Diversity & Service: Best Practices for Engaging Volunteers of Color
Introduction
Do-Now

• In groups of 3-4 participants discuss the following questions:
  ◦ What does diversity mean to you?
  ◦ What does it look and feel like to have diversity lived out in your organization?
At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of diversity within volunteer cohorts
2. Identify 2-3 organizational barriers to diversity
3. Identify 3-4 strategies that can be implemented in organizations in order to support and engage new and current volunteers of color
Diversity at Peer Health Exchange

• Multiyear plan to increase diversity amongst staff and volunteers
  ◦ Diversity across roles including senior leadership
  ◦ 50% of college volunteer identify as Black and Latinx by 2022

• Diversity philosophy
  ◦ “To fulfill our mission, we must understand the effects of systemic oppression on young people and actively combat this inequality in our work. To do so, we commit to seeking out and learning from diverse perspectives and identities. We also actively support our staff, volunteers, board, and community partners to provide culturally responsive learning experiences to the young people with whom we work.”
Defining Black and Latinx Identities

- **Black**
  - Umbrella term for people who come from African heritage
    - African Americans, people from the Caribbean, people from the African continent
- **Latinx**
  - Umbrella term for people who come from Latin American countries
    - “x” is used to be inclusive of all gender identities
- **You can be both!**
Benefits of Diverse Volunteer Cohorts

- Black and Latinx volunteers:
  - Are able to connect with populations served
  - Bring unique perspectives into their roles
    - Shared experiences with populations served
  - Understand community context
  - Are bilingual and bicultural
  - Enrich the program
Benefits of Diverse Volunteer Cohorts

Teachers of color can serve as role models as their presence tells teens (particularly, teens of color) that they too can eventually hold school leadership and authority positions (Villegas & Lucas, 2004). This helps to motivate teens of color and potentially build their confidence to excel academically (Villegas & Irvine, 2010; King, 1993).

When teachers are more similar demographically (specifically, in gender and race) student performance improves in the areas of attendance, retention, college-going rates and academics (Egalite, 2015; Villegas & Irvine, 2009; Villegas & Davis, 2008; Dee, 2006; Dee, 2004; Ehrenberg & Brewer, 1993)
Recruitment
Barriers to Volunteering

• High risk, low (monetary) reward
  ◦ Higher payout for job after college
    • Inability to save before and/or during service
      ○ Student loans
  ◦ Lack of experience alignment
    • First generation college students

• Cultural barriers
  ◦ Community pressure to “get out”
    • “Teachers, administrators and others propagate “so you can leave this place” narrative.”
  ◦ Being one of a few, or the only, POC participating in service program
Barriers to Volunteering

• Costs
  ◦ AmeriCorps monthly stipend amount in Boston (1700 hours): $1,128
  ◦ Common expenses:
    • Rent: $500-$850+ per bedroom
    • Credit card payments
    • Student loan payments
    • Money sent home or used to support community
• Emotional maturity and/or history of trauma
  ◦ Volunteers who live or come from communities affected by similar challenges they serve
In relation to barriers to volunteering, what are your current organizational recruitment practices?

- Which barriers were you aware of? Which barriers surprised you?
- How are you addressing some of the barriers?
- What do you feel you are doing really well?
- What are some areas for growth?
Recruitment Strategies

- Use honest testimonials from current Black and Latinx volunteers about their service experience
- Use proportional representation in recruitment materials
- Involve Black and Latinx volunteers in recruitment*
- Expand network and outreach opportunities
  - UMass Boston vs. BU, idealist/job fair vs. career center
- Show up in your community
- Increase stipends/compensation if possible
  - Work study opportunities for college volunteers
Recruitment Question Checklist

• Who is recruiting volunteers?
• Where does recruitment happen?
• What language is used to specifically recruit volunteers of color?
• What do you know about the area that you are recruiting in?
• How do you learn more about the area/community?
• What do you need to learn more about?
Engagement
Engagement

Volunteer engagement refers to an organization’s use of support and resources to keep volunteers involved and participating in the program. Volunteers should:

• Feel invested in
• Be able to complete program holistically
• Know how to access additional resources
Example supports provided include:

- Career services
- Meaningful on-boarding
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services
- Child care
- Support with SNAP benefits
- Affinity groups
- Professional development events and opportunities

How do these services support volunteers of color in reference to volunteering barriers?
In-service support

Pair-share (with a new partner):
- What supports do your organizations provide to volunteers now?
- Are the services provided culturally relevant?
- Are services provided easily accessible?
- Do programs affirm identities?
**Engagement Strategies**

- Increase leadership and professional development opportunities including mentorship and self-nomination
- Provide clear access to resources that volunteers may benefit from (SNAP, childcare, etc.)
- Involve volunteers in program design
- Engage community organizations and members in leading volunteer training
- Create a safe space for volunteers to learn and talk about how racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism etc. affect communities served
- Create a safe space for volunteers to process how their own identities show up in their work
- Host focus groups to learn about volunteer service experience
Retention
Retention Barriers

Why may Black and Latinx volunteers leave organizations?

• Position tenure: the longer someone stays in a company the lower the turnover
• Socialization process: in determining their ‘fit’, with an organization, “minorities may interpret numerical rarity of executives of color as an indicator of barriers to advancement, motivating them to seek opportunities elsewhere”
Retention Strategies

• Commit from the “top”
  ◦ i.e. diversify staff, have all staff attend
diversity/anti-oppression training
• Provide meaningful mentorship opportunities
• Give volunteers meaningful ownership over projects
• Accept and respond to volunteer feedback
• Appreciate and celebrate volunteer contributions
• Create a fair work environment
  ◦ Give appropriate time off
  ◦ Create space for individualized supervision
• Allow volunteers to self-nominate themselves for
leadership roles
Activities
Activity Instructions

You will have 15 minutes to respond to questions related to recruitment, engagement, and retention by drawing.

1. Turn hand-out over to determine what group number you were assigned
2. Pair with 1-2 other people with the same number
   ◦ Group 1: recruitment
   ◦ Group 2: engagement
   ◦ Group 3: retention
3. Complete activity and be prepared to share out
1: Exploring volunteer recruitment

Instructions: Using a blank sheet of paper, **draw** your responses to the following questions:
1. Who is recruiting volunteers?
2. Where does recruitment happen?
3. What language is used to specifically recruit volunteers of color?
4. What do you know about the area that you are recruiting in?
2: Exploring volunteer engagement

Instructions: Using a blank sheet of paper, draw your responses to the following questions:

1. What do engaged volunteers look like in your organization?
2. What do disengaged volunteers look like?
3. Why may volunteers become disengaged?
4. What is the role of your organization in managing volunteer engagement?
3: Exploring volunteer retention

Instructions: Using a blank sheet of paper, draw your responses to the following questions:
1. What is my organizational culture?
2. How does my organization culture support agency and growth?
3. What does my organization do to encourage upward mobility?
4. Who are potential mentors in my organization or partner organizations?
Whole Group Discussion

When reflecting on your organizational practices, did you find areas that address some of the volunteering barriers?

Did you find areas for improvement?
What can we do (differently)?

• Join a new small group of 3-4 participants to brainstorm ideas on how to effectively recruit, engage, and retain volunteers of color.

• Guiding questions:
  ◦ What are 2-3 barriers to diversity in your organization?
  ◦ Using your reflections from the previous activity, what are 1-2 things you want to change or improve to increase diversity across your volunteer corps?
Closing
Summary

• When recruiting volunteers of color it is important to understand the barriers they face when deciding to volunteer.

• Volunteers of color may need more structured support during their service term. Organizations should understand need and provide appropriate supports consistently.

• To retain volunteers of color commit to creating safe spaces, soliciting volunteer feedback, and providing opportunities for volunteers to continuously grow and lead.
Exit slip

• What is one practice or strategy you commit to taking back to your organization?
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Empowering young people to make healthy decisions
Thank You!
Diversity & Service: Best Practices for Engaging Volunteers of Color
Massachusetts Conference on Service and Volunteering

### Barriers to Volunteering
- High risk, low (monetary) reward
- Cultural barriers
- Costs
- Emotional maturity and/or history of trauma

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- Allow volunteers to self-nominate themselves for leadership roles
What will you do (differently)?