

Volunteer Coordination Steering Committee Meeting

Notes

April 22, 2025
9:00- 10:30 am

Attendees:

- Roman Aguilar
- Andi Cook
- Brooke Campbell
- Gary Flaharty
- Jackie Golz
- Jodi Bernstein
- Jackie Miller
- Robert Nnake
- Samir Idrees
- Tommy Holstien
- Trevor Barnett
- Sherroo Mukhtiar

General Notes:

- Amy Zachmeyer from New Houston is joining. New Houston supports labor and community organizations by conducting research, shaping policies, and advocating for campaigns to improve the lives of working families through local government. They have recently applied for VOAD membership.

Volunteer Houston Demonstration

- VH allows for hyperlinks in the description box
- There will be a template available for different kinds of natural disasters
- Is there any wiggle room on how soon the follow up email is sent to volunteers?
 - Currently set to be sent a week after their volunteer shift
 - Should be within 24 hours
 - This could prompt them to volunteer again
- What happens when someone posts a need that isn't related to the salient disaster?
 - Would someone be able to post a non priority job within the salient disaster?
 - Will review each post to ensure that the needs posts are assigned to disasters only when explicitly related
- There is only one initiative per disaster in the disaster module; however, multiple “spotlights” can be created to distinguish needs related to different disasters
- Reminder message for volunteer

- Will be sent out the day before
- Is there a separate URL we can publicize?
 - Yes
 - Will it be volunteerhou.org/disaster?
 - If we have multiple disasters happening simultaneously?
 - We can only make one initiative in the disaster module, but you can add spotlights for the different disaster needs
- Volunteers can browse needs if they don't have an account on VH
 - You are only required to log in if you are signing up to volunteer
- What happens if Samir is unavailable?
 - Andi has 80 trained technicians who use the Just Serve platform, can be trained on the VH platform
 - Jodi to connect with Gary to coordinate coverage and redundancy plans
- What happens if the organizations that host volunteer opportunities want to send out their own survey?
 - How will this affect engagement with the VH survey?
- Will volunteer organizations manage their volunteer shifts directly on the VH portal?
- Nonprofits will input information on their volunteer opportunities
 - The volunteer manager will have to keep up with the sign ups that don't come through VH
 - Volunteer managers at the nonprofits should sign up groups they know are volunteering but have not signed up through Volunteer Houston so that the relevant information can be collected
 - Roman: for them, it was easier to send out a needs post and reach out directly to the volunteers who signed up to place them in a pod that still needed volunteers and that was located in a convenient location for the volunteer
 - Nonprofits can either:
 - Upload needs with a capacity limit, allowing VH to manage signups automatically
 - Post evergreen or ongoing needs, managing signups manually
 - Posting with shifts enables automated data collection and clearer volunteer expectations
 - Decentralizing volunteer sign up through things like on going posts weakens our ability to:
 - efficiently allocate assignments
 - provide quality volunteer experiences
 - track volunteer hours
 - Samir can make the capacity field required and vet the organizations based on their capacity and experience with disaster recovery to approve the capacity they have indicated they have for a specific need

- There should be general, nonorganizationally specific shifts that are always available that allow the volunteer managers to send to priority efforts
- Trainings will be essential to ensure that volunteer organizations are using the VH portal effectively
 - Who will organize this training?
 - The steering committee can organize an in-person or online training, Samir will present
 - Can work 4-6 sessions
- We have a preferred path:
 - Agencies should manage hours entirely on VH
 - If agencies want to manage hours independently, they should be expected to share those reports in a timely manner
- Skills and Abilities
 - The system automatically matches needs to the volunteers
 - The system also typically sends out curated volunteer opportunities based on the profile the volunteer has made, but these rules are not in place in the disaster module
- What volunteers see
 - When the volunteers enter their page, they will receive a questionnaire
 - What questions need to be on the questionnaire?
 - Name
 - Phone number
 - Email
 - Age
 - Zip Code
 - Availability
 - Volunteers should select their availability, and agencies should assign them to evergreen opportunities based on the availability the volunteers have already indicated
 - Ongoing needs should just not be allowed to ensure that volunteers have a clear time when they need to come in
 - VH can also ask if they want to be signed up for specific mailing lists
 - Can add a field that asks “Would you like to be contacted in the event of another disaster?”, and this mailing list can be used to contact volunteers in the future
 - This can be sent to blue sky volunteers and disaster volunteers
- Existing concerns with VH:
 - Not getting a high enough volume of volunteers
 - Onerous data collection process
 - Addressing these points will be crucial for agencies to commit to using VH, even with the overhead it requires

- How long will it take for a needs post to be displayed on VH from the time it is submitted for approval?
 - Typically this process takes 24 hours, but they will be processed much faster during disasters

Action Items:

- Decide:
 - Timing of follow-up emails (aiming for 24–48 hrs)
 - Final public URL format for disaster needs
 - Which group(s) will lead agency training
 - Whether ongoing/evergreen posts will be allowed and under what guidelines
- **Samir** will send a list of variables that can be edited on the confirmation email
- **Samir** to send out access to the sandbox
- **Samir** to confirm if people can browse VH without signing in
- **Samir** to add the following fields to the volunteer questionnaire:
 - Name
 - Phone number
 - Email
 - Age
 - Zip Code
 - Availability
- **Andi, Gary, and Jodi** to connect offline about training a technician to help Samir.
- **Gary** to send an update on the calendar invites
 - Change time to larger group (Doodle poll)
 - Expand next steering committee meeting to 2 hours

Next Meeting

- 4/29 9:00 am - 11:00 am