



Creative Community Outreach Techniques

Getting the Word Out

Don't underestimate the importance of spreading the word about what you do. The more people hear about your group or project, the easier it will be to recruit volunteers and get the support you need.

- **Utilize multiple channels of communication to share information.** Maintain an e-mail database of anyone who has expressed an interest in your group or project to keep them informed. Use flyers posted around town, develop a simple one-page newsletter, or try mailing an outreach letter to everyone in your zip code.
- **Get to know the local press.** Send local newspapers, radio stations and other media outlets press releases about your activities, upcoming meetings and volunteer opportunities. Keep it brief, and send clear, high resolution digital photos to make it easy for the press to run your story or announcement.
- **Meet people where they are instead of waiting for them to come to you.** Offer to speak to other groups and organizations in your community about what you do. Your local scouting troop, church groups, and other civic organizations are a good place to start.

Involving your Municipality

- **Timing is key!** Most towns and villages start working on the next years' budget in October. If you make a request early enough, in most cases your municipality will set aside some funds for you if they are able.
- **Make the ask at a work session, not a legislative meeting.** Most town boards hold "work sessions" immediately before or in between regular monthly board meetings. It is a more casual environment and you are more likely to have a productive dialogue than during a board meeting.
- **Get to know the key players.** While your locally elected officials control the purse strings, it is often the Highway Superintendent, Parks Director or Building Inspector that gets the job done! They may be able to help with donated labor or equipment. All you need to do is ask the right person!

Getting and Keeping Volunteers

- **The best way to recruit volunteers is simply to ask people to help.** If you never have the conversation, how can someone say yes? And if you are turned down, keep in mind that you have still helped your community by reaching out to new people and lending visibility to worthwhile projects.
- **Don't confuse recruitment with publicity.** Sending out a flier or email notifying a long list of people about what needs to be done is information, but not necessarily an invitation to come forward. Never assume everyone "knows" what help is needed or whether she or he is right for the job.
- **Be clear on what you want people to do before you recruit them.** Avoid the vague approach of "Do you want to volunteer?" This can lead to all sorts of incorrect assumptions about what the tasks might be.
- **Try writing a "Volunteer Job Description"** and posting it around town. The description should include the time commitment and the particular skills you are seeking.
- **Be honest.** Tell prospective volunteers about the time and effort the role entails, even if you think it may sound like a lot. If you need someone several hours every week, say so.

Though government has an important role to play in meeting the many challenges that remain before us, we are coming to understand that no organization, including government, will fully succeed without the active participation of each of us. Volunteers are vital to enabling this country to live up to the true promise of its heritage.

- **Explain why you decided to ask this particular person to help** — what skills or personality traits make her or him the logical choice. After all, you are implying this person has the talent to do the job, and that's quite flattering.
- **Never recruit anyone by asking her or him to do it as a "favor" to you.** Instead, try to communicate that you don't want them to miss a marvelous opportunity to participate in an important project!