

Maximizing Your Training Budget

Providing top notch training with limited funds

Wisdom from the field:

When developing volunteer management training, Karen Dischler of Schools of Hope gathers stories from current VISTAs about difficulties they've faced recruiting and interviewing volunteers. These real-life stories are used in problem-solving activities during the training. "It makes the situations more real and enhances the training experience when the scenarios are from VISTAs themselves."

To create a training program that meets your organization's needs, first you have to know what those needs are. Then, you have to find the resources to address them. Often, the latter proves to be more challenging!

So, how do you squeeze the most member development out of a limited budget?

- **Recruit second-year members and recent grads**—By the time members finish a term, they have become experts at many facets of their service. With encouragement and coaching, they can create trainings and share their knowledge and experience with new recruits.
- **Look within your organization**—By communicating your training needs to fellow staff members, you can often find the right person from within your own ranks. Aside from keeping expenses down, no one knows your specific training needs better than your own people.
- **Partner with another organization to share expenses**—Great trainers can be expensive. Consider hosting the training with another program to split costs. This practice works best in metropolitan areas with multiple organizations and for more general topics such as volunteer management, diversity, or leadership.
- **Open your training session up to the general public for a fee**—Not only can this reduce your costs, it can shake up the dynamic of the training group. For example, one program is able to afford the services of the internationally renowned and expensive experts by inviting public participation, which cuts the cost by 50-75 percent. Another plus: your program benefits from increased public exposure and goodwill!
- **Let your supporters know what you need**—Include specific training needs on your fundraising "wish list." It is often easier for a community member to give time and expertise rather than money to causes they believe in.