Volunteer Development and Growth

Growth Paths for Volunteers
The growth paths for volunteers represent an additional way to retain volunteers, to increase their commitment and strengthen their feeling of belonging to the Partnership. The lifecycle of a volunteer in a Partnership can be long and in order to make the most of their willingness to be involved in Partnership, it is important to examine the retention of the volunteer through the prism of developing growth paths for the volunteers. A growth path combines meeting the needs of the Partnership while also meeting the needs, skills and abilities of the volunteer.

Growth Paths for the Partnership’s Volunteers

- **Advancement of the Volunteer**
  Development of an upward path for the volunteer in the Partnership hierarchy. For example, a volunteer on the Steering Committee who wishes to move up to the position of Chairperson.

- **Mobility between Positions in the Partnership**
  Switching of positions, an opportunity to acquire new skills and experience. For example, the head of a task force who moves to a fundraising position in the Partnership.

- **Expanding a Position**
  Allocation of additional authority, expansion of the function to include additional areas of responsibility and the addition of skills required for the position. For example, a member of the Steering Committee could also become the head of a Partnership project or the possibility of creating an additional subcommittee as a way of increasing the positions available to volunteer leaders.

In developing personal growth paths for volunteers, the Partnership is showing the volunteers that they are receiving attention and providing them with a horizon in the Partnership. This increases the chance of retaining high-quality volunteers.

Planning Personal Growth Paths for a Volunteer

1. **Analysis of the volunteer’s needs and abilities**
2. **Determine the needs of the Partnership**
3. **Build a career path for the volunteer—upward mobility, lateral mobility or expansion of a position**
4. **Determining the organizational implications for the Partnership**
• **Analysis of the Volunteer’s Needs and Abilities**
  What are the volunteer’s professional and managerial aspirations? What are their abilities and qualifications? What motivates them to climb up the ladder or to accumulate expertise in a particular position? What are their personal characteristics? Are they a candidate for promotion? For example, in the case of management positions, the Partnership will wish to see people exhibiting intelligent behavior, a broad perspective, an ability to work with people, the ability to work as part of a team, the ability to form partnerships and the ability to manage a staff.

• **Determining the Needs of the Partnership**
  What positions does the Partnership need filled at this stage? To what extent can the Partnership manage the volunteer’s new position in a professional manner? Which position can the Partnership define in order to expand the variety of positions available to the volunteer? Can the variety of positions in the Partnership be expanded to include advisors or consultants to leadership positions (whether paid or volunteer)? Can tasks that are cross-Partnership be assigned, such as carrying out surveys of the Partnership’s ongoing activities? Can the Partnership assign tasks and grant authority to the volunteer?

**Determining the Organizational Implications**
The Partnership must evaluate and deal efficiently with the implications of developing career paths for volunteers: how will the volunteers be affected by conflicts between the needs of the volunteer and those of the Partnership, i.e. a volunteer who is interested in a particular path of advancement which is not currently in the interests of the Partnership or alternatively the volunteer’s qualifications are not suited to the position. How will the promotion of a particular volunteer affect volunteers who are not promoted?

• **Building a Career Path for the Volunteer**
  Following the evaluation of mutual needs and of the volunteer’s abilities, it will be possible to build a career path for the volunteer and to support his retention in the Partnership. The Partnership, together with the volunteer, can propose and build a path for the subsequent three years.

**Tools for Volunteer Career Planning: Personal Growth Path Discussion**
It is desirable for the Partnership Director or Coordinator to periodically meet with the volunteer in order to exchange feedback and to talk about personal growth. During the discussion, he will ascertain the volunteer’s additional or new needs and his aspirations to advance or to switch his position in the Partnership. The Partnership should ascertain what activities in the Partnership the volunteer enjoys. What are the volunteer’s main abilities and how do they view their contribution to the Partnership in the future? This kind of discussion will be one-on-one and will provide legitimacy to the feelings of the volunteer and the Partnership should be attentive to the volunteer’s needs.

**Examples of Questions for the Personal Growth Path Discussion**
- What do you enjoy in your current activity? What do you not enjoy? What is lacking?
- How do you view your future as a volunteer with us?
- Which positions would you be interested in and what do you feel you are capable of?
- What training will you need to move to some other position?
Examples of Personal Growth Paths for Volunteers

Path of Promotion

Head of a Partnership Project  
Member of a Task Force  
Chairperson of a Task Force  
Member of the Steering Committee  
Chairperson of the Partnership

Development of Future Leadership for Young Volunteer (25-35 age group)

Member of the Young Volunteer Leadership  
Head of a Project  
Chairperson of the Young Volunteer Leadership  
Member of a Task Force  
Chairperson of a Task Force  
Member of the Steering Committee  
Chairperson of the Partnership

Mobility and Expansion of Positions

Volunteering as a Host Family  
Assisting the Director of the Partnership  
Escorting Delegations  
Escorting Delegations Abroad  
Supervising the Partnership’s Marketing Activity