



Examples from Cities Involving Culturally Diverse Volunteers

For insights on how to build multicultural volunteer involvement for your city, see these five examples of what cities are doing. Note that each city has taken a different approach.

City of Brooklyn Park Community Engagement

The City of Brooklyn Park, recognizing the increasing diversity of its residents, made the commitment in 2009 to focus on community engagement. A group of residents called the Core Planning Team created:

- A mission statement - Brooklyn Park, a thriving community inspiring pride where opportunities exist for all.
- Core values for the community
 - Everyone has equal intrinsic value
 - Diversity enriches community
 - Trust is the foundation for building a healthy community
 - The community thrives when each individual takes responsibility to contribute
 - When a community supports all its members, it thrives

The city has four community engagement staff who facilitate and participate in activities that build the capacity of community members and stakeholders to help the community and City reach collective goals. They work to build connections with diverse communities within the city. The City offers a spectrum of ways of getting involved that range from signing up for email neighborhood updates to applying to be a commissioner. Their approach to involving new Americans, starts with building relationships, with the communities within the city, inviting residents to monthly community engagement gatherings that focus on topics residents have suggested, and including volunteering in the range of ways to be engaged. The volunteer opportunities include welcoming new neighbors, Tater Daze Festival, and parks and recreation. Antonio Smith, Community Liaison says, "We move closer to our mission statement when we take action to better understand one another. That's probably why *Diversity Enriches Community* is my favorite Core Value." For more information, see <http://www.brooklynpark.org/get-involved/community-engagement> and <http://www.brooklynpark.org/get-involved/>.

City of Burnsville International Festival

The City of Burnsville hosts an International Festival every summer to show that it is a city that truly values and celebrates cultural diversity. During this event, guests can peruse food and vendor tents, admire cultural displays and see dancers, musicians and other entertainers exhibit the city's diverse population and traditions. The annual festival has been growing over the past eight years and now draws 4000 participants.

The festival involves volunteers that represent the diversity of the city's population on a planning committee for the event. The volunteers work on all aspects of the event including: publicity, sponsorships, food and entertainment. Julie Dorshak, Burnsville Recreation and Community Services Manager says, "The motivation for the event is to show the richness of the community through diversity. The planning committee volunteers are very passionate about the event; and work to ensure that the festival is held each year." The value of the event is documented in survey of participants with 81+% indicating that they had learned something new about another culture.

City of Plymouth Volunteer Program

The City of Plymouth, now is in its third decade of a thriving volunteer program, is seeing a growth of interest by volunteers who are new to the country. For example one of their volunteers was checking out the City website from her home in India after her husband got a job offer in the Metro Area. She saw the volunteer opportunities on the website and thought they sounded interesting. After she arrived in Minnesota, she called the city for more information. Jackie Maas, Volunteer Coordinator for the City of Plymouth, has observed the growing of interest of new Americans to volunteer in their new homes and has worked to set up good volunteer opportunities for them. She has found that volunteering for events is often a good entry point for a new American volunteer. When possible, she offers them a volunteer position related to their professional expertise or academic training. An example of this is a volunteer with a Master's degree in environmental studies who was interested in helping with buckthorn removal. Jackie says that she, "thinks of the new volunteers as the cream of the crop. They often have valuable skills and education and the time to help out."

Joint Community Police Partnership

Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP) is a collaborative effort of the cities of Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Bloomington, Hopkins, Richfield, St. Louis Park, Hennepin County and Northwest Hennepin Human Services Council. The mission is to "enhance communication and understanding between law enforcement officers and multicultural residents of these cities. By building trust and communication between the police and community members, we will ultimately improve the safety and livability of our communities."

One pillar of the JCPP Program is to have volunteers that are involved in each city and serve on a Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee (MAC). This committee provides advice, suggestions and assistance to the individual Police Departments to aid them in better serving, communicating with, and understanding the many cultures that reside in, work, and/or worship in their City. The MAC committees meet monthly to achieve two-way communication with law enforcement and the community that they serve. In addition to monthly meetings they also are attending neighborhood meetings, academies and spreading the work in the community about the purpose of the JCPP. The MAC members become the "eyes and ears" for other community members. According to Brooklyn Center Community Liaison/ JCPP Supervisor - Monique Drier and St. Louis Park Community Liaison Afton Martens, bridging law enforcement with the community is the key concept of the MAC. It is the two-way relationship that helps to build trust and provide opportunities for both stakeholders to learn more about each other. Members are interested in being involved for a variety of reasons including they believe in the community, want to help others and have a passion for a better future. For more information, contact Monique Drier – JCPP Supervisor – mdrier@ci.brooklyn-center.mn.us .

Minneapolis Park Board

The Minneapolis Park Board started the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access Initiative in 2014 with the goal to develop and implement a strategic approach to inclusion, diversity, equity and access in such a way that the Park Board creates a work culture and climate that supports the goals of the organization and the communities served by the Park Board. Staff are aware that some of the barriers that may exist for immigrants to volunteering in the Minneapolis Parks including language, background checks, time commitments, lack of knowledge about volunteer opportunities, and the idea that volunteer positions may not reflect the interests of some communities. Michelle Kellogg, Equity & Inclusion Project Manager for the Park Board offers the insight, “We know that many of the barriers to participation aren’t limited to volunteering; we are looking at opportunities to make our programs, facilities, and information more culturally relevant and accessible to immigrant groups and communities of color. As we continue this work, we will also need to be ready to assess our volunteer offerings and engage immigrant communities in visioning new opportunities that are beneficial to both the organization as well as to the volunteer.”

An area of success to highlight in involving new Americans as volunteers and participants has been through partnerships with community organizations. For example, they were approached with the idea of girls Muslim sports league that resulted in partnership for use of park facilities. Another success of a partnership approach is the Monarch Festival - Festival de la Monarca that started eight years ago. With five partners, including the Nokomis East Neighborhood Association, it draws thousands of participants. The festival offers everything from food, music, and dance, to monarch and habitat education, to hands-on art and native plant sales, all while highlighting the Minnesota – Mexico connection. For more information, contact Michelle Kellogg at mkellogg@minneapolisparcs.org.

Thank you to the Bush Foundation for funding the Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) for this initiative on city volunteer engagement. Additional resources from MAVA on city volunteer engagement are available at <http://www.mavanetwork.org/cities>.