Questions an Organization Should Ask When Transitioning a Volunteer Program
Overview

Intros
Context
Case Studies
Q&A
Workshop - Small Groups
More Q&A
Takeaways and Resources
We are:

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Context

Types of Changes

- Volunteer leadership
- Organizational leadership
- Organizational capacity
- Volunteer roles
- DEAI focus
Context

Why

- Old models not always working
- Pandemic pause and restart
- Volunteerism changes - what does the data say?
Survey Says

2022 AAMV Survey

- ½ of respondents said current volunteer numbers are less than 60% of their pre-pandemic numbers
- Recruitment was cited as a top challenge

2023 Volunteer Pro Survey

- 65% of respondents said they have decreased capacity for volunteers, post Covid.
- ⅓ reported retaining volunteers for 10 months or less
Case Studies
Strategic Plan for Volunteer Engagement

Developed from survey data

Created by staff, volunteers, and trustees

Assists in change management

Support from outside consultant VQ Volunteer Strategies
3 Critical Issues

1. Nurture a collaborative and unified workforce of volunteers and staff.

2. Broaden the diversity of volunteers and improve our ability to leverage their skills, talents, and uniqueness.

3. Empower volunteers and staff for maximum effectiveness.
Why a leadership remodel?

**Goal from Strategic Plan:** Evaluate, re/define, and communicate the role of volunteer councils and the Volunteer Executive Board.

**Continuous Improvement:** DAM is an evolving organization, assesses systems in every area to stay relevant.

**Equity Diversity Inclusion:** DAM prioritizes a variety of perspectives, flexibility, collaboration, inclusivity, diversity.

**Impact:** Volunteer support staff, allowing for greater capacity and impact
Volunteer Executive Board

President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Member at Large.


Exclusive. Big commitment.

Meetings scheduled during the day M-F.

Role of the group unclear.
Task Force

Staff and volunteer members representing different volunteer areas.

Presented 3 different leadership models.

Walked through scenarios with each model.

Took two polls to narrow down the model.

Presented new model to the VEB to get feedback.
Outcomes

Inclusive & efficient system for staff & volunteers to share input and strategies to address issues facing volunteers.

Inclusive & efficient system for communicating museum news and priorities from staff to volunteers.

Point person for reporting volunteer impact to the Board.

Strategy for conducting regular social and learning opportunities for volunteers.

Group to manage volunteer funds and keep volunteers informed.
Change Strategy

Introduce the idea of change to a smaller group of those who will be affected by the change before the larger group.

*Art of Alignment: A Practical Guide to Inclusive Leadership* to clarify questions, share compliments, listen to concerns, incorporate suggested changes, and to get commitment.

Communicate the change (and why) often and in as many venues as possible. Newsletters, Updates, LMS.

Identify stakeholders: Past Presidents, VEB, champions and challengers.
Honor the Past
Training and Retraining Volunteers Around DEAI
Shared Language

**DIVERSITY**
Diversity is all the ways that people are different and the same at the individual and group levels. Even when people appear the same, they are different. Organizational diversity requires examining and questioning the makeup of a group to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented.

**ACCESSIBILITY**
Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings.

**EQUITY**
Equity is the fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specified goals.

**INCLUSION**
Inclusion refers to the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes.

It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community.

*Source: American Alliance of Museums, aam-us.org*
Training and Retraining Volunteers around DEAI

- DEAI initiatives must be organization-wide, and training volunteers in coordination with staff and board members is a statement of the volunteers’ value to your institution
- Volunteer reactions
- Consideration of visitors, consideration of volunteers, and reframing liability
Strategies for Success

- Voices of authority
- Commit to listening, learning, sharing, and growing
- Accept and expect discomfort
- Be willing to make hard decisions
- Prioritize organizational values & set expectations at every stage
- Continuing education for yourself and your volunteers

This work is an ongoing journey, and one without a destination

DEAI Toolkit: aamv.org/Diversity
Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens
Using Visitor Data to Inform Change

- Use visitor data to create engagement opportunities for visitors that are more in line with needs and interests
  - Ex: only 3% of visitors visit “to learn something”
- Less lecture, more conversation with visitors
- Increase the number of visitor engagement opportunities
- Range from dive deep or answering questions
Changing Docent Roles

- Train docents to lead visitor-centered experiences
- Develop docent roles that provide greater access for a more diverse range of volunteers
- Progressive docent roles:
  - Ask Me (5-10-minute duration)
  - Spotlight (15-20-minute duration)
  - Highlight (20-30-minute duration)
  - Themed (45-60-minute duration)
Accessible and Inclusive Training

- Develop docent roles that provide greater access for a more diverse range of volunteers
- Develop and schedule training accordingly, leveraging hybrid training opportunities
- Training that is commensurate with the type of engagement offered to visitors (ex: short engagement=short training)
Q&A
Workshop
The Questions

- Think of the worst case scenario of what will happen if no changes are made.
- Are there things our museums are doing that resemble that worst case scenario?

Questions to ask and answer to avoid that worst case scenario

a. What are the driving needs to solving this problem?
b. Who are the stakeholders?
c. Who are your champions? Who do you need to convert?
d. How do we honor the past?
e. What are the barriers to this change?
f. What are some specific steps to take?
g. What is the timeline?
h. How do you address where different people are in the process?
i. What are the communications challenges?
j. What is the communication plan? Key message?
More Q&A
Resources

AAMV.org
Denverartmuseum.org
AAM-us.org
and more on the Resource List
(hard copy or conference app)