

COMMUNICATING TO RECONNECT with your VOLUNTEERS

a recipe

Ingredients

for reconnecting with your volunteers:

TONE

1 part

+

SAFETY

1 part

+

TIMING

1 part

Tone

As you compose emails, update your website, or post on social media, you'll want to think about the tone of your writing. But what tone should your communication strike? Here are a few tips:

Be Sensitive

Some in your community may be dealing with unusual circumstances and hardships. It's important to speak with a sense of compassion and care. Let your community and volunteers know that you've been thinking about them while you were away, and that you're there to answer their questions and concerns. This might be the first time they've heard from you in a while, it may seem tone deaf to jump in with a big ask. So what should you talk about in your next email to your volunteers? Or that first social media post in a long time? Reconnect your volunteers with your mission. Remind your community what your volunteer program strives to accomplish and the actions you're taking now.

Be Transparent

Your volunteers want honesty and transparency. And you've probably been keeping your staff informed, but many times, organizations forget to involve volunteers. While you may not have all the answers, you can keep your volunteers up to date with any relevant and important changes occurring within your volunteer program. Ask volunteers for their input and feedback. What would make your volunteers feel safe when returning to in-person activities? Are there other ways in which your volunteers want to help? Be receptive to feedback and thank volunteers for their engagement.

Be Consistent

Keep your correspondence consistent. Before you begin reaching out to your volunteers, hatch a plan for reengaging them. Your communication should reflect the collective voice or tone of your organization. And as always, if you make a claim or promise to your volunteers, follow through.

Safety

Your volunteers want to know that your organization is taking the necessary steps to reintroduce volunteerism safely. So, when reconnecting with your volunteers, you'll need to let them know all the ways you're mitigating risk. In addition to posting your safety efforts online, send information on your enhanced safety measures to your volunteers through email for easy access. And, post signage in volunteering locations. The CDC has plenty of [printable materials](#) and posters to help keep your community safe. Noticing that your volunteers have many concerns? Host an online question and answer session to reassure your supporters.



You may need to spend the time to train staff and volunteers on new safety protocols.

Timing

When is the right time for volunteer programs to reopen? Well, it's truly up to you and your organization to decide when the time feels right to welcome volunteers again. Once you've decided to reopen, you'll want to plan to reconnect with volunteers before you open your doors. To do this, you can create an email campaign to ensure you're engaging with them in ways that are safe and sensitive to timing. You may adopt a simple email newsletter campaign plan like this one:

email 1:

"Hello volunteers! Let us reintroduce ourselves."

- Reintroduce yourself, your organization, and it's mission.
- Direct volunteers to your website to reconnect with your organization online.
- Explain your organization's reasoning for reopening.
- Invite supporters to reach out to you with questions.

email 2:

"We're doing our part."

- Outline what your organization is doing to take safety seriously.
- Discuss any changes to your organization (i.e. programming, mission, virtual volunteering) and how these changes will affect volunteers.
- Link to additional community-based resources for volunteers.

email 3:

"Here's how you can help."

- Highlight ways volunteers can get involved. Include virtual opportunities and ways to donate for those who may not want to volunteer in person.
- Formulate a gentle call to action, like "There are so many ways to help our community. Learn more here." Avoid anything too demanding, like "Volunteer Now!"

More Quick Tips for Connecting with Your Volunteers

Here are a few more ideas for re-engaging your volunteers with your organization.

Be Responsive

Your volunteers may have some reservations and even more questions. Even if you don't have all the answers, you can connect with volunteers by being responsive to their concerns.

Be Flexible

Meet your volunteers where they are. Find out what motivates and concerns today's volunteers. Send a volunteer survey, and gather their feedback to help guide the direction of your program.

Host a Virtual Volunteer Event

Host a Virtual Volunteer Party through video streaming to reconnect with your volunteers at home. Or, arrange an online question and answer session on a social media platform like Facebook Live or Instagram TV.