

2.F Finding Reliable Volunteers

A) Finding Reliable Volunteers

To ensure you have confident, effective, and durable volunteers, we suggest you both screen them for capabilities and interests. If you have an activist group that is large enough that you will not need to find volunteers from the general public, you can ignore this section – but should first read item B) below.

We have discussed elsewhere that you need enough volunteers to ensure a successful petition drive and create an impression on the council or board in your community. Recall that you should have enough volunteers before starting the drive and you should have as many persons at the council or board meetings as possible. You want to have confidence about who will be willing and able to do all tasks before starting the work. And, let's face it, if your volunteers fall through, you will be the ones who have to take up the slack – and that could mean a lot more hours for you. Other communities have admitted their error in not ensuring the reliability of potential volunteers.

The purpose of the “public” *Education* presentation is to draw potential volunteers together and solicit them to help. Soon after this presentation you should contact those who attended and gave you their contact information. In order to quickly follow up, you must have educated yourself well about what needs to get done. So, we suggest you don't have the *Education* presentation until you have studied this whole Handbook and have spent some time with a WIUTA Advisor on the phone – we are prepared to work with you on this.

When you make first contact with potential volunteers, who you have identified either at the *Education* presentation or elsewhere, ask them if they are interested in helping – if you can find a role for them. You will lose some of them right away because they have had some time since the presentation to think about their interest and will have found reasons not to join you.

For those who are willing to attend a *How-To* meeting you should create a relationship with a little personal conversation. During the call ask them what kinds of things interest them, what skills they have, and what kinds of things they do not like to do. Record a little about them so you can present some potential tasks to them at the meeting to gauge their interests. You will lose some of them at that meeting as well – but better than when you are ready to start your work.

During this meeting have one of your core group pay attention to what the prospect volunteers say and ask – to learn a little more about what they might be willing to do. You might go over a list of types of tasks you have and ask persons to identify those they MIGHT be willing and able to help with each task.

The final step is to call each of the potential volunteers who came to the *How-To* meeting – with a list of tasks you envision – and ask them if they would be willing to come to a planning meeting. You might lose some at this point as well. And for those willing to attend, ask them if they had, at the *How-To* meeting, identified any tasks they could help with. If they don't know, console them and ask them to come anyway.

Even after all this work, you may lose some volunteers who said they are willing and able to do certain tasks. From our experience the most risky of these is for door-to-door signature collection. Some persons who said they could do door-to-door signature collection, after trying it, found they do not like doing it and quit. You should ask any person who says they would do this have ever done it before. If they haven't you ask them if they would tag along with another canvasser to get the hang of it. A way to test whether novice door-to-door volunteers have the personal characteristics for this work is to ask them to go door-to-door to get people to sign our supporter form. If they will try this, they will self-determine if they would be able to collect signatures door-to-door. Remember, you have only 60 days

to collect signatures – so proper planning and having enough volunteers for this are the two most important controls you have.

B) Ensuring You Have Enough Volunteers for the 60 Day window

You have 60 days to collect the require signatures – make sure you have enough volunteers.

- Do not start the petition collection until you have the volunteers necessary to complete the task. Keep in mind that more people will come to the “startup” meeting than will come to the next meeting – where you start doing the real work. This means make sure you have more people than you need at that startup meeting. If not, reconvene the meeting after you find more people.
- **For every 1000 signatures you target to collect, you will need volunteers collecting for 100 hours.** It is safest to assume that a volunteer can collect about 10 signatures per hour. If you have five reliable volunteers, each has to collect signatures for 20 hours to get 1000 signatures. Another safe assumption is that, typically, a volunteer will be able to work no more than four hours on any given day – this suggests that each will commit five days to collecting 1000 signatures. For example, for Manitowoc the 20% threshold suggested collecting 2500 signatures. If Manitowoc got 10 signature collectors, each would, on average, collect 250 signatures. This means each would have to commit 25 hours over the 60 days allowed to collect signatures. (All these numbers are average. In reality some volunteers will collect more signatures, while some will collect less – plan accordingly.)