Steps To Incorporating Citizen Science Volunteers Into Your Program

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Citizen Science: What is it?

Citizen Science Initiatives

- **Citizen science** is a term used for projects or ongoing program of scientific work in which individual volunteers or networks of volunteers, many of whom may have no specific scientific training, perform or manage research-related tasks such as observation, measurement, or computation.

- Citizen science volunteers can add new depth to your project and take it to levels beyond what you ever expected.

Involving citizen-science volunteers in your project is not hard, but you need to consider the five aspects below for success:

- Planning
- Recruiting
- Training
- Engaging
- Retaining

Planning

- With what project could you use volunteers?
- How many volunteers could you use?
- Does age matter?
- What will the volunteers do?

Planning

- What processes will volunteers follow?
- How about Quality Control Measures?
- How long do you need volunteers for?
- Who will supervise and/or correspond with volunteers?

Recruiting

- Is there a local volunteer center you could connect with? Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)?
- Can you use “On-line avenues” like Volunteer Match?
- How about connecting with hiking and watershed groups? Citizen-science activities often complement their activities.
- Announce opportunity through media stories, press releases, etc…

Training**

- Do your volunteers need extensive training or will an on-line course or a short orientation work?
- Do volunteers need training on data entry in addition to the specifics of your citizen-science project?

***Laws and Requirements will vary by location*

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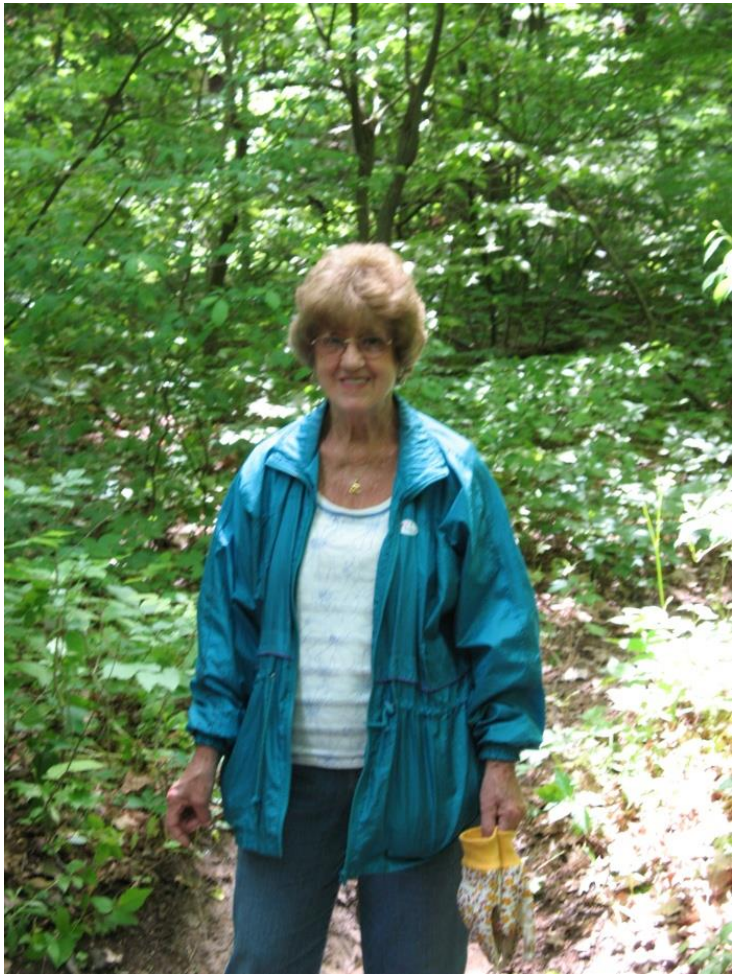
Engaging

- What information needs to be included in your “getting started” instructions or orientation?

- How often do you need your volunteers to report on their observations, either in-persons or virtually from their community?



Engaging

- Can volunteers serve alone or does your project require more than one person?
- Do volunteers need to take photos of what they have observed?

Retaining

- Evaluate your project regularly for successes and lessons learned, and make changes as needed.
- Keep your project fresh!

Retaining

- Communication is key to retaining your volunteers.
- Recognize your volunteers' efforts by acknowledging their service—even an occasional "Thank You" email will go along way.

A Few Other Tips

- Let volunteers know what happens to the data they collected. Example, our wildlife and weather data collected is used to analyze climate change and other environmental indicators.

- When able, let the volunteers know their data is useful by giving them details.

- Remember that not all volunteers will be a match for your program AND your project will not be a match for a volunteer. That is alright and to be expected.

Any questions?

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