

Principles of Volunteer Management



Welcome! Please share in the chat where you are calling in from and what is one place you currently or have ever volunteered at.



Presenter: Jess Bloomer, Garden Manager

Workshop Purpose and Outcomes



- Share **principles** of volunteer management that inform the Edible Schoolyard Berkeley's work and that can be broadly applied.
- Share the **structures** and **systems** of Edible Schoolyard Berkeley's volunteer program.
- Intended outcome is that attendees walk away with **inspiration** and **resources** for growing their own volunteer program.

Workshop Agenda

- Overview of the ESY Berkeley volunteer program
- Our guiding principles
- Key challenges with running a volunteer program
- “Nuts and bolts” of the ESY Berkeley volunteer program
- How we do recruitment and outreach
- Strategies for retention and engagement
- Data tracking



ESY Berkeley Volunteer Program Overview



- Purposes:
 - support with garden maintenance
 - build community relationships
 - provide garden access and education for community members
- We host volunteers every Tuesdays-Thursdays and one Saturday morning each month.
- Most volunteers drop-in, some are regular returning volunteers.
- Parent volunteers support with lunchtime garden supervision.

Guiding Principles

- Establish the purpose(s) of the volunteer program.
- The volunteer is one of our constituents.
- Connection.
- Provide multiple days and / or options for volunteering.
- Non drop in opportunities require a minimum commitment that values staff time
- Always have seated / shaded / kid-friendly tasks on-hand.
- Match skill level with the task.
- Communication / stay in touch.



Key Challenges

- **Turnover and drop ins:** manager teaches interns, interns teach volunteers, allowing for skill building at all levels; new volunteers are an opportunity for interns to practice
- **Unskilled labor:** matching appropriate tasks with group size, skill level, and available supervision.
- **School relationship:** background checks may be necessary. Important to be near volunteers at all times during school day.
- **Communication and coordination:** Significant work to keep communication running smoothly.



“Nuts and bolts”

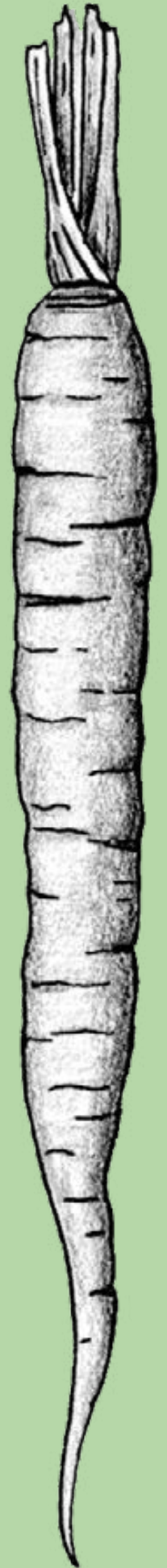


Volunteers in the '24-'25 School Year

- Total volunteers: **576**
 - ~ 35 are weekly vols/interns
 - ~ 540 drop in vols (many come more than once)
- Total hours contributed: **2039** (approx. 40 hours/wk)
- **23** volunteer groups

Growth over time:

- Our volunteer program took a long pause during Covid – no volunteers for three years.
- Starting in 2023 we re-built our volunteer program to what it looks like today.



The Team

Garden manager: 5-10 hrs per week

- manage work parties (weekday and weekend)
- set up/close out individual volunteers with tasks (15-30 mins each)

Garden management fellows: 5-15 hrs per week

- co-lead work parties (weekday and weekend)
- coordinate lunchtime volunteer program
- set up and close out volunteers with tasks

“Volunteer coordinator”: 5-10 hrs per week

- co-host weekday work parties
- manage communications
- coordinate volunteers for drop in work parties

Program Director: after initial development, 2-3 hrs per month

- thought partnership in development of systems
- coordination with school administration



Four Key pathways to volunteer at ESY Berkeley

- Drop in work parties (on a repeating cadence)
- Committed weekly volunteers
- Group volunteers
- Interns and fellows (often with a stipend)



Drop-in Work Parties



- Weekday: weekly on Tuesdays, 9:30-12
- Weekend: Monthly on first* Saturdays
- RSVP via HOBA website
 - RSVP required for school day volunteering / optional for weekends
- Connection through opening circle and group work
- Tasks led by interns and fellows (ideal ratio is 1:10)
- Thank you emails after big work days

Committed Weekly Volunteers



- Weekly repeating volunteers
 - **minimum commitment** 2 hrs/wk for 8 weeks
 - Only offered within days/times that work for garden management team (Tues-Thurs)
- Weekly lunch / recess volunteers
 - **minimum commitment** 2 hrs/wk for 1 semester
 - 4 adults needed for every lunch period (parents and fellows)
- Process:
 - Garden team sets up volunteers with tasks; they then work independently
 - Try to pair volunteers with others when possible (Tues during drop in, or existing slot)

Group Volunteers



- Free if aligns with existing volunteer day (Tuesdays / Saturdays)
- Fee if request a specific date / time.
- Fee is waived sometimes for groups we have relationship with, and / or situations when we need a lot of help.
- We've worked with: college student organizations, middle and high school volunteers, corporate groups, meet-up groups, church groups, and more!

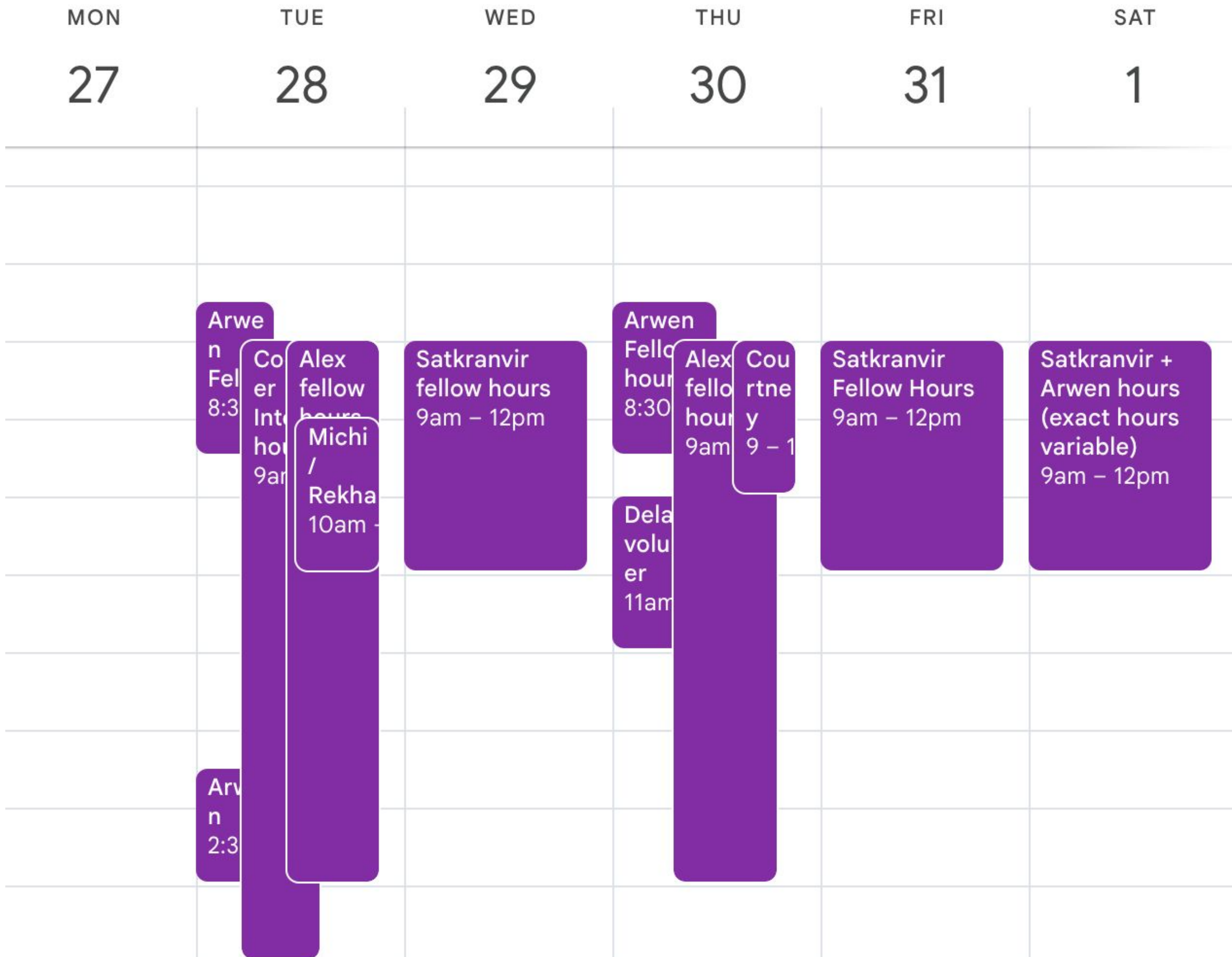
Interns and Fellows

6-20 hours / week usually for 2-9 months

2025 Key Partners:

- Summer Fellows (internal to Edible Schoolyard Berkeley; funding obtained by fellow or unpaid)
- California Climate Action Corps (paid by Americorps)
- College Corps (paid by UC Berkeley)
- UC Berkeley Landscape Architecture (paid and/or class credit by UC Berkeley)
- Merritt College (paid by Merritt college)
- Berkeley High School (paid and/or class credit by Berkeley High)
- Youth Works (paid by City of Berkeley)





Orientation, Training

Welcome & Orientation

- drop in volunteer: opening circle
- weekly volunteer: 30 min overview / tour
- lunch/ recess weekly volunteer: 1 hour orientation / tour
- intern: 90 min overview/tour
- fellow: 2 week orientation

Skills training / support

- drop in volunteer: intro to the task by task leader
- weekly volunteer: repeated introductions to each task
- intern: skills list and monthly check ins to monitor learning goals
- fellow: multi-week systems trainings, monthly check ins; independent projects, on-going workshops



Communications

Typical Volunteer Program Communications (2-3 hrs/week):

- Weekly email to school with lists of volunteers on site
- Monthly outreach to all volunteers / PTA
- Monthly thank you email to volunteers after Saturday work parties
- Communications with HOBA platform
- Monitoring email for potential absences / questions
- Fielding volunteer opportunity requests from groups and individuals
- Giving updates to volunteers about school closures
- Recruitment and scheduling orientations

Strategies and tools:

- Created **specific email account** for all volunteer communication
- Consistency: having a primary point-person for communications
- For mass emails, we use a mail merge service called Yet Another Mail Merge

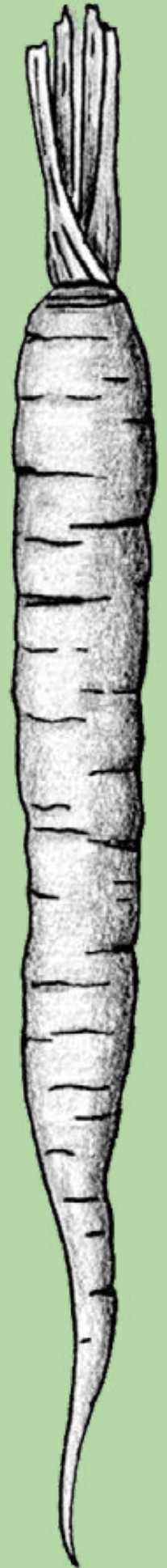


Recruitment / Outreach

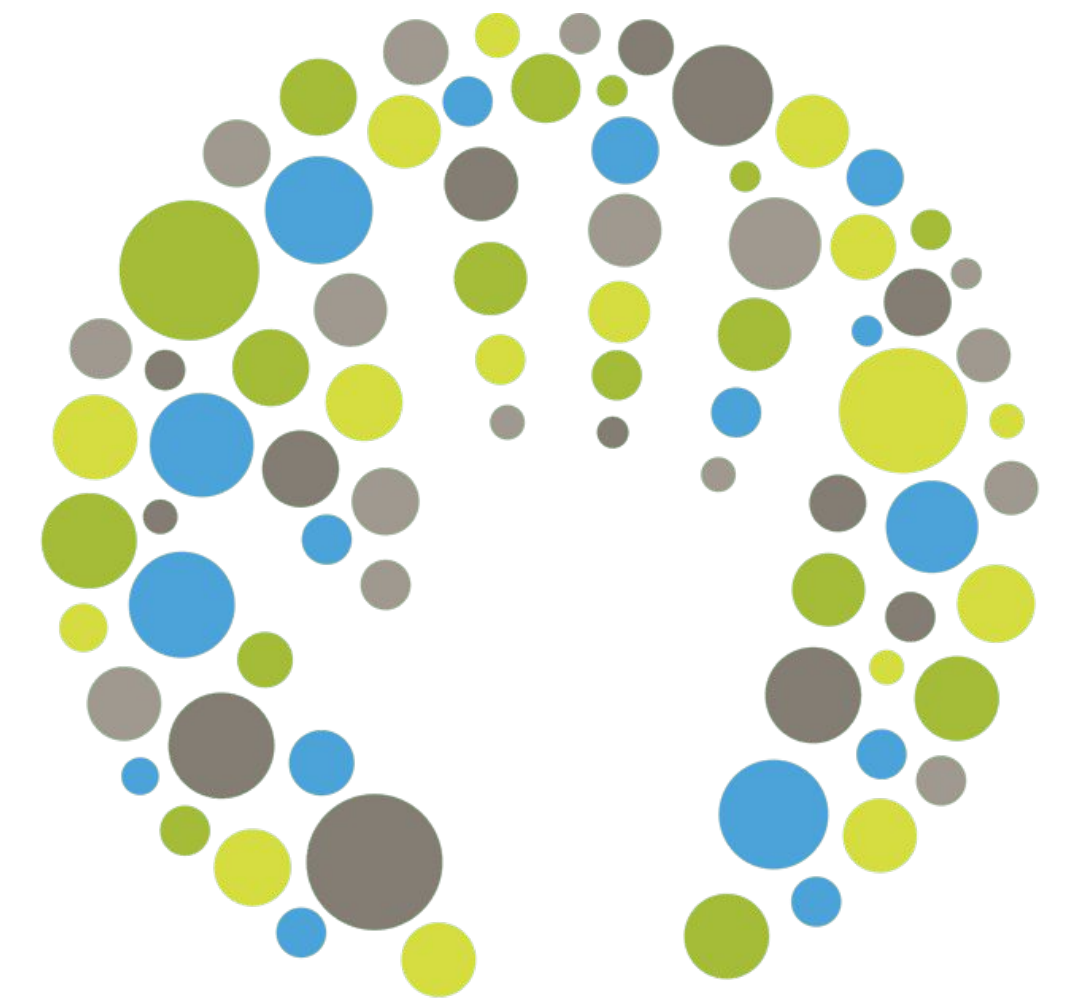


Colleges and Universities

- Relationship with Berkeley Food Institute- within university, has a listserv for volunteer opportunities
- Relationships with faculty who share out volunteer opportunities with their classes. (Some require service and offer us as a suggested site.)
- Student organizations mostly find us



Regional Volunteer Hubs



Hands On
BAY AREA

- Partnership with local volunteer hub that connects people seeking volunteer opportunities with providers.
 - ** Essential for our Drop In work parties**
- We post all volunteer opportunities on Hands On Bay Area that people can then sign up for, searching by key word (“gardening”) & date
- Automated emails are sent for basic details, reminders, thank yous, etc
- Group events coordinated by HOBA 2-3 x/yr

School Parents

- Send school-wide / PTA announcements about volunteer opportunities.
- Utilize other communications channels to promote volunteer opportunities (e.g. Vice Principals' What's App groups, coffee mingle social time, word of mouth between parents, club collaborations, specific parent groups)
 - Try all the outreach methods! You never know which one might actually work.



Retention / Engagement



Strategies for Retention and Engagement

- Building connection to volunteers as individuals.
- Pairing volunteers together to encourage sense of community.
- Consistency of date for drop ins.
- Opportunity for regular volunteers to choose their own time to come.
- Garden as therapeutic element in volunteers' lives.
- Volunteer appreciations (end of each semester- tea, pickles, garden party, etc!)



Data Tracking



Why We Track Volunteer Data

- Helps provide insight into what it actually takes to get all the work done.
- Grants provide matching funds for in-kind contributions from the organization.
- Staying in touch - optional add to email listserv
- Potential to cultivate donors within volunteers



Tools for tracking data



- Physical sign in sheet – tracking every volunteer visit and how many hours they contribute
- Data entry into Google sheets (interns complete this)
- Ongoing volunteers listserv- receive monthly email invitations (YAMM- google sheet add-on)
- Currently exploring how to utilize Salesforce



Questions?