

**A Guide to Meeting Essential Service #3:
An annual volunteer recognition activity (program or event) that heightens awareness of volunteering
in the community and recognizes community volunteers.**

In order to assist Volunteer Centers in meeting Essential Service #3 this guide has been prepared by Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network staff and the members of the Volunteer Center National Network Essential Service Task Force. The Guide includes three sections:

1. Essential Service #3 Summary – as Volunteer Centers have begun examining the Affiliation Agreement in preparation for submittal, a number of questions have been raised about Essential Service #3 and its quality criteria. Below we have provided additional clarification.
2. Frequently Asked Questions – as more in-depth conversations have occurred with Volunteer Centers as they assess their ability to meet Essential Service #3 there are some common questions that have been raised. Through the Frequently Asked Questions section, we have tried to answer many of them.
3. Examples of Recognition Activities that meet Essential Service #3 – as Affiliation materials have been received and reviewed, additional examples of what Volunteer Centers are doing that meets Essential Service #3 have been identified. This section seeks to provide some examples as another way to help Volunteer Centers understand Essential Service #3.

In addition, we want to remind Volunteer Centers of the current assistance that is available from the Foundation:

- Technical assistance to assess your current situation – the Foundation staff is available to help review your existing recognition activity to help determine whether it meets Essential Service #3. For more information contact Chris Krinock-Davis, Senior Director, Technical Assistance and Strategies at (202) 729-8158 or CKrinockDavis@PointsofLight.org.
- Information on current Foundation recognition programs that can be used by Volunteer Centers – the Foundation can provide a comprehensive list of competitive national recognition programs managed by the Foundation that can be utilized by Volunteer Centers. These national recognition programs include: the Daily Points of Light, the Extra Mile and the President's Service Awards. For more information about these Foundation programs contact Sherri Thomas, Director, Recognition at (202) 729-8143 or SThomas@PointsofLight.org.
- Recognition Toolkit – the Foundation staff and Essential Service Task Force are currently developing a comprehensive toolkit to assist Volunteer Centers in developing and implementing recognition programs that will meet Essential Service #3. The completed Toolkit will be available in March 2007. For more information on the Toolkit contact Sherri Thomas, Director, Recognition at (202) 729-8143 or SThomas@PointsofLight.org.

Essential Service #3 Summary

Volunteer Centers must have "An annual volunteer recognition activity (program or event) that heightens awareness of volunteering in the community and recognizes community volunteers." The essential service was created to promote consistent levels of service across the network and to promote volunteering. Further clarification on the essential service is provided by the following quality criteria:

- ❑ *Be conducted alone or with a partner:* As a partner, your Center can play a variety of roles (promotion, judge, venue, administration). However, no matter what the role of your Volunteer Center, it must be a key and publicly recognized participant. This means that credit must be provided to your Center for your role, including use of your name and/or logo so that your Volunteer Center is positioned as an expert in the community on volunteer recognition.
- ❑ *Be conducted at least once every 12 months:* Recognition activities can be conducted as frequently as desired, but not less than once every 12 months. For this Affiliation Agreement period (January 1 – December 31, 2007) if you conducted a recognition activity between January 1 and December 31 2006, you have met Essential Service #3. If you have not conducted an activity during this period, you must schedule and conduct one by December 31, 2007. Once you conduct your activity, you must notify the Foundation and you will have met Essential Service #3.
- ❑ *Recognize volunteers in the community (versus volunteers of the Volunteer Center):* Must be open and inclusive to the entire community, not just the Volunteer Center or its parent and/or partner organization.
- ❑ *Recognize a broad spectrum of volunteers from the community:* Volunteer Centers should recognize volunteers from various sectors of the community, not just one type like youth or seniors.
- ❑ *Allow for participation from anyone in the community:* A recognition activity should be available to all volunteers, nonprofits and other organizations in the community.
- ❑ *Be marketed and promoted to the community and the local media:* The activity must be communicated about by the Volunteer Center and its partners. This can occur through one or more mechanisms, such as flyers, Web site, newspapers, newsletters, media, etc. Marketing and promotion of the activity helps position the Volunteer Center as an expert in the community on volunteer recognition.
- ❑ *Measure number of volunteers recognized:* The Volunteer Center should track and be able to report annually the number of volunteers it recognizes through its activity that meets Essential Service #3.

Frequently asked Questions

1. What is an activity?

An activity does not necessarily mean an event. It could be anything that meets the Essential Service#3 quality criteria, such as Volunteer of the Month recognition program, an article or an ad in the local newspaper recognizing all the volunteers in your community or hosting an open house for community volunteers.

2. What constitutes a partnership?

As a partner, your Center can play a variety of roles (promotion, judge, venue, administration). However, no matter what the role of your Volunteer Center, it must be a key and publicly recognized participant. This means that credit must be provided to your Center for your role, including use of your name and/or logo so that your Volunteer Center is positioned as an expert in the community on volunteer recognition.

3. When do my 12 months start?

January 1, 2006 and subsequent calendar years thereafter. For example you must have conducted an activity in the 12 months prior to January 1, 2007 to be able to meet Essential Service 3# as the first Affiliation Agreement starts.

4. If I have multiple service areas or satellites, do I need to do an activity in each one?

No, you do not have to do an activity in each service area; however, everyone in your entire service area must have access to at least one recognition activity every 12 months.

5. What does it mean to recognize volunteers in the community?

Recognition needs to be public beyond a note or letter. Community must incorporate the full service area and not be limited to Volunteer Center volunteers or those of a parent or partner organization.

6. If I'm internal to another organization and they do a recognition activity, does that count?

Maybe. In order for it to count, the Volunteer Center must be involved in the activity and given credit for its role (see also what constitutes a partnership).

7. If I submit nominations for a state or national program, does that meet the requirement?

Maybe. The answer is no if the Volunteer Center simply identifies a local volunteer to nominate and has no other role or connection with the program. The answer is yes if Volunteer Centers are a recognized partner in the program (see also what constitutes a partnership) and the program meets the quality criteria (recognizes a broad spectrum of volunteers, etc...) and the Volunteer Center's nominee is recognized. In order to further guarantee that such a program would meet Essential Service #3, the Volunteer Center should conduct or be part of a local nomination and selection process that identified the nominee submitted (so that it meets the quality criteria) and provides some sort of recognition (e.g. certificate or citation) to those not forward as the nominee to the state or national program.

8. Can my Volunteer Center make money on a recognition activity that meets Essential Service #3?

Yes as long as the activity meets the quality criteria. Many Volunteer Centers manage recognition activities that solicit sponsorships to cover all costs. They may also ask people and businesses to contribute resources, such as food, certificates, space, media ads, etc or even sell tickets to an event. Again, this is all acceptable as long as the activity meets the quality criteria.

9. What if I can't afford to do an event?

An activity is not necessarily an event. A recognition activity can be as simple as an article in the local newspaper spotlighting community volunteers or holding a coffee social for community volunteers during National Volunteer Week. A recognition activity does not need to be costly, but must meet the quality criteria. For more ideas on how to hold an affordable recognition activity, contact Sherri Thomas, Director, Recognition, SThomas@PointsofLight.org or (202) 729-8143.

Examples of Recognition Activities that Meet Essential Service #3

Volunteer Partners, Lincoln, NE

The Volunteer Center coordinates an annual community-wide volunteer recognition event. At this reception-type occasion, agencies are encouraged to express their appreciation to their volunteers by inviting them and providing information on how their volunteers have helped their agencies and thus, the entire community. This event is held in connection with National Volunteer Week in April every year.

Volunteer Center of Lehigh Valley, Bethlehem, PA

In partnership with Gebhardt Enterprises and WAEB Radio, the Volunteer Center of Lehigh Valley has been honoring local volunteers for 17 years through the "Someone Special" Program. Coordinated by the Volunteer Center, nonprofit organizations can submit nominations for volunteers, along with brief descriptions of what make them special volunteers. Each day of the week (Monday through Friday), one volunteer is recognized on WAEB radio for the terrific work they are doing in their local community. The "Someone Special" volunteer also receives a personalized plaque donated by Gebhardt's Enterprises. The procedure is free of charge and gives organizations a special way to say thank you to their very special volunteers, i.e. participation in special projects/events, years of service, etc. It gives the nonprofit organization an opportunity to be recognized as well. The Volunteer Center and its management of the program is promoted on the plaque and through the on air announcement.

Volunteer Center of Madison County, Huntsville, AL

The Volunteer Center of Madison County partners with *The Huntsville Times* to present the "Partners for Charity Volunteer of the Year Awards." The purpose of the awards are to highlight and celebrate the achievements of volunteers as they strive to give their time, talent, and heart to helping others in Madison County. Anyone can submit a nominee, which can qualify in one of four categories: Adult, Youth, Group and Family. A luncheon is held in the honor of submitted nominees during National Volunteer week. Every volunteer who is nominated receives a certificate suitable for framing. The Volunteer of the Year in each of the four categories receives an award and a \$1,000 grant for their qualifying non-profit organization and five overall finalists receive an award and a \$250 grant for their qualifying non-profit organization.

United Way of Larimer County Volunteer Center, Fort Collins, CO

The Volunteer Center manages the Volunteer of the Month program. Each month local agencies may nominate volunteers or group of volunteers for this honor. The winner selected each month receives a certificate of appreciation and their profile is posted online, on the Centers website, for the entire month.

The Volunteer Center of NorthWest Suburban Chicago, Arlington Heights, IL

The Volunteer Center partners with the *Daily Herald* to publish a Volunteer of the Week Column. The column features a volunteer and their agency. While the column recognizes the work of the volunteer and the agency it also provides information on how to contact the Volunteer Center to volunteer at the featured agency or in general. The Column is also featured on the Volunteer Centers website.