



**Satisfaction Guaranteed:
Happier Volunteers =
Greater Volunteer Retention**

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Volunteers

- Backbone of any non-profit organization.
- Keeping them happy and engaged can be challenging.
- How do you measure their satisfaction and retention?
- And what can you do to improve them?

What is Volunteer Retention?



Volunteer retention is an organization's ability to keep and engage active volunteers for a given period of time.

- Every organization/program will define this differently; depends on your organization's goals and the types of volunteer opportunities available.
- Can be defined by the number of hours volunteered (versus length of time).


High volunteer turnover can:

- Disrupt an organization's operational efficiency.
- Threaten its ability to implement projects effectively.
- Suck up resources (recruiting and training).
- Keeping a volunteer is much more efficient than finding a new one.

Long-term/committed volunteers:

- Improve a nonprofit's return on investment.
- Tend to be more reliable and may even perform better work.





*Main Street Program Volunteer
Development & Retention Survey*

24 RESPONSES (22 OF 30 PROGRAMS)

Is your organization successful at retaining Board Members/volunteers?

Yes - 16, No - 5, Yes & No - 3

- Overall, responses seemed geared toward Board Members versus volunteers
- Generally positive feedback

- Lucky to have a core group of dedicated volunteers and Board Members, due in part to efforts to make them feel appreciated, validated, and heard. We have new volunteers and Board Members, and I hope they will continue the same long-term trend.
- Board Members usually stay on their full term and then repeat.
- Many Board Members have been with us since the organization started.
- Current 2023 Board is pretty much all new except for three Board Members.
- Lots of longer-term Board Members/volunteers, as well as plenty of short timers.
- Replacing Board Members has been a challenge. Constantly attempting to fill positions.
- Event volunteers and committee members have sometimes been a challenge to recruit.
- We have two long-standing board members and recruited four new Board Members last year. Board Members have picked up additional responsibilities which helps keep them tethered to the organization.
- Probably like other communities, we retain and see the same people helping at most events. Luckily, we have a full board roster of 14 as well as regular committee members.
- Board members show up time and time again to help with events/projects.
- We need help with green spaces and events which can be hot and tiring, which can be unappealing. The school teams don't mind and keep coming back.

Why do Board Members Leave?

- Time constraints/conflicting schedules.
Jobs, families, personal lives.
- Moved out of town.
- Termed out.
- Tired of being president. Elected as Mayor.
- Retiring, cutting back on extracurricular commitments.
- Health.
- The person who recruited them is no longer with the organization.
- Not happy with the direction the organization is going in.
- Unhappy with other Board Members
- Board Member doesn't comply with requirements/expectations.

Why do volunteers leave?

- Moving out of the area, graduated college, new job, health issues, and limited time/availability
- Too busy at work. Growing family. Lack of clear volunteer opportunities that don't involve attending meetings.
- Burn out. Many volunteer for lots of organizations around town.
- They have lost interest. It's too hot.
- No interest, often no one says anything and just stop coming.
- Personality clashes with Board Members and/or staff.
- We do not have regular volunteers.

An unpleasant experience.

Feeling underappreciated.



Set Clear Expectations

Set Clear Expectations

- Screen volunteers and match them with appropriate opportunities.
- Get to know who they are and what their causes and interests are.
- Determine how and when they want to participate.
- What do they hope to get out of their experience (volunteer motivation)?
- How well do they understand their role, responsibilities, and goals?
- Share expectations during recruitment and onboarding – both of them and you (organization).
- Provide them with a written volunteer agreement, a handbook, and a job description that outline their tasks, time commitment, benefits, policies, chain of command, and feedback mechanisms.



Is your organization setting expectations of Board Members/volunteers?

Yes – 16, No – 5, Sometimes/Not Sure/In process – 3

How is your organization setting expectations?

Interview/Application

- Prospective Board Member/volunteer interviews and conversations.
- Prospective Board Member survey/application.

Onboarding/Orientation

- Onboarding documents, board handbook, and training.

Board Handbook

- Board Member Job descriptions.
- Board Member versus Staff Roles & Responsibilities.
- Bylaws.
- Policies.
- Municipal Service Contract.
- Work plan with Economic Transformation Strategies.
- District Map.

Planning/Placement

- Annual planning sessions.
- When communicating tasks need to achieve annual goals.
- Committee/project placement.

Meetings/Email

- During Board meetings and committee meetings.
- Over email.

Expectations might include:

- The organization has a working board that supports staff with projects and events.
- Board members have financial responsibilities (management, fundraising).
- Board members are responsible for participating/working on at least one project for the organization per year (more if they are able).
- Prospective Board Members' interests and how well they fit with the organization's mission and vision, and the role of the Board.
- Allow board members to sign up for events/jobs that match skill and desire.
- Clearly communicate mission and goal of volunteer activities
- Volunteer needs, abilities, and scheduling preferences.
- Should be communicated more often.

Case Study: Setting Clear Expectations

Nolan Ojeda

Alamogordo MainStreet
Executive Director



Alamogordo MainStreet



Provide Training & Support

Provide Training & Support

- Creates confidence and competence for Board Members/volunteers in their role.
- Can include orientation, mentoring, coaching, workshops, webinars, or online resources.
- Not just “technical” aspects of their role
 - **Include soft skills, such as communication, teamwork, or problem-solving.**
- Should be ongoing, relevant, and accessible.
- Help Board Members/volunteers develop skills, knowledge, and confidence.



Grants MainStreet Project

Is your organization providing training and support to Board Members/volunteers?

Yes – 17, No – 4, Sort of – 3

How is your organization providing training & support?

- NMMS Network Wide Trainings (Conference & Institute; Zoom roundtables).
- NMMS On-Site Board Trainings.
- Board Retreat/Annual planning meeting.
- Committee activation/specific event-based training.
- Board Member Onboarding/Orientation (in-person, via email).
- Board Member Training (annual or otherwise) on operations, duties, roles and responsibilities, technology (email, file drive, Canva, etc.).
- Volunteer orientation/training related to duties they volunteered for and continuing as needed.
- ED attends NMMS Zoom and in-person trainings and shares info with Board Members.



Zuni Pueblo MainStreet

Case Study: Providing Training & Support

Brenda Ferri

Raton MainStreet
Executive Director



Raton MainStreet

Case Study: Providing Training & Support

Morgan Fox
Artesia MainStreet
Executive Director



Artesia MainStreet



Collect Feedback Regularly

Collect Feedback Regularly

- Use a variety of methods: surveys, interviews, focus groups, or suggestion boxes.
- Gather Board Member/volunteer opinions, suggestions, and concerns.
- Ask about their satisfaction with their role, training, supervision, recognition, support, and impact.
- Listen to their feedback and act on it.
- Demonstrate appreciation for their input and willingness to make changes to improve their experience.



Los Alamos Main Street

Is your organization collecting feedback regularly from Board Members/volunteers?

Yes – 17, No – 5, Sort of – 2

How is your organization collecting feedback?

- Annual Board evaluation/annual accreditation.
- Time for suggestions, comments, concerns, and issues during Board meetings, committee meetings, executive sessions, etc.
- Debrief/"After Action Review" following events/projects/programs to identify areas for improvement next year (Board Members, volunteers, stakeholders).
- Regular communication among Board & staff by phone, email and/or in person.
- Regular check ins with Board Members/volunteers.
- Volunteer surveys.
- Six-month check-in with Board Members.

Make adjustments based on feedback:

- Accommodate their schedules
- Provided cooling trailers and more food.
- Increasing volunteer appreciation efforts (gratitude, perks, recognition)
- Asked Board Members unable to serve fully to become ad hoc members.
- Effort made to determine how they can contribute, take on a project/activity leadership role, and/or contribute financially. If they can't find a role, they will most likely be asked to move on.



Case Study: Collecting Feedback

Claudia Loya

Alamogordo MainStreet
Board President



Alamogordo MainStreet

Build Relationships & Community



Build Relationship & Community

- Volunteers need to feel connected and engaged with your organization and with each other.
- Foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie by creating opportunities for socialization, collaboration, and networking.
- Organize team-building activities, social events, or peer-to-peer mentoring.
- Can also involve volunteers in decision-making, planning, and evaluation processes.
- Demonstrate that you value their opinions, perspectives, and contributions.



Is your organization creating socializing and community building opportunities for Board Members/volunteers?

Yes – 7, No – 16, In process – 1

Is your organization actively trying to make Board meetings and volunteering fun?

Yes – 14, No – 4, In process – 5

How is your organization creating socializing & community building opportunities?

- “Lunch-bunch” on Friday (casual, optional, and self-pay).
- Tight knit group that hangs out for dinner at least four times per year.
- Quarterly/annual “bonding” get-togethers.
- Annual volunteer mixer (also used as a recruitment event)
- Annual holiday party with a fun theme and/or gift exchange.
- President and Executive Director grab a beer after activities/events.
- Mostly during NMMS conferences/institutes.
- Board/volunteer summer-themed party held after annual signature event at the local waterpark; Board Members/volunteers invited to bring family and friends to enjoy an evening together.



Raton MainStreet

How is your organization making Board meetings and volunteering fun?

Refreshments

- Snacks, food, drinks, alcohol
- A meal and fresh baked dessert with time set aside to enjoy them during Board meetings.
- Provide lunch during volunteer activities and keep the atmosphere light and fun with music.

Environment/Meeting Format

- ACD steering committee annual meeting/strategic planning includes games with prizes. Semi informal environment.
- Meetings are held as a mix of Zoom and in person with food and drinks.
- Try to make Board meetings interesting, enjoyable, fun, and spirited.
- Keep Board meetings short.
- Let people pick and choose, never assign responsibilities.
- Have an inviting organization with laughter and comradery.
- Board members build relationships during events, making meetings feel like reunions.

Meeting Location

- Hold Board/committee meetings at different downtown locations each month to introduce Board Members to different businesses.
- Host committee meeting at brewery located in the district at 4 pm so people can unwind and enjoy an alcoholic beverage if desired.



Case Study: Building Relationships & Community Making Meetings Fun

Kat Davis

Carlsbad MainStreet
Executive Director



Carlsbad MainStreet



Recognize & Reward

Recognize & Reward

- Volunteers need to feel recognized and rewarded for their efforts and achievements.
- Can take many forms, such as verbal praise, certificates, awards, gifts, events, or opportunities for growth.
- Make them meaningful, personalized, and timely.
- Recognize and reward volunteers not only for their hours or output, but also for their skills, qualities, and outcomes.
- Celebrate their milestones, successes, and stories.
- Show them how they make a difference to your cause and your community.



Is your organization providing rewards and perks to Board Members/volunteers?

Yes – 15, No – 3, Sometimes/In process – 3

Is your organization demonstrating appreciation and recognition of your Board Members/volunteers?

Yes – 10, No – 12, Sometimes – 2

How is your organization providing rewards and perks?

- T-shirts; Logo polo shirts for Board Members.
- Branded swag/merchandise, including bandanas, stickers, hats.
- Annual (local) holiday gift; ability to purchase local artwork at cost.
- Gift certificates/gift cards/district shopping vouchers.
- Food, snacks/snack bags, coffee, refreshments, free beer/adult beverages.
- VIP tickets/event tickets/free admission.
- Access to NMMS out-of-town trainings/Main Street Now at no cost to Board Members (stipends, lodging, registration); free trainings and skill building.
- Certificates of appreciation for volunteers.
- Annual signature event volunteer appreciation/orientation night featuring live music and food.



Los Alamos MainStreet

How is your organization demonstrating appreciation and recognition?

- Award(s) at annual meeting/banquet/holiday party/open house.
 - Volunteer of the Year, "Most Volunteered" Individual, MainStreet MVP (Most Valuable Politician), Board Member length of service, awards based on annual volunteer hours, awards for volunteer excellence on specific projects.
- Host "thank you" events post-event.
- Write thank you cards at the end of the year or following an event.
- Provide gift cards out of event profits to volunteers who went above and beyond.
- Bring them a tray of cookies or something similar and a thank you card, particularly after a tough event/activity.
- Highlighting the MainStreet program at a Chamber event.
- At our Board meetings by telling them so.



Case Study: Recognizing Volunteers



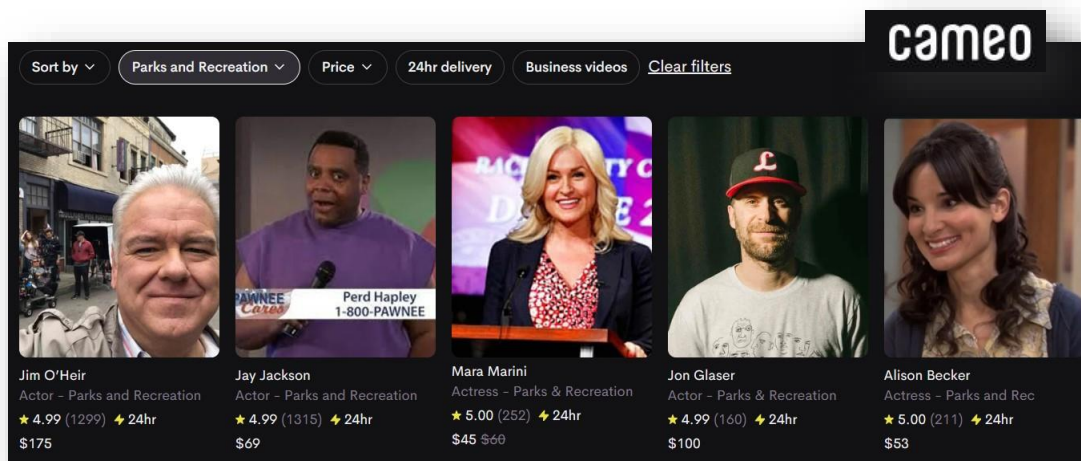
William Yarborough
Grants MainStreet Project
Executive Director



Grants MainStreet Project

More Ways to Demonstrate Volunteer Appreciation

- Highlight a volunteer in every newsletter/regularly on social media.
- Send letters from the community.
- Take group photo and use it as a personalized gift, get it framed, use it in media.
- Recruit a celebrity to say thank you.
- Plan a night out - movies, sporting event, dinner.
- Plan a night out AND include their families.
- Host a private social event for your volunteers.
- Host a volunteer appreciation gala.
- Host a volunteer surprise party.
- Give new volunteers a welcome gift/gift bag.
- Give volunteers an opportunity to design swag (design contest).
- Gift seasonal items - gloves or hand warmers for winter events; sunscreen, hats or water bottles for summer events.

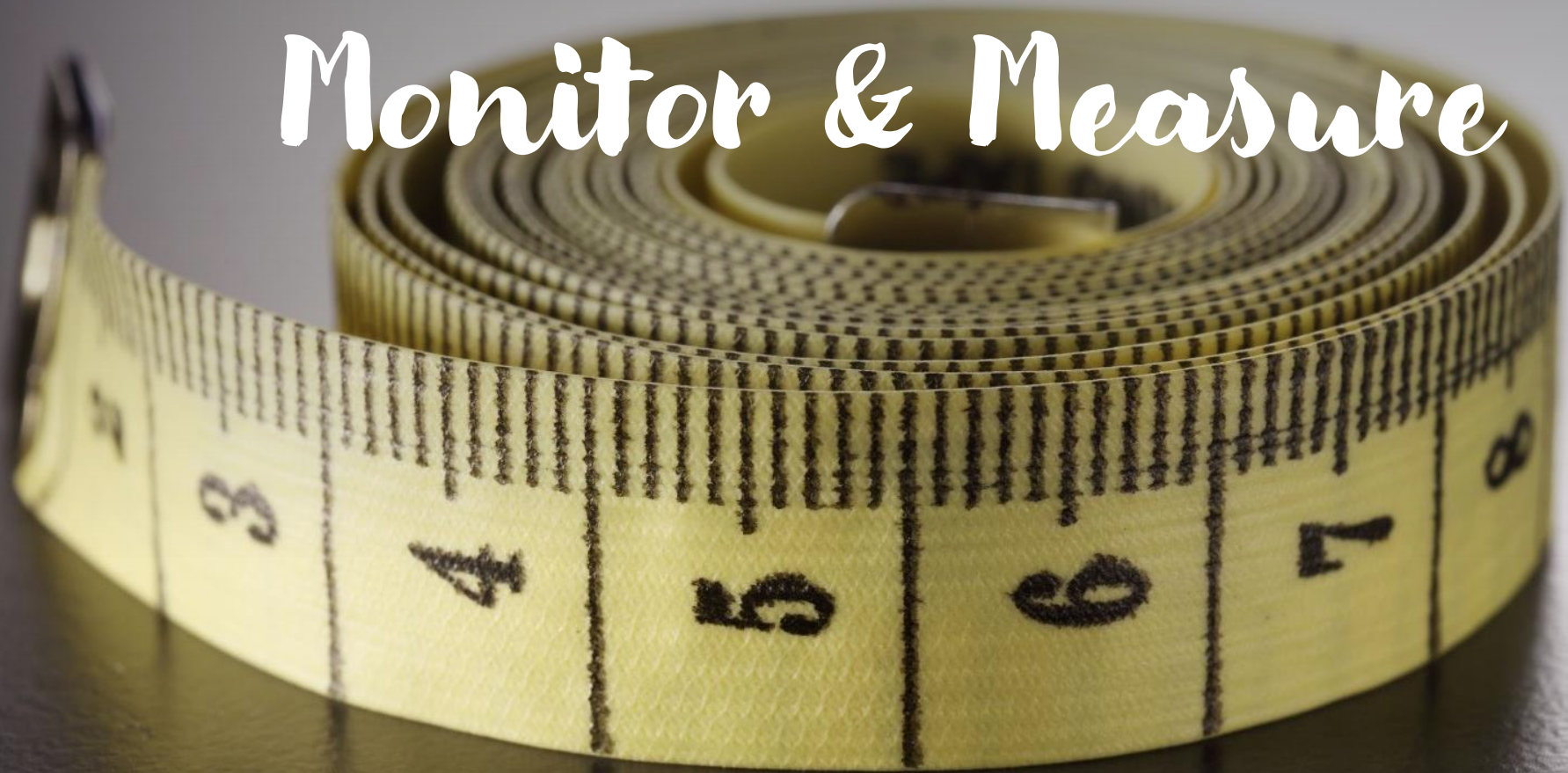


More Ways to Demonstrate Volunteer Appreciation

- Host a car wash just for your volunteers.
 - Recruit a youth group to wash cars and provide a donation.
- Bring in a food truck to provide food to your volunteers during activities.
- Start a raffle based on \$\$\$ raised, volunteer hours, # of events volunteered at, etc.
- Write LinkedIn endorsements for top volunteers.
- Write letters of recommendation.
- Serve as a reference.
- Invest in your volunteers with skill building
 - Instead of the ED attending the training and transferring knowledge after, send the volunteer.
- Give professional advice and make contacts (where appropriate).
- Promote or hire your top volunteers!



Monitor & Measure



Monitor & Measure

- Monitor and measure volunteer satisfaction and retention rates and trends.
- Help identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as factors that influence volunteer experience.
- Can use various indicators, such as turnover, retention, engagement, loyalty, satisfaction, or impact scores, to track and evaluate volunteer performance.
- Can also use benchmarks, goals, or standards to compare and improve results.
- Analyze and report your data regularly and use it to inform your strategies and actions.

Is your organization monitoring and measuring your Board Member/Volunteer satisfaction and retention rates?

Yes – 4, No – 18, Yes (retention) – 1

- How?***
- Conversations and open dialogue with our volunteers.
 - Use database to track volunteer hours, requests to become inactive, etc.
 - Surveys

Monitor & Measure

Define retention for different types of volunteers.

- **Retention for Board Members likely different from retention of other volunteers.**

Retention of volunteers supplied by partner organization.

- **Might want to evaluate if the partner wants to continue to bring volunteers and how many are participating, as opposed to whether they are the same volunteers; particularly if a student organization.**

What's the length of time you are tracking/measuring? Annual, monthly, by event/activity

Create specific opportunities for Board Members/volunteers to provide feedback and share their satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with their experience.

- **One-on-one meetings, 6-month check ins, surveys.**

Don't forget to evaluate your efforts internally!



Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

Strongly Agree ~~Agree~~ Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

You felt adequately prepared (via orientation or training) to volunteer with the organization.

You were satisfied with the amount of work you were given to do.

You were satisfied with the number of hours you volunteered each month.

You are satisfied with the level or quality of work you were asked to do.

You believe your volunteer work had an impact.

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

You were satisfied with the management and direction of the volunteer program.

Organization & and committee leadership were open to suggestions and ideas from volunteers.

Organization & and committee leadership empowered volunteers to take the lead on projects and activities.

Please indicate your satisfaction with your overall experience volunteering with Shelbyville MainStreet.

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Neutral

Unsatisfied

Very Unsatisfied



What is your organization doing to encourage volunteer retention?

PLEASE SHARE!

Thank you!

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Sources: [How do you evaluate and improve your volunteer satisfaction and retention? \(linkedin.com\)](#)

[Volunteer Retention: 9 Ways to Keep Your Volunteers \(galaxydigital.com\)](#)