



Tips from Cities Involving Culturally Diverse Volunteers

Cities across Minnesota are increasingly interested in involving residents as volunteers, and specifically in having that involvement reflect the diversity and richness of their community. As part of a Minnesota Association for Volunteer Administration (MAVA) initiative on city volunteer engagement, cities were asked to share advice on involving volunteers who are new Americans. Suggestions received:

- Build authentic relationship with the immigrant communities in your city. Take time to reach out and talk with people. Find leaders in the cultural communities who are interested in helping their community connect with city. Hold information gatherings for the communities on topics they have indicated interest in to build a relationship with the city.
- Personally ask new Americans to be involved. The personal invitation is the best way to catch interesting in volunteering.
- Include a request for volunteers on your website in a way that communicates volunteers from all cultural communities are welcome. This can be through a verbal message of welcome, as well showing images of the diversity of the community in pictures of volunteering.
- Make sure that someone is assigned to follow up with people who express an interest in volunteering. If there is not a response the first time a person expresses interest, he/she may not come back again.
- Understand there may be barriers such as working two jobs, family commitments, language and transportation that might limit some new American's availability to help. Try to work around those barriers with flexible times for volunteering, family friendly volunteering, and openness to doing things in a different way.
- Indicate in your flyers and announcements if translation will available when volunteering. If it will be offered, have the flyer or announcement available in the languages for which translation will be available.
- Recognize that you may need to do things in a different way if you wish to involve new communities. Ask your contacts in the different communities how things would need to be set up to catch their interest.
- Be well organized. It is important that the first experience is a good experience.
- Provide a welcome atmosphere. Make sure that staff understand the cultures of residents and are welcoming. Have artwork or displays at city offices that demonstrate valuing the diversity of the community.
- Learn the volunteers' interests and skills to find a good fit for their involvement. Set up the first volunteer experience to be a good experience with staff and other volunteers who will be welcoming. Give the volunteers a personal thank you for coming to help.

Thank you for sharing ideas to staff from the City of Brooklyn Park, City of Burnsville, Minneapolis Park Board and the Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP) staff from the Cities of Brooklyn Center and St. Louis Park.