteer prior to special, new, or additional assignments.

To evaluate the volunteer's task performance on a regular basis.

To train paid staff to utilize volunteers effectively.

To give the volunteer an opportunity to meet regularly with staff members.

To talk with and listen to the volunteer when recommendations or complaints are made.

To recognize volunteers with appropriate awards.

To provide letters of reference and/or recommendation.

To keep accurate records for award and employment purposes.

To treat volunteers with dignity and respect.

I, _____, AS A VOLUNTEER, AGREE:

To attend orientation and training for the volunteer position as required.

To use work space and equipment only for the assigned tasks.

To accept the supervision of the staff person responsible for overall volunteer activities and their direct supervision on the job.

To notify in writing, with appropriate notice, extended vacation time or resignation.

To maintain at all times the dignity and integrity of the agency when working with and in the public.

To dress appropriately as needed for the assigned tasks.

To be willing to be evaluated in the same manner as other staff members.

To give the manager of volunteer resources an exit interview if requested.

To honor all confidential information involving the agency and its clients.

To perform the tasks of the selected position to the best of my ability in a reliable, prompt, accurate, and professional manner.

To provide at least 24 hours notice when unable to perform volunteer tasks.

To abide by all established policies and procedures of the agency.

To stay within the boundaries of my volunteer responsibilities.

To provide a two week notice upon resignation of volunteer duties.

To agree to a background check when working with vulnerable clients.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT - - EXAMPLE II

I, the undersigned, desire to volunteer my services to the _____ Agency at _____ (location). I expressly agree that my services are being performed as a volunteer and that I am not, solely because of these services, and employee of _____ Agency or any instrumentality thereof. I expressly agree that I expect no present or future salary, wages, or related benefits as payment for these volunteer services.

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT - - EXAMPLE III

ASSUMPTION OF RISK, RELEASE, AND INDEMNIFICATION

In participating in the _____ and using the _____ (equipment) provided, I recognize, understand and expressly assume all the risks of this activity. These risks include, but are not limited to, loss or damage to personal property, injury or fatality due to _____ (specific risks), and accidents while traveling to and from the activity site. I understand that the dangers and risks of participating in this activity may result not only in death or serious injury, but in serious impairment to my future abilities to earn a living and to engage in other social, business, or recreational activities.

I understand and agree to abide by the activity rules, to follow the directions of the activity staff, and to behave in a reasonable and prudent manner. I also understand and agree that I may be held liable for any damage or loss to the activity organizers, _____ (others involved) or the _____ (agency), their staff, directors or other employees that is caused by my negligence, misconduct, or fraud.

VOLUNTEER STATEMENT - - EXAMPLE IV

I certify that answers given herein are true and complete to the best of my knowledge.

I authorize investigation of all statements contained in this application as may be necessary in arriving at a volunteer employment decision. I understand that this application is not, and is not intended to be a contract of volunteering.

In the event of volunteering, I understand that false or misleading information given in my application or interview(s) may result in discharge. I understand also, that I am required to abide by all rules and regulations of _____ agency.

Chapter 8: Closing Thoughts

The key to a successful interview process is to be prepared. If you go into an interview without preparation, it will not be a pleasant experience for you or the prospective volunteer.

Know your organization inside and out. Know what the need is for volunteer service. Know who is prepared to supervise volunteers and who is not. Placing a good volunteer with an unprepared staff member will only cause problems.

Know what the volunteer position entails that you are interviewing for. This means doing some research into what is needed and expected of volunteers in your organization. By knowing what each volunteer position entails you will be able to better answer any questions presented by the prospective volunteer.

Know when and where the interview will take place. Keep all interviews scheduled as you would any other appointments. Be prompt and have your questions and any necessary paperwork ready before the interview begins.

Know the format for the interview. Will you be the sole decision maker or will the individual who is directly supervising the volunteer make the final decision? Be sure to tell the volunteer if they must go through a series of interviews or only one.

Know what questions you will ask. Choose the questions that will best answer the purpose of the interview. Is motivation more important than computer skills for example? Be prepared.

Know what questions you can and cannot ask. Be legal in your questioning.

Know how to listen to obtain information. Do not allow the halo effect or body language or any of the other barriers prevent you from obtaining the information you need in order to make an informed decision about having the prospective volunteer join your organization.

Know that a decision must be made. Then be sure and tell all prospective volunteer applicants either in a letter or by phone if they have been selected to join your organization.

The key to a successful interview process is to be prepared.

Here are some final tips for a successful interview:

1. An interview should be a “friendly” conversation. It is not simply a series of questions and answers - the prospective volunteer should also have an active role in the conversation. Simply put, a prospective volunteer who is comfortable will respond more openly and honestly to questions.
2. Remember, the “ideal volunteer” does not exist.
3. Make sure the prospective volunteer understands the reason for the interview.
4. Keep the interview private and confidential. Conduct the interview in an area that is separate from others at the agency. Also, try not to sit behind a desk. It sets up a barrier between you and the prospective volunteer.
5. Listen to what the prospective volunteer says. Everybody has different ways of expressing themselves - some clearer than others. As a result, it is important to be careful not to make assumptions or conclusions. When you don’t understand, ask the prospective volunteer to clarify. You will find yourself saying “What do you mean by _____” many times during the interview. Don’t worry. You won’t sound repetitious.
6. If the prospective volunteer asks you a question that you don’t know how to answer, be honest. You can say, “I don’t know, but I’ll try to find out for you.”
7. There is an 80/20 rule of interviewing which states that the interviewer should talk about 20% of the time and the prospective volunteer should talk 80% of the time. If you find yourself talking too much, or asking too many questions in a row, sit back, take a deep breath and have a “moment of silence.”
8. Asking open-ended questions, those that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no, will help the prospective volunteer to open up. This is especially helpful when the prospective volunteer is shy or nervous.
9. To keep the conversation on track and to avoid it from becoming an inquisition, mix open-ended questions with conversation openers such as: Comments like “Tell me more,” “Go on,” “That’s interesting.” Silent pauses allowing the prospective volunteer to think before answering Feedback to let the prospective volunteer know you understand what s/he said.
10. If you’d like to take notes, you can tell the prospective volunteer at the beginning of the interview that you’ll be writing some things down to remind yourself later about your conversation.

Appendix A: Mock Dialogue for Interview

I = Interviewer

V = Prospective volunteer

I: "Hello, _____. I am _____. I'm glad you could take the time to meet with me today. How are you doing?"

Prospective volunteer answers.

I: I just want to explain a few things about this interview. For some people, it seems strange to go to an interview for a volunteer position. But, we want you to understand what we're all about so you can decide if this is really what you want to do. We also try to make sure this is a good match for both of us. So I am going to begin by describing the roles and responsibilities of volunteers here and then I'll ask you some questions about your expectations and past experiences. Please feel free to ask questions at any time. Any questions?

Prospective volunteer may ask questions. The Interviewer then explains organization mission, clients served, jobs for volunteers, etc.

I: Does all this sound like what you had in mind?

The actual interview can begin in two ways. The first way would be to ask an open question and see where it leads.

I: Tell me about yourself.

As the prospective volunteer talks you can use the Questions For Interviews where appropriate to check out perceptions, learn more about the prospective volunteer and keep the dialogue moving.

The second way to begin the interview is to immediately try to determine which volunteer job interests the prospective volunteer:

I. Do you have an idea of which volunteer position interests you most?

The prospective volunteer may know which position s/he would be interested in, or s/he may look to the interviewer for more guidance. If the prospective volunteer is unsure, the interviewer can say, "There's no rush to make a decision. Why don't you tell me a little bit more about yourself so we can figure out what might be best for you. You can start by telling me what interests you about doing volunteer work."

Continue with questions, creating a discussion-type atmosphere. Keep the objectives in mind and find out what you need to know about the prospective volunteer's MOTIVATION, COMMITMENT, WORK HABITS, EMOTIONAL STABILITY & VALUES, LEADERSHIP & ASSERTIVENESS, COMMUNICATION & INTERPERSONAL SKILLS, and JOB SKILLS. Be sure to ask follow-up questions on areas you'd like to know more about or have some concerns with. For example:

I: In a group, everyone has something to contribute and each person plays a different part, such as organizer, peacemaker, motivator, to name a few. What role do you feel you play in a group?

V: Well, I think I'm usually the person cleaning up and doing the little things.

I: Kind of a 'detail, behind-the-scenes' person?

V: Yeah, I would say that.

I: Tell me more about the experiences you had when you were in this role.

V: Sure. My church had a big spaghetti dinner to raise money one time and I was in charge of clean-up and making sure there were enough chairs and tables. I don't think anyone really noticed me, but I knew it wouldn't have gone as smoothly if I hadn't been there. I don't need a big 'thank you' if I like the work.

I: Sounds like you felt good about what you could give. [Pause, letting him/her respond.]

After the questions:

I: I don't have any other questions. Do you?

If accepting a prospective candidate as a volunteer:

I: Thank you for meeting with me today. I think you'd be great for our program. Congratulations, you are accepted as our newest volunteer. (Give him/her the date of the next volunteer training, etc.)

If rejecting a prospective volunteer as a volunteer:

I: "I'm glad we met today because it doesn't sound like this is the best match for both of us because (refer back to something s/he said earlier). I do know of other volunteer programs that you'd probably really enjoy. They are (give name of agency, contact person and telephone number). Thanks again for your interest and good luck."

If unsure whether to accept or reject a prospective volunteer as a volunteer:

I: "Thanks for meeting with me today. It was nice talking with you. I'm going to think over everything we talked about today and I'll call you in the next few days with more information. Feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or questions in the meantime. Thank you. Goodbye."

Appendix B: Miscellaneous Questions

Still not sure what questions to ask? The following are good “openers” to use to learn more about the prospective volunteer. These questions can be interspersed with the targeted questions mentioned earlier.

- Given a day to yourself, what would you do?
- What kinds of things do you find frustrating?
- How can we help you gain from your volunteer experience?
- What skills do you have that you'd like me to know about?
- What are your requirements for a good experience?
- What are your best qualities as a person or as a worker?
- What is your idea of a perfect supervisor?
- What is your idea of a perfect volunteer job?
- Why are you interested in this job?
- What do you feel you can contribute to this agency's work?
- Tell me what you know to be the duties of this job.
- How did you become interested in this field?
- Could you outline your experience and training in this field?
- What do you feel best qualifies you for this position?
- Why did you choose this particular organization to apply to?
- Tell me a little about what you know about this organization.
- Why do you want to work here?
- Tell me about your education and training background.

- Is there anything you would like to ask about this organization?
- What am I really getting when I hire you?
- How do you feel you could most benefit this organization?
- How do you know when you have done a good job?
- What do you expect from this organization when you volunteer?
- What kind of support do you require from your supervisor?
- What kind of supervision do you prefer?
- How do you feel about routine work?
- Have you held a position like this before? Tell me about it.
- What kind of satisfaction do you get from this type of work?
- How do you feel about challenges?
- Do you enjoy this type of work? Why?
- Is there anything else we should know about you in relation to this position?
- Do you prefer working alone or with others?
- Can you take feedback without feeling upset?
- What types of people annoy you?
- What difficult situations do you think you might encounter in this position?
- How would you handle a difficult situation arising out of this position such as ___ ?
- Do you feel you would be an assertive, achievement oriented volunteer?
- How about some examples?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest efforts?

- What qualifications do you have that make you think that you will be successful?
- How would you determine or evaluate success as a volunteer with us?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
- In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our organization?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Describe your most rewarding work or professional experience.
- Do you like working closely with others?
- In what kind of a work environment are you most comfortable?
- Which of your past jobs—paid or volunteer—have interested you the most? Why?
- How do you describe the ideal job for you?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?

Appendix C: Forms For Your Personal Use

Volunteer Application Worksheet

Interview Preparation Worksheet

Volunteer Interview Evaluation

Non-Verbal Communication

Exit Interview

Volunteer Application Worksheet

Name _____

Address _____
(street or box, apartment number, city, state/province, zip/country code)

Telephone _____
(home and work; ask which number is preferred for calls)

Email _____

Date of Birth _____
(ask for month and day only; this information can be used to send a card to the volunteer; if you must report the ages of your volunteers you can ask for year of birth but must make that optional)

Occupation _____
(provides you with an idea of skills)

Employer _____
(provides information regarding prospective resources for other projects)

Educational Background _____

Previous Volunteer Experience _____

Are you fluent in other languages besides English?

Read: _____ Write: _____

Speak: _____

Will you consent to a background check through the State Police? () Yes () No
(A conviction will not necessarily disqualify someone.)

Volunteer position applied for: _____
(Use this on the application if you have more than one volunteer position. Make a list of those positions and ask the applicant to check which ones s/he wants.)

In case of emergency, who should be contacted:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

References:

Interview Preparation Worksheet

Name of Prospective Volunteer: _____

Interview Time: _____

Interview Date: _____

Interview Place: _____

What is the purpose of the interview?

What do I know about the background of this individual? (Review Volunteer Application)

Do I have enough background information for this interview?

What information/materials do I need for this interview?

How will I open the interview and put the individual at ease?

What subjects must I cover:

Points to make:

Have I arranged an appropriate environment:

seating
no interruptions
central location

non-threatening
comfortable
professional (not personal)

How will I close the interview?

Volunteer Interview Evaluation

Name of Prospective Volunteer: _____

Date _____

Did the volunteer demonstrate the following qualities appropriately? Provide examples, where necessary.

1.) MOTIVATION

2.) COMMITMENT

3.) WORK HABITS

4.) EMOTIONAL STABILITY & VALUES

5.) LEADERSHIP & ASSERTIVENESS

6.) COMMUNICATION & INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

7.) JOB SKILLS

Prospective volunteer's name _____ Accept _____ Reject _____

Job assignment _____

Other comments:

Non-Verbal Communication: Checking the Interviewer's Response

NON-VERBAL RESPONSE	POSSIBLE MEANINGS	RESPONSES BY THE INTERVIEWER
The person is sitting with open, relaxed hands, palms turned upward.		
The person avoids making eye contact.		
The person looks directly at the individual who is speaking with his head tilted.		
The speaker uses a lot of hand movements.		
The speaker sits on the edge of her seat.		
A person fidgets as s/he is speaking.		
The speaker uncrosses her legs and moves closer to the other person.		
The speaker fidgets with his watch, clothing and hair.		
The speaker fidgets with their watch, clothing, hair, glasses.		
The person's eyes become large during the interview.		
The person's hand covers part of his mouth.		
You notice raised eyebrows and the jaw dropping open slightly.		
To every statement you make there is a slight smile on the individual's face.		
The other person speaks slowly and deliberately.		

Exit Interview (An Example)

Did you enjoy the clean up the park day? YES NO

What did you enjoy most?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What did you enjoy least?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Was the length of time

Too long Too short Just right

Was information provided about your tasks and the expectations were for the day

Excellent	Why
Good	Why
Poor	Why

Would you like to volunteer for a similar project? YES NO

If you were in charge of the volunteers at the agency where you worked, what changes would you make to improve things?

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Authors Addendum

KM CONSULTING AND TRAINING

CONNECTION

We offer:

Organizational Planning©

- ~ Where has your organization been?
- ~ Where is it going?
- ~ What trends are impacting on what you do?

Organizational Planning© is the continuous process of systematically making plans with the greatest possible knowledge of the future; organizing the activities needed to carry out the plans; and monitoring the results of the plans through feedback.

Training Services

- ~Do you want to do more than just sit and listen during a training session?
- ~Are you tired of just opening your head and receiving information?

KM Consulting and Training Connection will allow you to actively learn the information you need. All workshops utilize a variety of mediums to assist in knowledge retention and answer the big question, "How does this apply to my job?"

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Marketing and Management Expertise For
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Whether you require a consultant's advise and skills for a specific project or training for board, staff or volunteers, CNY Enterprises is the place to call. Our training and consultancy can help your organization tap into new thinking and achieve the results you want.

There are no "one size fits all" approaches to problems and organizations. Our approach is to work side-by-side with management to clarify issues, refine ideas and give them shape. Our strength comes for our ability to understand things from a broader perspective and to use this information to ensure a future direction can be successfully implemented. Like you, we are committed to producing measurable results and real change.

Our consulting and training services include:

Board Development – from facilitating board retreats that reinforces teambuilding and problem solving to evaluations of the board composition toward the development of a board recruitment plan

Strategic Planning – from conducting a complete review of organizational strengths and weaknesses to developing goals, objectives and action plans to implement immediately rather than gather dust on a shelf

Volunteer Management – from performing an audit of the entire volunteer program to developing volunteer recruitment and retention plans to targeting hard to find volunteers

Fundraising – from developing a fundraising plan to organizing special events to training others to raise money

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