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# Best in Class Volunteer Experience

What does it mean to build and maintain a best-in-class VITA volunteer experience?

9,000  
volunteers

400,000  
service hours

300,000  
returns

\$500M in  
refunds

Foundation  
Communities VITA  
Volunteer Impact  
since 2005

# So how do we do it?

- We ask and we ask again.
- We work to make it easy and reduce barriers.
- We build connections.
- We provide meaningful work.
- We hire dedicated Volunteer Engagement staff to focus on creating the volunteer experience. This is crucial!



# Meet the Tax Help Volunteer Team

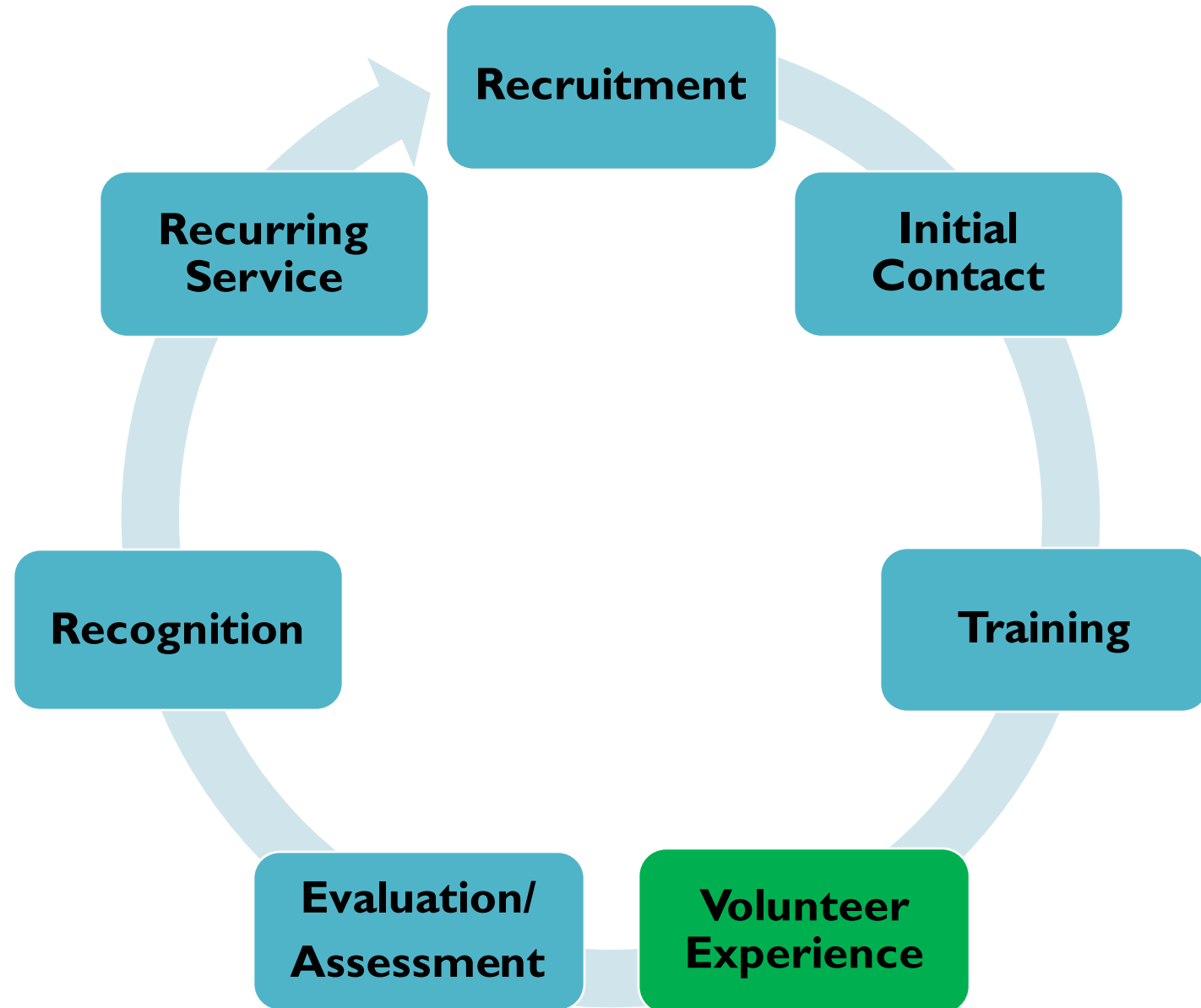


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Volunteer Coordinator



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Volunteer Engagement Manager

# Volunteer Engagement Cycle



# Recruitment



# Recruitment

- Start with our existing pool
- You will need more “applicants” than will actually volunteer
- Create and maintain a list of partner organizations
- Invite clients to volunteer
- Think outside the recruitment box

# 4 Motivation Strategies for Recruitment Messaging

Enlist

Often all someone needs to get involved is to be asked to participate.

Motivate

Others need an incentive or reason.

Persuade

Then there are those that need to be won over or talked into giving service a try.

Show

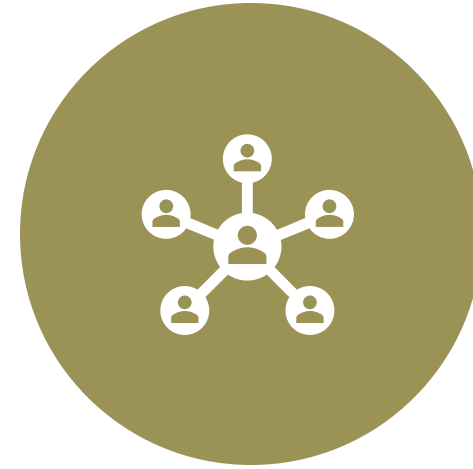
Physically seeing service in action and seeing the impact on someone's life.



# Initial Contact



#1 - WE RESPOND



#2 - WE CONNECT



## Set clear expectations

- Create a volunteer position description
- Clearly lay out the hours requirements and availability needed
- Express what your desired experience in a volunteer is, base this on the type of training you can provide
- List the training requirements

Training

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We work with program staff and volunteers to create content and training delivery plans.

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We work hard to reduce barriers and make training accessible.

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We serve as the main point of contact for volunteers.

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We answer a LOT of questions.

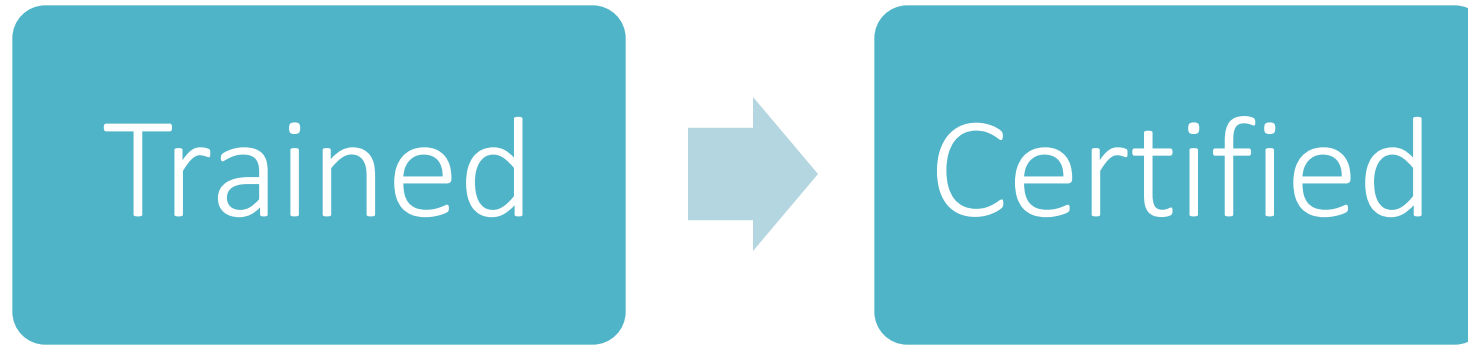
We have a responsibility to ensure volunteers are adequately trained.

# Jumping the training hurdle



Support, support and more support!

- We provide very explicit instructions
- We offer a lot of 1:1 support
- Testing support sessions



Follow up, follow up and follow up again!

- Invest a lot of effort in the follow through
- Set deadlines
- Make a communication plan
- Keep communication consistent

It's critical volunteers feel supported in their efforts.

# Volunteer Experience





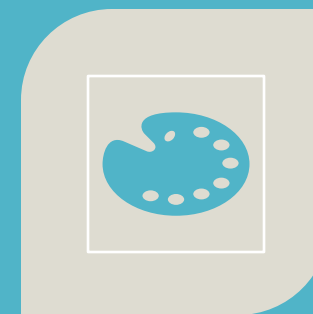
TRAIN YOUR STAFF



SET EXPECTATIONS



PROVIDE TOOLS



CREATE A CULTURE



## ALL ARE WELCOME, WE'RE ALL IN

We are champions. Champions of our mission, our residents, our clients and our volunteers. As a community, we have a responsibility to champion kindness, respect and inclusion. Join us in embracing individuals of all identities as we increase access to housing, education, health and financial stability.

## WHAT DO YOU SAY? ARE YOU ALL IN?

Let's champion each other and all our neighbors.

# "ALL IN" COMMITMENT

## WHO

All are welcome. We value all people and celebrate the multitude of social identities we all possess. This includes (but is not limited to): age, nationality, class, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, (dis)ability, size, sexual orientation, political affiliation, first language, family status, military status, citizenship status and geography. While all are welcome, not all behaviors are welcome. Our responsibility also lies in highlighting what we do not champion: hate, exclusivity, inappropriate conduct or disrespect.

## WHAT

Together we'll create spaces where people want to be. Where staff, clients and volunteers are encouraged to come as they are. Where individuals, in all the complexities of their identity, are accepted, included and respected.

## WHERE

Everywhere we show up, especially our housing communities, service sites and virtual spaces.

## WHEN

Today, tomorrow, every day. This work is lifelong.

## WHY

Each of us has a part in creating spaces where all people feel like they belong. It doesn't just happen — it takes work. By examining the ways we may unknowingly cause harm to others, we have the chance to learn, to heal and to correct. Only by doing this can we truly celebrate our collective strengths as a diverse community, where all people experience a sense of belonging.

## HOW

Through training and education. Taking risks and growing from our stumbles. Uncomfortable conversations. 360 degree feedback. Examining our own biases. Unlearning harmful ways of interacting with people of different identities. Learning all about our own identities, both personal and social. Asking questions and getting curious about what shapes our own perspectives and experiences. We have resources to do this together!

# The Volunteer Experience

The first day volunteer experience is key

- Train your staff
- "It's my first day" checklist
- Provide an opportunity for shadowing
- Reach out to first time volunteers after their first shift

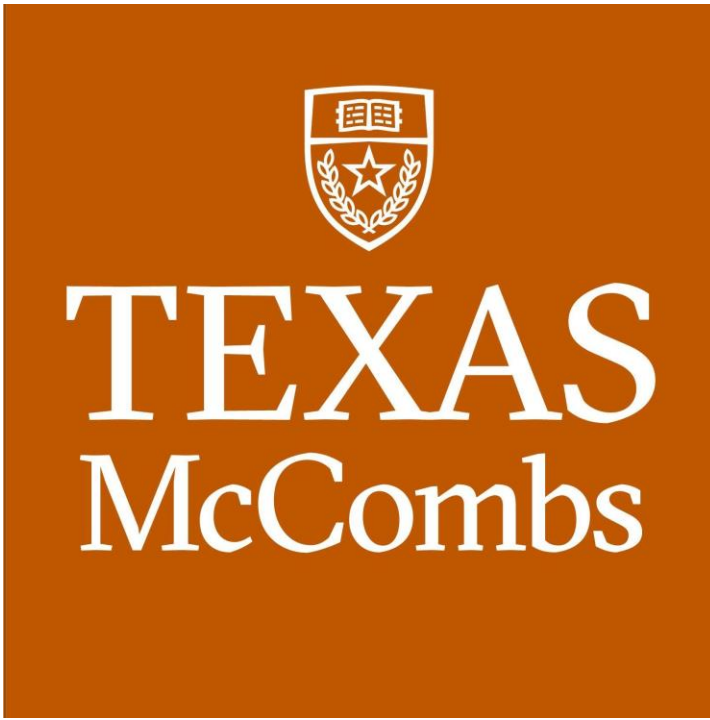
# Keeping volunteers engaged



## Foster A Culture Of Support!

- Through training and communications, we constantly emphasize our team environment
- The volunteer resource pages
- Have a centralized point of contact volunteers know they can go to
- Managers/onsite staff to provide feedback to Volunteer Engagement Team on specific volunteers that require follow up and we follow up
- Maintain regular communication with volunteers

# Service Learning



## Partnership Since 2006

- Over 2,500 students have participated
- Over 140,000 hours of service

# How it works, at a glance

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Practicum/Internship course

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55 hours of service

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In class presentations from community leaders

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Group work throughout the semester

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End of semester paper



## BENEFITS

- Added capacity
- Guaranteed volunteers each year
- Connect the University with the community
- Real world experience for students
- Impact it has on students

## CHALLENGES

- Require more staff oversight
- Low retention rates
- Retrain every year
- Some students have never had a customer service job before.
- Student motivation levels vary
- Shift coverage aligns with academic calendar and student schedules



# Evaluation/Assessment

Ask for  
feedback...and  
take action!

TRAINING SURVEY

ONGOING SURVEY

END-OF-SEASON SURVEY

STAFF FEEDBACK SURVEY

Recognition

# Retention

THANK YOU goes a long way!

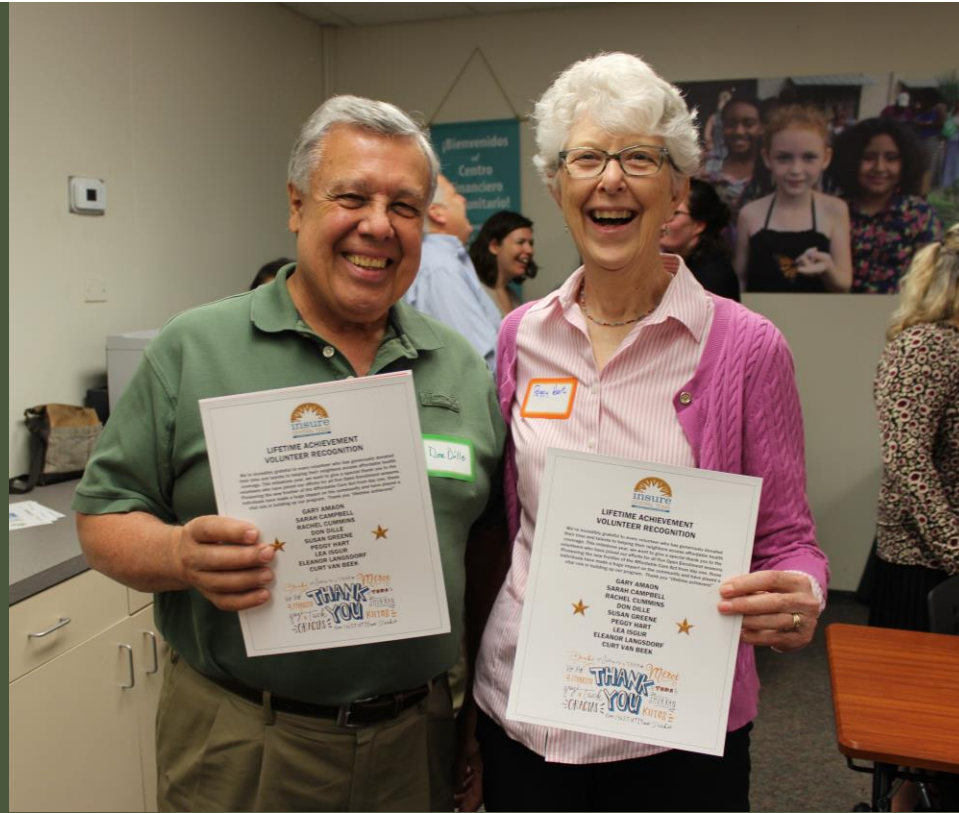
## Simple ways to appreciate volunteers:

- Be present on-site
- Learn their names
- Notice repeat service
- Provide them with a nametag
- Treats and snacks
- Mail personalized, hand-written thank you Notes
- Leadership opportunities
- Individual impact data
- Offer recommendation letters
- Social media spotlights
- Award applications



# Ways to show appreciation

Recognize milestones  
(5 years, 10 years, etc.)



# Outstanding Service Award for 100+ hours



Ways to show appreciation

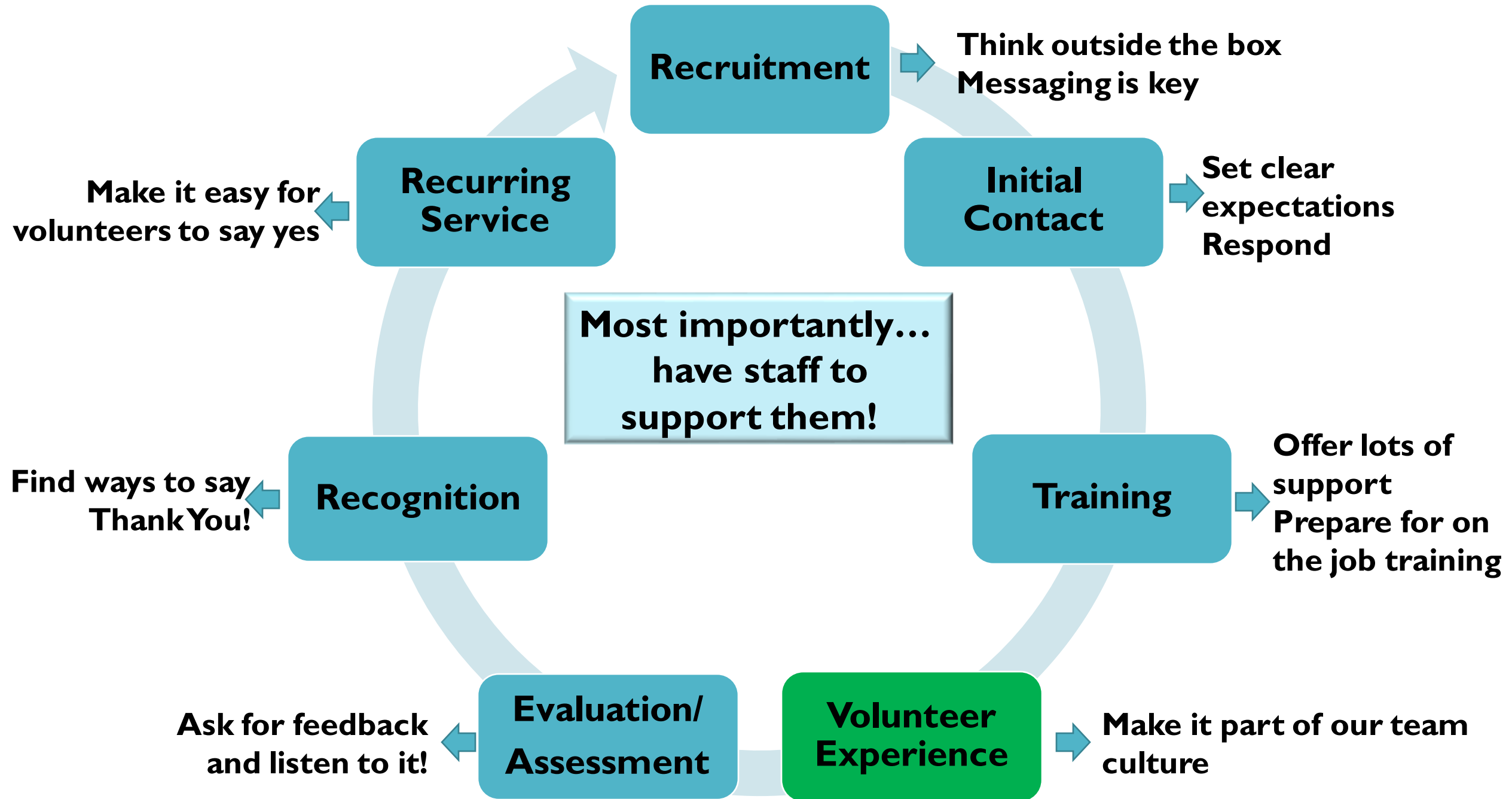


# Volunteer Appreciation Week



# Volunteer Appreciation Dinner





Q&A