



Bringing about sustainable positive social change through your program requires the development of volunteer leaders. They can take action, provide a vision and inspire others.

Leadership, however, is created over time. You can play a role in mentoring, coaching and encouraging potential leaders to build the skills they need to take on a leadership role. Provide opportunities within your organization for emerging volunteer leaders to develop and practice their skills.

Look for current and potential leaders in your neighborhoods. Identify known community leaders to learn about their grassroots experience. Engage them in identifying the next group of leaders and ask for their support as you engage this group in focused, responsible activities.

There are several places in the community to search for existing leaders. Faith institutions often have active members who lead their own volunteer and community functions within the congregations. Public school teachers and parents have valuable knowledge of youth in the community. Local government groups attract some of the top leaders interested in creating change through the legislative process.

Choose individuals who have consistently demonstrated their ability to collaborate and work well with others in productive, long-term relationships. Through mentoring, you can give new leaders the tools to manage a team and make effective decisions that result in progress toward objectives, which will improve the community.

Developing leadership skills in your volunteers is an ongoing process but one that is crucial to the long-term success of your efforts.

Tips

- Encourage your volunteers to take on challenges that will foster their own growth and development. Make it safe for them to make mistakes by treating them as learning experiences.
- Support initiatives that your volunteers may come up with themselves rather than insisting on your own (to the degree that you can). Volunteers will be inspired to pursue efforts and topics that are of particular interest to them rather than what you feel is best.
- Recognize individuals frequently for their contributions. Recognition that is low-key, frequent and personal is generally more meaningful to people than a big, annual event (although doing both is even better).
- Send volunteers with leadership potential to a training or take them to conferences. Progressive responsibility and improved skills help build leaders.

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