VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT GUIDE

How to #FindMoreFRNds

FRN National Team

2017
INTRODUCTION

Having a solid volunteer base is essential to a functioning and sustainable FRN chapter. However, one thing remains constant: the need for quality, hardworking, and consistent volunteers. In this resource, we’ve outlined a multitude of steps to consider when planning recruitment strategies, so that chapters of all shapes and sizes can effectively recruit the best volunteers for the job.

If you have any questions as you read this, please don’t hesitate to contact us:

- Email: programs@foodrecoverynetwork.org
- Text: (240) 473-3778

Protip:
Read this guide with your leadership team and the individuals tasked with leading recruitment for your chapter. Discuss how this can be adapted to your chapter’s specific needs.
PREPARATION AND PLANNING

The first questions

The most effective recruitment strategies begin by asking questions that help you obtain a better understanding of the fundamentals of your chapter, school, and community.

“How many volunteers do we need?”

There are two numbers to consider here: the total volunteer pool, and the number of volunteers needed at each recovery. The size of your volunteer pool is dependent on a number of variables, specifically:

- The size of your school
- The frequency of your recoveries
- Number of volunteers required at each recovery

We recommend 3 to 7. Keep in mind that volunteers may not have the capacity to volunteer for every recovery.

- Your volunteers’ schedules
- Volunteer turnover

You may or may not be able to predict the size of your recoveries in advance. You should talk with your food donor so you can gauge a general range beforehand and schedule the right number of volunteers ahead of time.

“What are our expectations of them?”

The biggest expectations that you need to convey are reliability and communication. You don’t need to be the most experienced service leader in the world, but you definitely don’t want to be left hanging if someone signs up for a recovery and doesn’t show up. For those that are leading recoveries, be sure to have the emails and phone numbers for all volunteers to double-check their availability before a recovery begins.
“How are we going to manage expectations from a diverse group of volunteers?”

You may be entering the recruitment step with an expectation that your new volunteers will be present for every recovery, be timely for all events, and be engaged in all aspects of the team. Unfortunately, this is simply not realistic. The fact of the matter is that you’ll be managing a diverse group of individuals with different levels of interest, skill, and capacity. Potential volunteers will also have their own expectations for how they see their role in the chapter; these expectations will manifest themselves into different types of volunteers. It helps to familiarize yourself with the different types of volunteers in order to manage your team effectively.

The most common types of volunteers are:

- **The SuperFRNd**
  
  This is a volunteer that meets the needs of your chapter, and excels in their responsibilities for the team. They are timely, eager to help, and contribute meaningfully to discussions.

- **The FlakyFRNd**
  
  Will volunteer with the team infrequently throughout the year, usually due to a hectic schedule

  AND/OR

  This individual may initially sign on to be a regular volunteer, but will eventually volunteer less and less as the year goes on; usually due to academic, athletic, or personal commitments.

- **One-And-Done**
  
  This individual volunteers for a single recovery or event. Potential reasons or causes:

    - The individual is interested in completing a service requirement for an organization that they’re a member of
    - The individual decides they are interested in other forms of service
    - The individual may not have enjoyed the recovery

      » If that’s the case, you should ask for feedback.

  Some volunteers may specifically state that they are only participating in one recovery; others may simply not show up for another.
**Specific Interest Volunteer**

Although this individual may not participate in all aspects of the recovery process, they may be interested in a specific aspect of service work. Can be tasked with event planning, financial management, social media, or any other capacity-building activity.

- For example, many chapters use their organization as a chance to program education events or volunteer with their Partner Agencies (PAs).

This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it out of the question to see a variety of the above attributes in one volunteer. More than likely, you’ll encounter many permutations of the above “types” in your team. With this in mind, one of the best ways to reduce volunteer turnover is to be explicit about the expectations for your volunteers, and in return, have them detail their expectations.

Do you remember your first few weeks at school? Chances are, you had to learn to balance school, work, and extracurricular activities. If you approach new volunteers with this in mind, and provide ample opportunities for learning and development, **any volunteer has the potential to be a SuperFRNd**. The best volunteers are the ones who have their expectations met and feel fulfilled in their roles on the team.
“How do we know what roles will fit potential volunteers?”

In brief, ask them what their interests are. FRN has high crossover potential with a wide variety of disciplines, such as: STEM, sports, service work, environmental advocacy, food justice, etc. No matter their answer, it’s likely that there’s a seat at the table for them on your FRN team. Brainstorm with your team on how you can tailor this messaging to different disciplines on campus. More information is available in the “Resource Mapping” and “Recruitment, Tabling, and Outreach” sections, which follow.

Protip:

As a member of the leadership team, be aware of who is on your team and in what position. Sometimes, a volunteer will be placed in a role that either does not fit their skillset or level of qualification. Identify these discrepancies, and either speak to the volunteer in question about your concerns or have them shadow a more experienced member of the team.
RESOURCE MAPPING

Now that you understand the groundwork for different types of volunteers, it’s time to find them!

Resource Mapping is a way to envision your college or university as a network of resources that can be mobilized as potential sources of volunteers or partners for your chapter. We recommend doing this activity with your leadership team and/or staff advisor.

**Step 1:** Identify overall resources and communities. Common resources and communities on university campuses include:

- Student Government
- Greek Life Organizations
  - Often have philanthropic requirement
- Educational Departments
  - E.g. College of Humanities, College of Science, College of Engineering
- Student Unions/Cultural Organizations
- Sustainability Office
- Office of Student Engagement / Service Learning
- Athletics
- Outdoor Recreation
- Residence Life / RAs
- ...and many more that will be specific to your campus community!

**Protip:**

Consider reaching out to professors – even if they are not your own – who teach classes related to environmental sustainability and/or food justice. Some professors may offer class credit for students who volunteer with clubs, and they may also be willing to invite student representatives from FRN to come and give a short 5-10 minute presentation. Don’t be afraid to ask!
**Step 2:** Determine which organizations may make good partners, and how. The following questions can help you decide which organizations you’d like to target first.

*“Which organizations’ missions most align with FRN?”*

The intersectionality of FRN’s mission provides high crossover appeal to a broad base of student interests. Our national network includes students from nearly every major and background that are passionate about the intersection of food waste and hunger.

However, as you develop your volunteer base, it may be helpful to start off with a handful of majors, departments, and clubs that are more clearly aligned with FRN (such as nutritional sciences, public health, sustainability departments/offices, or environmental studies/science).

*“Does anyone on our leadership team have existing connections with other organizations on campus?”*

Utilizing your team members’ personal networks can help establish FRN as a large and credible presence on campus. For example, if your co-president has worked with the nutrition department, they are in the perfect position to pitch FRN as a volunteer opportunity for nutrition students. When approaching on-campus outreach, start with your personal networks and expand from there.

**Protip:**

Distinguish between groups that can provide volunteers and groups that can be connectors to other volunteer recruitment opportunities. For example, Resident Advisors may be too busy to volunteer, but may be aware of which students would most like to be involved and could spread the word. Or, the Sustainability Office might have event opportunities that you could use to interact with potential student volunteers. Shift your “asks” based on what you think different groups or people can provide.
RECRUITMENT, TABLING, AND OUTREACH

Now that you have a clearer sense of your volunteer expectations and the various organizations and departments on campus, it’s time to develop a targeted recruitment strategy. Once you have a handful of organizations or people you’d like to connect with, start by sending them an email, or researching if there are drop-in/office hours where you could approach them about FRN.

This sample email is designed to introduce a chapter and its mission to any campus organization. When crafting your email, know your audience. Use the information you have about your target demographic and tailor your request to be the most persuasive and mutually beneficial.

Beyond establishing direct partnerships with other organizations on campus, you will also need to interact with students on an individual basis. There are a variety of strategies for marketing and advertising FRN on your campus. The following section details best practices for a variety of classic recruitment strategies.

Tabling Preparation

Tabling is defined as any kind of public, informal presentation that is initiated by an interested party. Recruitment efforts centered around tabling should be prepared in the first week or two of the semester. Your best bet for recruitment is to see if your campus has a club/organization fair, designed to recruit new students into existing campus clubs. For these types of fairs, be sure to contact their organizers and/or sign up as necessary ahead of time.
These events are highly valuable to chapters, as they provide ample opportunities to reach out to underclassmen. Underclassmen will look here for ways to get involved and find a sense of community. Involving underclassmen will also help your chapter in the long-run when you have to consider leadership team transitions.

In order to begin preparation for a tabling event, it’s important to know in advance who will be there and when. Take some time the night before (or whenever is most convenient to meet) to discuss the following considerations:

“What is the end goal of tabling? Is it to raise awareness? Sell swag? Obtain email addresses? Network with other tables? How much time and energy do we want to allocate to each goal?”

Next, sort out the logistics. Do a dummy-check the night before to make sure you have all of the supplies necessary to table. Do you want a trifold that contains information about the national organization and its statistics? Do you need a power supply for a laptop to show a video? If so, do you know who to contact or where to get a power strip?

Exchange everyone’s contact information to ensure that people can contact each other in case of changes or an emergency. If you need a special multimedia accommodation, be sure to contact the organizer of the fair or multimedia department at your school for assistance. Murphy’s law applies to everything related to electronics, so you’ll want to check and double check to make sure your computer can connect, that you have necessary cords and attachments for your device, etc. **No one wants to see 50 minutes of a blue screen during a tabling event.**
Ask each other tough questions that may come up during the event. (If you’re not sure what the answers are, don’t worry, just check out the FAQ page on our website).

“How do we know we won’t get sued?”

“What is FRN?”

“What is a partner agency?”

Practice giving succinct, clear answers. Stumbling through a question might not give the best impression. You might not have the answer to every question, but don’t be afraid to take someone’s contact info and get in touch with them later with a more defined answer. Saying, “I don’t have a definitive answer, but I can find out more information for you” is OK!

Consider bringing a cheat sheet with answers to some of the questions you anticipate. This can be helpful especially if you get nervous when asked questions on the spot.

**During tabling**

Have two or three people at the table who know what their roles are. Are they primarily going to be standing and talking to students, or placed closer to the back of the table to explain information about swag, pamphlets, flyers, email sheets, etc? Will you be able to switch roles if someone doesn’t want to do a task anymore?

Your primary goal is (“surprise”) to recruit volunteers. Either have a spreadsheet open on a laptop or a pen-and-paper list to capture email addresses and phone numbers. This way, you can contact all interested students afterwards.

*We recommend contacting potential volunteers within two weeks.*
If one of your goals is to network, have a point person go around the room and strike up some conversations with other tablers and guests! When approaching other tables, be casual about what organization you’re affiliated with. The goal is to network and build relationships with other related organizations, not to steal other clubs’ interested volunteers.

- For instance, if you approach a greek life table, ask them about their mission. If it involves service, ask what organizations and clubs they work with. Following that question, it would be perfectly appropriate to discuss your role as an FRN rep and bring up the fact that you’d be interested in partnering with them.

- Additionally, if you and another student group mutually agree that your two organizations could benefit from a future partnership, feel free to invite them to visit your table where they can sign up for FRN updates and/or exchange contact information. This is a great opportunity to consider ways in which you might benefit from a unique partnership!

Sometimes, you’ll expect a certain group to table at the same event. If you know this information already, plan and practice how you’ll approach them. What’s the purpose of approaching them? How will you go about it?

**Multimedia**

Whether it’s a video of a recovery or a powerpoint slideshow of different facts, it’s always nice to have a multimedia element to your tabling plan. It’s eye catching, and conveys more information to those who might not otherwise approach the table.
Here’s a sample powerpoint provided by FRN National. Some topics that your team’s powerpoint could include:

- An overview of food waste and insecurity in the US
- Eye-opening stats about food waste
  - Ex: Approximately 1.3 billion tons of food are wasted globally each year – that’s enough to feed 3 billion people, or 10 times the population of the USA (Courtesy of Feedback Global)
- The history of FRN (from a single club at University of Maryland in 2011 to more than 200 chapters across the country in 2017)
- What a recovery looks like
  - Average duration, food donor, types of food, volunteers involved, etc.
- Who is your PA (their background and history; demographic group(s) they target)
- Pounds recovered to date (individual chapter & National)
- Ways they can get involved / how to connect
  - Contact information
  - If your chapter is a club or school-recognized organization (SRO), what can students expect if they become a member?

Physical Flyers

Set them out all over campus! Residence halls, cafeterias, libraries, study rooms, etc. are perfect for flyer placements. An example of an eye-catching placement could be a flyer at eye level above a trash can in your cafeteria/dining hall.

Example flyers are available for your team, but you are more than welcome to make your own!

- Be sure to include vital information, such as name of club, contact information, next meeting time/location, social media handles, etc.

Protip: Connect with graphic design students on your campus!
Other Recruitment Opportunities

- Give a brief pitch of FRN before classes (specifically to underclassmen)
- Wear FRN swag around campus!
- Get an article in your campus publication or local newspaper
  - Feel free to reach out to them and explain what your group does!
- Ask each current member of your team to approach 2-3 of their friends and talk about FRN
- Ask for advice from faculty and staff on campus – some may offer extra credit for students who volunteer with FRN

Following Up

Once you have a list of interested students, you need to provide a pathway for them to sign up for recoveries. This should always be available and incorporated into the above recruitment strategies. Some platforms to consider are:

- Golden Volunteer
- SignUpGenius
- Google Docs/sheets
- Listserv

Protip:

As you collect contact information from potential volunteers, don’t forget their phone numbers! Sending reminder texts and updates about recoveries is often a more effective communication strategy for college students than email. Ask if volunteers are able to receive group texts or if they can be reached over text in general.
Social Media

At its core, FRN should be a fun and inclusive activity for students of all backgrounds. **The more that students see your team having fun, the more likely they’ll want to join.** One simple way to do this is to make sure your chapter is active and posting regularly on social media. Besides being a “face” for your chapter, it should also be a useful conduit of information for interested students.

Some general tips for maintaining an FRN-based social media page are:

- If you have regular recovery times, list them on your “About” page
- Provide contact information for leadership team members or a general chapter email address individuals can use to express interest in volunteering (if you do use a general email, make sure that someone is assigned to check it regularly)
- Provide links to your PA’s website
- Post your recovery weight totals and pictures so people who visit your page can get a sense of the tangible work you’re accomplishing
- Share photos of your team serving your community and having a great time!
- Use FB for events, polls/surveys, recovery troubleshooting
- Connect with other FRN chapters through social media. Links to their accounts can be found on their chapter page.

**Protip:**

If the person on email duty does not know how to answer a specific question, they should respond within 24 hours and say something along the lines of, “I am looking into this and will get back to you shortly,” or “I’ve forwarded your email to our volunteer coordinator.”

Acknowledging their message shows them that they are not being ignored.
Final Thoughts

Although it’s significantly easier to recruit volunteers in the beginning of the year, recruitment can (and should) happen year-round. By setting a good example for new recruits through timeliness, hard work, and positive attitudes, you can encourage new volunteers to do the same.

Additional resources:
- FRN Student Portal
- FRN Official Chapters Facebook Group

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