

Assessing Volunteer Resources and Potential

Every community has a set of unique characteristics that will guide the Planning Team in determining potential volunteer resources that can carry out the clinic's mission. Any clinic using volunteers must have an organization-wide commitment to this operational model. This commitment starts at the top of the organization with the volunteer Board of Directors and needs to be reflected at all clinic levels and in all clinic activities.

Keep in mind that assessing volunteer resources is different from recruiting volunteers. In the first instance, you are exploring possibilities, gauging general interest, and identifying areas of focus where specific recruiting activities may be conducted

To begin matching volunteer resources with clinic needs, the Planning Team should conduct a thorough analysis to match need with availability of volunteers. The findings should be reflected in the environmental scan and completed business plan.

Activities to accomplish this may include the following:

- 1) The information from the patient flow exercise will help you anticipate volunteer needs by type and number. This sort of analysis enables clear estimations of volunteer need to be made.
- 2) Investigate potential volunteer sources to approximate what is actually available. The Planning Team often represents various constituencies that may begin to meet your volunteer needs. If your clinic is faith-based, the congregation is a natural source of volunteers. As they begin sharing the clinic vision with friends and colleagues, others will step forward to make the clinic idea a reality.
- 3) Have thoughtful conversations with medical providers to determine the depth of commitment they are able to make in volunteering in your clinic. Ask for specifics:

- Will they volunteer once a month for a three hour shift?
- Do they need to wait and see once the clinic is open?
- Are they available only certain nights of the week?

It can be a downfall in planning if the volunteer force has been overestimated.

Accurately assessing volunteer resources and potential will be appreciated by supporters and funding sources. The presence of a critical assessment of an important element of organizational success will impress funders who want to invest in impactful and sustainable organizations. This structured analysis will reflect a depth of planning and commitment that is not always found in new endeavors.