

## **Evaluation of Volunteers and Volunteer Programs**

Volunteers can be immense assets to UNHCE, especially when we work to use volunteers efficiently. This means maximizing the benefits of volunteers while minimizing the costs to UNHCE. Ongoing evaluations of the program, the volunteers, and our own performance as administrators all contribute to efficient volunteer management. Evaluations can help volunteers realize their potential, help us to better use volunteers, determine if our program's objectives are being met, and help plan for future programming.

### **Evaluation of Volunteers' Performance**

Extension volunteers are expected to receive periodic program or performance evaluations, as appropriate. This may include a yearly meeting with a supervisor to discuss their roles and contributions, to compare volunteer activities with volunteer service description, and/or to address areas of improvement.

### **Complaint & Grievance Process**

Volunteers are entitled to feedback and/or evaluation by their volunteer supervisor. Part of volunteer evaluation is establishing a path volunteers can take if they have a problem or feel they are treated unfairly. If a volunteer is not performing the requirements outlined in their volunteer service agreement and/or are not in compliance with UNHCE policies and procedures, volunteers should be notified by their supervisor and provided with steps to take and a timeline for improvement. If significant improvement is not made, a volunteer should know that he/she may be asked to leave.

### **Evaluation of Volunteer Programs**

Volunteers (as well as staff and program audiences) may also be asked to participate in evaluations of the volunteer program itself. Feedback may come in the form of yearly/monthly submissions of volunteer hours or activity reports, contributions to newsletters, annual reports, or surveys and comments concerning the administration, content, staffing or impacts of the program itself.

The following outline describes different types of evaluations that relate to volunteers and volunteer programs. Evaluations help answer questions about the volunteers or about the volunteer program or impacts. The following topics describe which questions each evaluation can help to answer. We have adapted the list from Ch. 5 of "Achieving Success through Volunteers: A Curriculum for the Effective Administration of Volunteer-Supported Programs" (Michigan State University Extension, 2005). A copy of this curriculum (binder) is in each county UNHCE office.

## Types of Evaluations

### 1. Evaluate the Volunteer Program Itself (How Is It Done?)

This type of evaluation may be done by staff, or asked of the volunteers. It can answer questions such as:

- How does the program function on a daily basis?
- What are the costs of the program?
- Is the volunteer supervision adequate?
- Is communication effective?
- What training was done?
- How well is the program administered and coordinated?

### 2. Evaluate the Program Outputs (How Much Was Done?)

This evaluation is directly linked to a program's objectives and the "services" our programs provide. It answers the following types of questions:

- How much time do the volunteer contribute?
- How many clients were served?
- How much land was managed for wildlife?
- What are the direct results of the program?
- What activities were held?
- How many attended?
- How many lakes were monitored?
- How satisfied were participants in the activity?

### 3. Evaluate the Program Impacts (What Difference Did It Make?)

This is the hardest kind of evaluation to perform, since it measures how lives have changed as a result of the programming. It answers questions such as:

- What impact has the program made on the community?
- How have lives of the program participants been changed as a result of their involvement?
- What needs has the program met?

These are often critical questions to stakeholders (and funders.) Sometimes the most direct way to answer these questions is to ask the questions directly (for example, "*Has your experience with the Coverts Project changed you, your activities or your views?*")

### 4. Evaluate Volunteers work/performance of the volunteers

A volunteer evaluation may take several different forms, depending on the specificity of the volunteer activities. For example, 4-H leaders may receive a more intensive performance evaluation on a more regular basis, while Tree Stewards receive more general feedback (i.e. confirmation that they are still considered "active" volunteers) or simply be evaluated as a group, based on statistics gathered from individuals (e.g. total # of hours performed by Lakes Monitors this year).

Performance evaluations can collect information such as:

- Volunteers' length of service and number of hours per year served, and for Civil Rights compliance – age, race, sex and ethnicity of volunteers.
- How well did they complete their responsibilities?
- Amount of annual turnover?
- Kinds of tasks volunteers engaged in.

If individual volunteers are being evaluated, make it clear to volunteers when their performance will be reviewed. Include outcomes such as “the volunteer will be given a written evaluation and a record of the hours served for his/her personal use.” Decide upfront, and communicate to the volunteer whether or not this is the time when either party can decide to continue, end or revise the volunteer assignment/service agreement.

## **5. Staff Evaluation**

You may ask volunteers to answer questions about their volunteer experience, the results of which can help improve the program. Questions may include:

- Do you receive adequate support from staff?
- What has been the most useful help you've received?
- In what areas of duties do you feel you need more support?
- Do you have opportunities to have input about the operation of the overall volunteer program?
- Are you satisfied with the conditions of your volunteer task(s)?
- If not, in what ways can we improve these conditions?
- Does the volunteer position utilize your time to the best advantage?