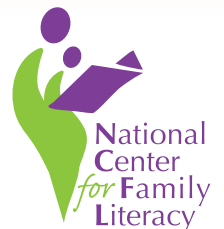


Planning for Volunteers in Literacy

CHAPTER 1: ASSESSING PROGRAM NEEDS



Funded by UPS



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CHAPTER 1:

Assessing Program Needs

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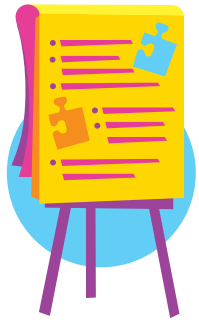


Introduction

You want to use volunteers—or, perhaps, use them more effectively—in your program, but you’re not certain where to begin. Planning is a wise place to start! Planning for volunteers takes into consideration your program’s needs. It is only through assessing your program’s needs that you can identify where and how volunteers will best fit into your program.

How your program determines its need for volunteers can be as complicated or as simple as you choose to make it. Completing a needs analysis is often part of a much larger and comprehensive strategic planning process, which may include developing a mission and vision for your organization and completing a situational or environmental analysis. This chapter, however, will present a simple process for completing a needs assessment for the purpose of examining how and where volunteers can be used to enhance program services for families.

The following story exemplifies how a family literacy program in Christian County, Kentucky, used a program needs assessment in evaluating the role volunteers play.



Program Description

Christian County’s Family Literacy Program is a part of the Christian County Adult Education Program (CCAEP). The family literacy program operates in two locations, serves 65-70 families per year, and employs three full-time equivalent staff. Funding for the family literacy program comes from private funding, federal Even Start monies, state grants, and additional monies via the local Housing Authority.

How the program uses volunteers

Christian County uses volunteers in a variety of ways. Volunteers provide direct instructional support, working one-on-one with learners most in need of individual assistance. In addition, 15 community leaders volunteer as advisory board members. The majority of the program’s volunteers are actually managed by other agencies, such as local churches, health departments, the Christian County Cooperative Extension Services, the local community college, Head Start, and the local Business and Professional Women’s Club, but they perform tasks for the benefit of and at no charge to the program.

Christian County’s needs assessment

In 2003, the program staff began a fruitful strategic planning process to assess their program’s needs. The Leadership Team met to consider two conditions of their program: “what is” and “what should be.” Any gaps between these two

conditions helped the team identify their top priorities for program improvement. At this point, the program was well-prepared to examine how and when volunteers could assist in helping the program address these priorities.

The team discovered several areas they thought needed improvement. It was clear that the program needed to improve attendance, increase participation in Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time* activities, and better capture grade level gains to satisfy the program's performance indicators. The team also recognized that both staff and volunteers needed a better understanding of how to emphasize the importance of PACT Time during new adult student orientation. Of particular concern was the program's inability to accurately track the overall program statistics.

Results of their planning

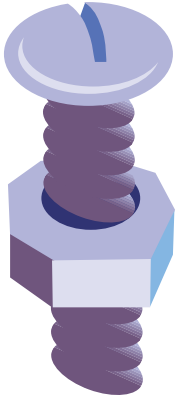
Two of the program's needs—converted into goals—were to improve the orientation process for new students and to make better use of other agencies' volunteer help. Several strategies were implemented to address these needs. A notebook was created for staff and volunteer use that includes parenting activities and tips for facilitating parent education. Student roster spreadsheets and goal setting worksheets were revised to prompt the capture of data so important to providing evidence of student progress. Conversation starter/vocabulary sheets with suggested parent/child activities and PACT Time Weekly Activity Journal sheets were developed for parents' use.

* Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time® is a term used by some family literacy programs to describe regularly scheduled interactive literacy activities between parents and children.

These new and improved forms assist the program in ensuring that family gains are captured and provide better documentation of these gains. Armed with a clearer understanding of the program's need to better deliver and document PACT Time activities as well as with a notebook containing clear directions and suggested activities, new staff and volunteers are better able to support the program in meeting PACT Time goals. Additionally, the program's strategic plan helped convince the superintendent to fund an adult education instructor at a family literacy site, the first time that such a position was funded by non-grant funds.

According to program coordinator Bev Thomson, "Now my staff know the big picture. Planning ahead and more carefully tracking our progress means that we no longer have surprising—and disappointing—results at the end of the program year." While acknowledging that long-term planning is difficult when a program is dependent on grant funding, Thomson supports the strategic planning process as it "helps to have an organized way of looking at things."

Sample A provides more details related to Christian County's process and their utilization of volunteers to meet the program's needs.



Nuts and Bolts of Needs Assessment

Planning to plan

Planning to plan... That may sound redundant, but it's actually crucial to any process. Preparation can streamline your planning and needs assessment process and eliminate wasted time. Before you begin, assemble the following information:

- Recent program statistics/annual reports/performance indicators
- Staff job descriptions
- Budget
- An organizational description or profile and an environmental or situational analysis, if you have them
- List of previously set program goals with explanations about if and how each has been met. Unmet program goals can serve as a foundation for examining the place of volunteers in your program. Could more and better trained volunteers have made a difference? A tool for examining your program's recent past is included as *Template A*.

Who should be involved in the needs assessment process?

Your planning group may expand or change during different steps of the needs assessment process. For example, your advisory board may have valuable contributions to make in the first few steps, while your program staff may be more involved during the later steps of implementation. Involving many minds in the process will result in a richer assessment and plan.

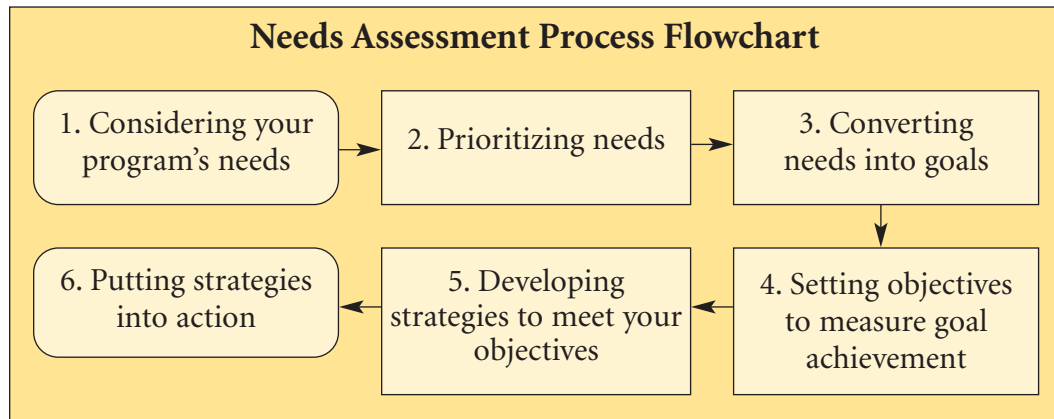
Although you will gather input and collect data from myriad sources, it is best to keep the team to a manageable size, especially if you plan on striving for consensus. Balance the need to move the planning process forward with the need for involving stakeholders, as input from many may result in greater acceptance of the final plan.

How long does it take to complete a needs assessment?

The length of time depends upon the experience within the team, the size of the team, and the team's level of knowledge of your program. Frankly, it can take as long as you allow. However, effective needs assessment can be done in a day. To minimize the time spent in a meeting, share pertinent information with team members in advance of the needs assessment meeting, encouraging team members to do some of the preparatory work outside of meeting time.

The Needs Assessment Process: Step by Step

Needs assessment is a process. There is a beginning, an end, and a defined sequence of steps in between. The flowchart below outlines the steps that will be covered in this chapter.



Considering your program's needs

What does your family literacy program need? The answer to this important question should be the driving force behind your use of volunteers. One way to tackle this fundamental question may be to look at the four components of a comprehensive family literacy program:

- Children's Education
- Adult Education
- Parent Time (Parenting Education)
- PACT Time (Parent-Child Interactive Literacy Activities)

The Christian County Family Literacy Program approached their needs assessment by identifying two conditions: “what is” and “what should be.” A variation on these conditions might be “what is” and “what *could* be”—that is, under ideal circumstances, how would your program operate? These conditions can be applied to the four educational components of family literacy listed above. When describing the current state of your program, the key is honesty. At the same time, this is an opportunity to list program strengths as well as weaknesses.

The “what could be” condition is a chance to dream. What impacts can your program have on the educational progress of adults and children? Remember to connect these dreams to the goals families bring with them to the program.

STEP 1

Here is an easy method for assessing your program's needs.

- a) Organize your thoughts by drawing four quadrants (one for each family literacy component) on two sheets of paper. Label one sheet "What Is" and the other sheet "What Could Be."

What is?	
Adult Ed.	Children's Ed.
PACT Time	Parent Time

What could be?	
Adult Ed.	Children's Ed.
PACT Time	Parent Time

- b) When completing the "What Is" sheet, consider the previous year's program goals, particularly those that weren't met, and student achievement data. You also may want to consider any surveys completed by participants about their level of satisfaction with program services. If your program already engages volunteers, collect their opinions about their integration into the program and how they rate their experiences. And, of course, discuss any funder expectations and whether the program met those expectations.

The "What Could Be" page is your ticket to dream! If there were no barriers, what could the program achieve? In a perfect world (or program!), what would each component look like?

- c) Now, expand your thinking. On two new sheets of paper, draw a line to split the page in half. Label one half "Component Integration" and the other "Collaboration." Title one page "What Is" and the other "What Could Be" as you did before.

What is?
Component Integration
Collaboration

What could be?
Component Integration
Collaboration

Component integration is one of those key ingredients that makes comprehensive family literacy work. Component integration is more than following a theme throughout the four components. It reinforces the learning happening in each component through activities in the other three. Have you ensured that each component relates to the others? Is there a clear connection between all four components? Is this integration intentional and well-planned?



When considering collaboration, think about the organizations you partner with. Are there others in your region that may be able to support or enhance services to families? Keep in mind how volunteers might assist in helping to forge new partnerships. Do your current volunteers have personal connections that would be of value? Is this another opportunity for maximizing involvement by utilizing volunteers in your efforts to build links within the community?

- d) Look at any gaps between “what is” and “what could be.” A need is a gap in results, the difference between the current and ideal status (Kaufman & Herman, 1991). What needs might volunteers be able to help address?

Prioritizing needs

Remember, your program’s use of volunteers should stem from your program’s needs. So, the first question is not, does my program need (more) volunteers? Rather, it is, what does my program need? *Then* ask, can volunteers help meet this need? If so, *how* do volunteers help meet this need? The question of whether your program is ready for volunteers will be addressed in future chapters.

STEP 2

More than likely, your needs assessment will identify far more options and possibilities than your program can realistically tackle in a year. You will need to reduce your goals to a reasonable number to which your program can commit. Five key goals, maybe even fewer, might be plenty for your organization.

If you have a long list of needs, how do you choose which ones are most important? Let’s take a look at three methods that can help prioritize needs. The first two are relatively quick ways to shorten a list of choices.

- 10-4 Voting. Each person has 10 votes to allocate to all of the needs you’ve identified. No more than four of an individual’s 10 votes may be used on any one need. All 10 votes must be used. After everyone has allocated their votes, tally the votes given to each need. Set aside the needs that received the fewest votes, and repeat the process until your list is reduced to three to five needs.

- **N over 3 Voting.** Take the total number of needs on your list and divide by three. Assign this number of votes to each team member. For example, if you've identified a total of 18 needs, each person would have six votes ($18/3=6$). Each member then allocates one vote to one need, until all of that individual's votes are used up. Tally the votes to determine a consensus about which needs should be considered a priority.
- **The Prioritization Matrix.** A prioritization matrix is a decision-making tool that allows you to identify—in a simple and objective manner—those options that are most and least important to you. The method allows you to compare options systematically and record your comparisons, resulting in a prioritized list. *Template B* provides a simple matrix for your use.

STEP 3

Converting needs into goals

Once you have prioritized your program's needs, keeping in mind those that volunteers can help you address, it is time to convert those needs into goal statements. Goals address the potential of your literacy program. They are broadly defined results that establish direction and begin to close the gap between the current status and the desired future. Goals do not direct resources (that is, time, people, or money) and do not represent an activity or endeavor. They are for your program as a whole.

Think big... and creatively! Examples of volunteer-related goals might be:

- To provide more one-on-one tutoring for English language learners, the program will utilize volunteers in ELL classes.
- To retain volunteers longer and thus increase their impact on services, the program will develop and implement a system of volunteer recognition.
- To utilize volunteers more effectively, the program will complete a volunteer management plan.

STEP 4

Setting objectives to measure goal achievement

Goals provide the framework for setting objectives. Objectives address how you will know when you have reached your goal; they do not address how the goal will be accomplished. Objectives explain (1) what must be done and (2) when it must be done in order to meet a goal. What results will indicate success? For many literacy programs, objectives may be closely related to, if not the same as, performance indicators from government funders.

Good objectives are **SMART...**

Specific and supportive of goals
 Measurable
 Action-oriented
 Realistic and compatible with other objectives
 Time-related

Using the first goal suggested above, a related objective might be:

Goal: To provide more one-on-one tutoring for English language learners, the program will utilize volunteers in ELL classes.

Objective: By November 15, we will have three trained volunteers working six hours per week serving as interpreters and assistants in ELL classes.

Developing strategies to meet your objectives

After you have identified objectives, you can begin to address solutions or strategies to meet your objectives. Strategies address the issue of how... How will you reach your objectives? Strategies are statements of how resources (time, money, and people) will be used to accomplish a specific objective. Remember that people are the key to a strategy's success.

While strategies are well-intended, and good strategies are carefully planned, there is no guarantee that they will be successful. According to Stephen J. Wall, head of the consulting firm Marius in Stamford, Connecticut, "Your strategy is what the organization consciously decides to do and then what you learn out of doing it" (Galagan, 1997, p. 6). Strategies are a series of tests (similar to action research, a popular direction in education). So, don't be discouraged by strategies that backfire; it happens! But be sure to evaluate what worked and what didn't, and adjust your strategies accordingly.

Working from the objective listed previously, related strategies might be:

Objective: By November 15, we will have three trained volunteers working six hours per week serving as interpreters and assistants in ELL classes.

Strategies:

- a) Recruit ELL class volunteers from the local high school and college (exploring ways to offer academic credit for their time)
- b) Move ELL class sessions, if necessary, to a day and time more attractive to potential volunteers

Putting strategies into action

Strategies provide the boundaries for developing action plans and help set them into motion. Action plans address the issue of whom. They describe the steps that must be taken to implement each strategy. Action plans identify the specific tasks and deadlines assigned to individuals or groups. Who will do what by when? See *Sample B* for an Action Plan developed by the Scott County Literacy Council, Inc.

Continuing with our ongoing example, an action plan item that addresses the strategies described above might include:

STEP 5

STEP 6

Strategy: Recruit ELL class volunteers from the local high school and college (exploring ways to offer academic credit for their time)

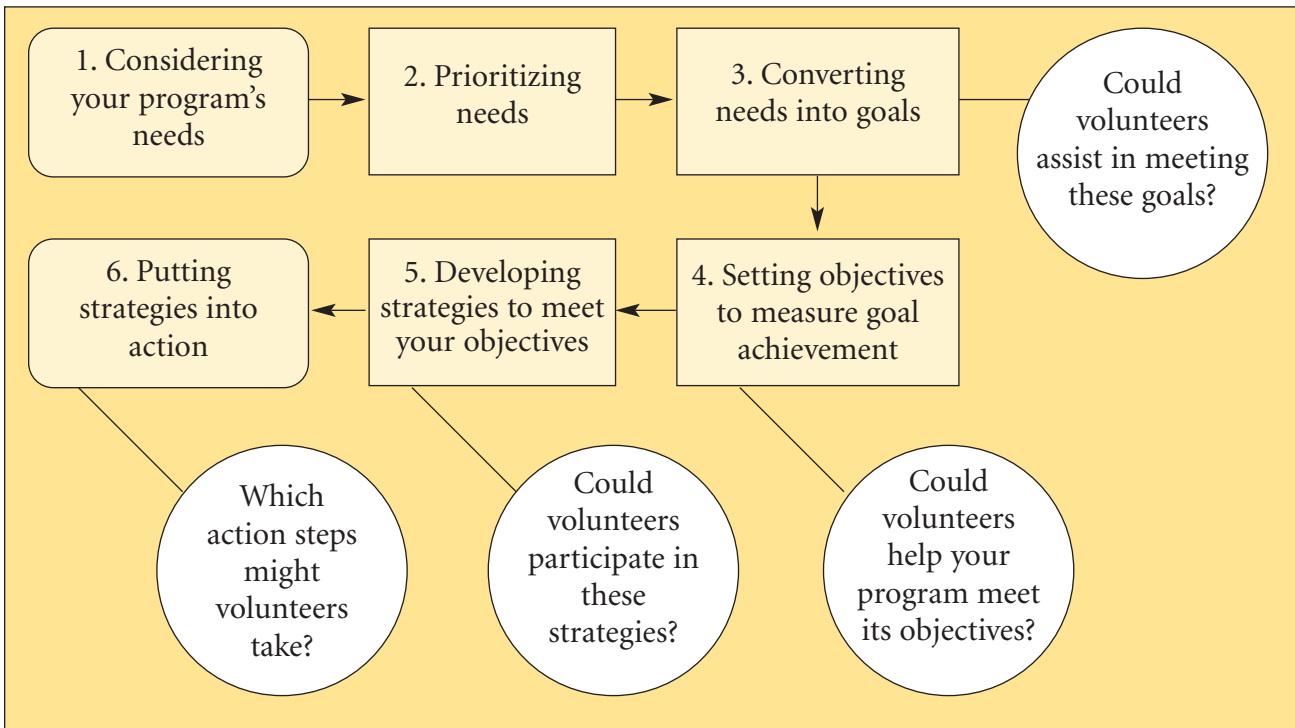
Action Plan Item: By October 1, program coordinator will call XYZ High School and Hometown Community College to discuss recruiting students to help in ELL classes.

The steps outlined in this needs assessment process can help you form a plan from which you can identify your program's needs and determine a course of action to address those needs through the effective use of volunteers. Take advantage of *Templates C* and *D* to complete your own needs assessment.

Where Do Volunteers Fit In?

The answer is: Everywhere! Certainly a program goal or objective might revolve around the use of volunteers. Many programs use volunteers heavily in the strategy and action planning stages. In what roles do you most need volunteers?

Let's take another look at the six-step process and consider where and how volunteers might help programs meet their needs.



The role of volunteers especially should be considered in the final four steps of the process. While volunteers can contribute during the earlier steps, creating an action plan is where volunteers can really dig in.

You may want to think of volunteers as helping in two broad areas, instructional support and administrative support. Don't limit your thinking to opportunities that involve volunteers being physically present at your center. Many volunteer roles can be completed at home or out in the community. *Template E* is a comprehensive checklist to assist you in evaluating the capacities in which you might need volunteers.

Putting It All Together

This chapter has introduced the definitions and the vocabulary of the needs assessment process. It is only with a completed needs assessment that you can realistically see how and where you might need volunteers.

Volunteers can “fit in” or contribute at any stage. Recruiting and training new volunteers might be a goal for your program for next year. Or, recruiting and training volunteers might be a strategy that you will implement in order to help you meet an objective of serving more families. Volunteers may show up in your action plan with important roles in implementing the strategies you have identified.

Following the six-step needs assessment process, you will have a clear picture of where your program is now, where it is headed and how volunteers can fit into your program's future. Take advantage of the templates and samples provided to help you assess the needs of your program for volunteers.



Christian County (Kentucky) Family Literacy Program Strategic Planning and Volunteer Utilization**Strategic Planning Process**

In summer of 2003, the leadership team, comprised of six staff members (the distance learning instructor, assessment coordinator, data clerk, adult education instructor, family literacy instructor and family literacy coordinator) and Bev Thomson, program coordinator, carefully analyzed their Kentucky Department of Education Even Start evaluation and Kentucky Department for Adult Education and Literacy's year-end report. Several other documents were examined in the course of the process including the program's budget, the state grant scope of work, performance indicators, and GED Test score analyses.

The following questions helped guide subsequent strategic planning.

1. Is our leadership focused on achieving our performance expectations? Is it focused on student achievement? Is it focused on empowerment of staff? Is it focused on innovation?
2. How do we develop our strategic objectives? Do we have an action plan?
3. How do we determine requirements and expectations of students? Do we listen to determine their needs and expectations? How do we build relationships to retain students? How do we determine student satisfaction?
4. How do we use information and analysis to measure and analyze our performance? Do we track daily operations to integrate and monitor overall performance?
5. How can we improve our work system to promote staff satisfaction and productivity? How can we improve training opportunities?
6. How can we improve our process management and delivery of services to improve effectiveness? How can we improve counseling, advising, and instructing students?
7. According to 02-03 Performance Rewards, our program's performance has been 100%. However, on a daily basis, what would be our greatest concern about performance? What would be the major organizational improvement suggestion?
8. What is our program's greatest strength?
9. What is our program's greatest weakness?
10. What suggestions do you have for improving this aspect of our program?

Examples of Volunteer Utilization

- Eight members from local church groups make puppets and puzzles.
- A volunteer from the Helping Hands Health Department works with parents of children under the age of one on developmental issues.
- Two staff from Christian County Cooperative Extension Services office serve as guest speakers on budgeting and nutrition, and also provide 600-1000 free books annually to families of newborns for the Christian County Literacy Council's project, Born to Read.
- The Christian County Health Department and Pediatric Associates provide well-child checkups of newborns, six-month and one-year-olds. They also distribute 600-1000 free books annually with reading tips to these families, as part of the Born to Read project.
- The BOOKENDS monthly family reading club incorporates volunteer time of 11 preschool teachers; this program serves 100 at-risk preschoolers and their families, assisting parents with PACT Time activities and assisting the program with recruitment of new families.
- The Hopkinsville Housing Authority's resident specialists provide referrals and transportation; they also provide employability skills instruction for family literacy students.
- Hopkinsville Community College provides a full-time learning center and classrooms as necessary and supplies two case managers from the Ready-to-Work program to help in the recruitment of learners; these case managers each work 20 hours per week to help parents make the transition from GED to post-secondary education.
- During the winter holidays, four local church organizations provide free children's books to the families in the program.
- Area high school students studying Spanish assist with English as a Second Language classes.
- Hopkinsville Business and Professional Women's Club provides various instructional materials and clothing suitable for job interviewing.
- Classrooms and maintenance services are provided at no charge by Hopkinsville Community College, Christian County Head Start, and Oak Grove First Baptist Church.

SAMPLE B**Scott County (Indiana) Literacy Council, Inc., Action Plan**

The following action plan was created by the Scott County Literacy Council, Inc., to secure a grant request from the Scott County Step Ahead Council of Indiana. Note that, in this sample, the goals support the objective; this is contrary to how this chapter presents the sequence. Still, it shows a completed action plan for a family support committee.

Action Plan

Scott County Literacy Council, Inc. of Indiana Grant Request
 from Scott County Step Ahead Council of Indiana Planning/Discretionary Grant
 Name of Group Members: Family Support Committee
 Date: March 1999

Strategic Objective: Provide fun/educational activities that are family-based (e.g., field trips, take-home packets for parent and child interaction, and educational activities)				
Goals Measured by completion of goals stated below	Resources (\$, people, agencies)	How	Who	When
1. Provide funding	1. State, federal, foundation and/or local funds	1. a) Establish criteria for grant awards b) Solicit grant proposals c) Evaluate proposals against criteria	1. a) Family support committee and literacy providers b) Same as above c) Scott County Step Ahead Council members who did not submit proposals	1. September 1, 2005 — annually
2. Award grant(s)	2. Funds and Scott County Step Ahead Council proposal evaluators	2. Announce at Scott County Step Ahead Council meeting and mail letters to grantees	2. Scott County Step Ahead Coordinator	2. November 1, 2005— annually

Examining Previous Program Goals

TEMPLATE A

Goal	Goal Met? Yes/No	Why?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

TEMPLATE B**Prioritization Matrix**

A prioritization matrix is a decision making tool that helps you to identify—in a simple and objective manner. This method uses a series of comparisons of two items and keeps track of your priority for each compared pair. It works especially well for very long lists that need to be prioritized.

Instructions:

1. List items to be prioritized. The items can be in any order.
2. Compare two items at a time, circling the letter of the item that you feel is more important. For example, if A is more important than B, circle A.
3. Count the number of times each item was circled. If two items were circled the same number of times, to break the tie, look back in section two to see which you preferred when you compared the two; then give the preferred item an additional point.

Finally, use the totals in section three to list the items in the new, prioritized ranking.

Example:

1. Let's prioritize these three theoretical family literacy program needs:
 - A. Need to show greater grade level gains for adults in adult education
 - B. Need to serve 18 more families next year
 - C. Need to collaborate with Organization X to better serve the needs of our single parent participants
2. Compare A and B. For the sake of the example, let's choose B as more important than A. Next, A and C are compared and A is selected as the more pressing need. Finally, we compare B and C and again choose B.

A / (B)

(A) / C (B) / C

3. In this example, the top priority is B, the need to serve 18 more families next year, as it earned two “votes,” more than the other options. The second priority need is A, as it earned one vote, compared to no votes for C.

Item	A	B	C
Number of Times Preferred (circled)	1	2	0
Final Ranking	2	1	3

1. List your program's needs (in any order)

- A. _____
- B. _____
- C. _____
- D. _____
- E. _____
- F. _____
- G. _____

2. Circle the need you consider more pressing in the following comparisons.

- A / B
- A / C B / C
- A / D B / D C / D
- A / E B / E C / E D / E
- A / F B / F C / F D / F E / F
- A / G B / G C / G D / G E / G F / G

Item	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Number of Times Preferred (circled)							
Final Ranking							

New Prioritized Order:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____

TEMPLATE C From Goals to Strategy

Goals...to meet priority needs		
1. _____ _____ _____	2. _____ _____ _____	3. _____ _____ _____
Objectives...to measure attainment of goals		
Objectives for Goal 1	Objectives for Goal 2	Objectives for Goal 3
1A. _____ _____	2A. _____ _____	3A. _____ _____
1B. _____ _____	2B. _____ _____	3B. _____ _____
1C. _____ _____	2C. _____ _____	3C. _____ _____
Strategies...to achieve objectives		
Strategies for Objective 1A _____ _____ _____	Strategies for Objective 2A _____ _____ _____	Strategies for Objective 3A _____ _____ _____
Strategies for Objective 1B _____ _____ _____	Strategies for Objective 2B _____ _____ _____	Strategies for Objective 2C _____ _____ _____
Strategies for Objective 1C _____ _____ _____	Strategies for Objective 2C _____ _____ _____	Strategies for Objective 3C _____ _____ _____

Volunteer Roles Checklist

When considering the roles that volunteers might play in your family literacy program, check off those that you feel your program needs.

Providing Instructional Support
Adult Education – A volunteer can...

- Assist teachers with instruction; tutor one-to-one or assist with small group learning for adults who need extra help
- Make home visits
- Help with assessment of students
- Teach special skills such as job interview skills, computer skills, home skills like cooking or sewing, life skills related to a profession (e.g., realtors: how to buy a house; bankers: how to set up a family budget)
- Gather resources for classroom use and for developing curriculum ideas
- Record books onto audiotape

Children's Education – A volunteer can...

- Assist teachers with instruction; tutor elementary school children; tell stories, read aloud
- Assist with a homework club
- Assist in preparing for classroom activities (e.g., gathering and setting out materials, mixing paints, changing learning materials and toys in various areas of the room, putting up bulletin boards and children's art work)
- Share a special skill or hobby, assist children at the computer or use knowledge and skills to help nurture cultural appreciation
- Help teachers develop student portfolios by gathering, labeling and filing children's work; help with assessment of students
- Help clean and organize toys, gather and organize free materials and resources, such as art supplies, egg cartons, margarine tubs, etc.
- Be an active part of learning; put on a puppet show or other special event; have interactive conversations with children—listen and support their language and literacy learning; play, sing songs, dance, work puzzles
- Attend and be an extra set of hands (e.g., for excursions and field-trips); help children put on shoes after nap time, or get coats, boots, hats and mittens on for outside play; assist as children select books on regular trips to the library; hold and rock an infant

- ❑ Help integrate native languages into the classroom for children who are English language learners or help the teacher integrate a second language into elements of the English-speaking classroom
- ❑ Assemble parent/child book packets with books and activities for families to take home and use together; help create “prop boxes” with materials to be used in various classroom learning centers; create book listening tapes; make supportive educational materials, such as puppets, flannel board stories, a file of favorite songs, materials for the woodworking area; conduct a Web search or visit the library to identify resources such as books, ideas, materials, and activities related to a particular topic

Parent Time – A volunteer can...

- ❑ Provide advocacy training or budgeting information; share money-saving recipes and cooking ideas; show parents “how it’s done”—from how to eat in a restaurant to how to dress for a workplace environment
- ❑ Help parents with navigating the school system, assist parents who are preparing for U.S. citizenship, help parents study for a driver’s permit, help parents interpret a phone bill or fill out a form
- ❑ Take part in a Health Advisory Committee (doctors, nurses and others in the healthcare profession can volunteer to make presentations on topics that are specific to students’ needs)
- ❑ Listen, support, encourage; be a mentor or “wise advisor”; establish a relationship with a parent and “set an example”; coach—establish a meaningful relationship with a parent to create an environment in which a parent wants to do and be his/her best
- ❑ Teach parenting skills to young or new parents
- ❑ Provide basic literacy tutoring; help teach parents to read or teach parents how to read to their children
- ❑ Help coordinate and invite speakers to the local program to speak on parenting topics
- ❑ Model the enjoyment of playing with children and model reading to children
- ❑ Share family traditions and parenting experiences; speak to students about a career or a particular area of interest
- ❑ Share connections: provide tickets to special events in the community; make a valuable business contact to pave the way for parents who are facing the fears and joys of that first job

PACT Time – A volunteer can...

- Gather take-home materials to be used by families; help select and provide appropriate books for parents and children to read; help gather a variety of books and texts for the classroom; gather music and song sheets for parents and staff; create letter and word games, puzzles, cards; create various ways for children to practice writing, such as sand boxes or small blackboards or slates
- Help organize materials, games, story-telling and scheduling
- Provide the much needed “extra set of hands” that will make parent and child interactive literacy activities meaningful and engaging
- Develop a relationship with families and provide encouragement as well as assistance as parents try new ideas with their children
- Facilitate book making with families
- Arrange family literacy, math and science activities
- Support parents with ideas for ways to “have fun with language”
- Help facilitate special services such as health screenings and picture day, or help plan and make arrangements for special events, such as a family literacy supper; plan and make field trip arrangements
- Share with parents various ways to use literacy learning materials
- Assist in preparing the classroom environment by gathering toys or materials needed for a particular activity, readying an area for use, or helping organize the classroom
- Participate during Circle Time by singing songs, listening and reading stories, and assisting with children; share rhymes, chants and songs with parents and staff; lead songs for parents, children and staff to learn
- Help to interpret instructions, stories and songs for parents and children who speak a language other than English; help the teacher to integrate families’ first languages into the English-speaking classroom
- Take notes on events occurring during PACT Time that will help teachers focus learning and discussion during Parent Time
- Become a role model for both adults and children
- Help English language learners or others new to the community link to resources available beyond the classroom, providing a “friendly face” that both parents and children can turn to for support

Providing Administrative Support

A volunteer can...

- Serve on advisory boards/boards of directors, or as committee member
- Manage other volunteers
- Keep records or serve as librarian
- Help with intake assessment
- Provide teacher/program clerical support; serve as office assistant; create Web site; develop low literacy materials for adult readers; place orders for materials and books; coordinate guest speaker program for classes
- Clean and maintain facilities and equipment
- Recruit families and other volunteers
- Assist with marketing and public relations, designing and printing brochures and newsletters; prepare press releases and program information
- Plan and support events and celebrations, field trips, guest speakers, etc.
- Assist with fundraising and grant writing
- Help supervise on the playground or in the cafeteria or work in the kitchen; ride buses with children to provide additional assistance and supervision
- Work on special projects
- Offer personal and professional expertise in helping the program and its participating families access other community services, such as free or low-cost medical or dental services
- Coordinate sharing of materials and resources between site collaborators
- Inventory materials
- Offer to be a mentor; take an adult student to lunch; help fathers become role models for young men and boys; become a “foster grandparent” to a child
- Provide student transportation to/from the program, to the library for story hour or for special events (e.g., a GED testing date, a visit to the local college, a trip to a job site, or a field trip to the zoo)
- Raise awareness about family literacy or be a guest speaker in the community on behalf of family literacy programs; advocate for parents involved in the legal system; be an advocate for parents involved in the public school system; serve as a liaison and representative within the community, informing church groups and service organizations about the program
- Provide child care for parents while they attend classes or provide an hour or two of “respite time” for a single parent

References — Assessing Program Needs

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