

Selected Questions from Readiness Assessment - Using Specialized or Skills-based Volunteers

- This readiness assessment could be used as a stand-alone tool but it is designed to be used as the 13th section of the Volunteer Management Audit developed by Susan J. Ellis
- The term “specialized” volunteers is being used as synonymous with “skills-based” volunteers. All volunteers have skills. What distinguishes this type of volunteerism is that the volunteer comes to the organization with specific skills, credentials, and experience that is not available in the general population.

Element # 13: Specialized (or skills-based) Volunteers	
Using specialized volunteers can provide a wealth of talent for projects that otherwise would be costs for the organization. But utilizing specialized volunteers calls for a different approach than for unskilled, do-whatever-you-ask-them-to, volunteers, including special approaches to planning, engagement, orientation, supervision, performance management and involvement.	
<p>A. We utilize specialized volunteers as needed/available.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The organization does not use the specialized skills of volunteers. 2. The organization uses the specialized skills of board members but not other volunteers. 3. The organization uses the specialized skills of volunteers as opportunities to do so arise. 4. The organization strategically and effectively utilizes the specialized skills of volunteers by assessing organizational needs and matching those needs to the assessed skills of volunteers (existing and recruited). <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>B. We have developed long-term goals for engaging skilled volunteers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have not articulated any goals for engaging skilled volunteers. 2. We have developed short-term goals specific to the tasks assigned to skilled volunteers. 3. The volunteer program has developed goals for the recruitment and placement of skilled volunteers. 4. The organization has articulated long-term goals for engaging skilled volunteers based on the results of an organizational needs assessment as part of our strategic planning process. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>C. We allocate funds and resources to meet the needs of managing skilled volunteers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We do not allocate funds or resources to managing skilled volunteers. 2. There are funds available as needed to recognize and appreciate volunteers in general. 3. The volunteer program has a dedicated budget, but funds are not allocated to specifically meet the needs of skilled volunteers 4. Adequate funds and resources are allocated to support the engagement of skilled volunteers. Budget includes funds for training of staff and volunteers, recruitment, equipment and space needs, recognition, and staff time. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>D. Staff working with volunteers have acquired the skill set (including leadership level skills) required to work effectively with professional volunteers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No funds or resources are allocated to training staff to upgrade skills to work with skilled volunteers. 2. The volunteer manager is encouraged to upgrade volunteer management skills, but little to no funds or resources are allocated. 3. Staff receive some training to work more effectively with skilled volunteers. 4. Funds are allocated to the volunteer program manager, staff and key volunteers to upgrade the skills required to work with skilled volunteers. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>E. The organization plans ahead of time on how we will utilize skills-based volunteers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We do not design volunteer assignments for volunteers with specialized skills. 2. We design volunteer assignments when a new volunteer offers a specialized skill. 3. We design volunteer positions for specialized volunteers based on the anticipated needs of the organization. 4. We have designed specialized volunteer positions based on the assessed needs of the organization and have the flexibility to respond to the specific skills offered by a volunteer (we have assessed skill gaps and job functional competencies beginning with mission critical tasks). <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____

<p>F. We have developed a Recruitment Strategy for recruiting specialized volunteers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We don't actively recruit specialized volunteers. 2. Recruitment of specialized volunteers is done on an as-needed basis. 3. Opportunities for specialized volunteers are posted regularly. 4. We have a managed recruitment process for recruitment of specialized volunteers including the tracking and monitoring of recruitment strategies. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>G. We have developed a process for screening and interviewing specialized volunteers that takes into the account those special aspects of managing more highly-functioning volunteers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We accept anyone with special skills who wants to volunteer. 2. We screen volunteers to determine their special skill set and how that might be utilized within the organization. 3. When a specialized volunteer comes forward, we assess not only their skill set, but their personality fit with the organization. 4. We conduct in-depth interviews with specialized volunteers to determine their skill set, fit with the organization, and to clarify expectations on both sides. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>H. We have a separate orientation and training program for specialized volunteers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have no orientation or training program for any volunteers, other than basic training on whatever job they are given. 2. Specialized volunteers receive the same orientation/training as other volunteers. 3. Specialized volunteers receive the same orientation/training as other volunteers, but we do make an effort to give them more of a sense of how their project fits in to the organization. 4. Specialized volunteers are given an in-depth orientation to the organization, including how their project fits in overall, an introduction to other staff, and training on our policies and procedures, even where they do not immediately apply to them. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>I. We insure that specialized volunteers are given the staff support and resources needed to accomplish their projects.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Specialized volunteers receive limited supervision and sometimes need to supply their own supplies, resources, and other things needed to accomplish their project. 2. Specialized volunteers receive an introduction to staff members, and support from the Volunteer Coordinator. Basic supplies are provided. 3. Specialized volunteers are assigned to a project coordinator within the organization who ensures that the volunteer has access to supplies, staff, and whatever else is needed to accomplish their project. 4. Specialized volunteers are assigned a project coordinator at the senior management level, who is charged with ensuring that the volunteer has access to supplies, other staff members and whatever else is needed (within budget) to complete their project. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
<p>J. We have a performance management process in place specifically for specialized volunteers that ensures that expectations on both sides are met.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We perform a project review at the end of the process to determine how successful the project was, and to document lessons learned. 2. Specialized volunteers receive both positive and negative feedback as the project goes forward. 3. Specialized volunteers are assigned a project manager within the organization who is responsible for checking the progress of the work and correcting course if necessary. 4. At the beginning of the assignment the project manager meets with the specialized volunteer to set expectations; feedback is constant, and if the specialized volunteers is determined to now be a good match for the organization and/or project, they are effectively managed out. <p><input type="checkbox"/> None of the above. In our situation.....</p>	L E V E L _____
Total Score for Element #13: Utilizing Specialized Volunteers (Total /36)	