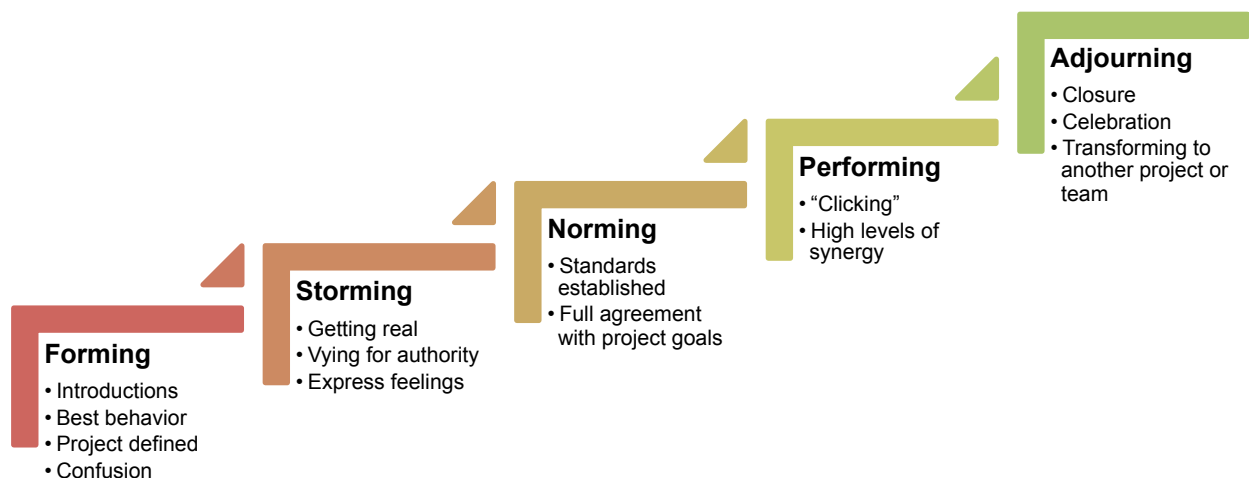


Teambuilding Ideas for Volunteers

Use any of these activities during meetings or trainings to build trust and deepen relationships within your volunteer team. Each activity is aligned with a specific stage of team development to help volunteers move through them successfully.

Tuckman's Stages of Team Development



First proposed by educational psychologist Bruce Tuckman, in 1965, these phases are necessary & inevitable in order for the team to grow, face challenges, tackle problems, find solutions, plan work, and deliver results.

- **Forming** — Team members share personal information, get to know one another and begin to focus on their assigned tasks.
- **Storming** — Team members compete for status, argue about goals and direction and struggle for relative control
- **Norming** — Team members begin to build mutual understanding, develop shared group norms and tentatively begin to work together more cohesively
- **Performing** — Team matures and is able to handle more complex issues, roles are formed and exchanged as needed and work is efficient
- **Adjourning** — Team members let go of frustrations, celebrate successes and turn to a new assignment (or return to a previous one)

Teambuilding Ideas at Each Stage of Development

Forming: The Joy of Six

- **Objective:** To demonstrate the satisfaction of being included and the unease of being excluded
- **Materials Needed:** Messages and envelopes, prepared in advance for all participants
- **Estimated Time:** 10 minutes
- **Instructions:**
 - Choose a short themed phrase that represents the topic of your meeting or your program. Duplicate the phrase on small pieces of paper and put them in envelopes. If 10 or more people will attend the meeting, make 6 total. If you have less, create less.
 - Create similar envelopes of 1 to 5 other messages (one unique message per envelope), depending on how many participants you have.
 - At the meeting, give one envelope to each participant.
 - Ask participants to open them, and find the other people who have the same message in their envelope.
 - When everyone has clustered, you will have one group; the rest should be alone.
 - When they have found anyone who has a similar phrase, ask participants to reflect on the experience and share their thoughts with the group.

Questions for Reflection:

- How does it feel not to be accepted into a group or team? Has this ever happened to you on the job or when you were volunteering?
- How did you feel when you found someone with the same message?
- How did you feel when you could not find anyone with the same message?
- Did those already in the team reach out to the others? Why or why not? What policies, procedures or self-interests keep us from including others in our teams?
- What can we do to include others “in the loop”?
- What lessons does this have for our own teambuilding?

Storming: I Wish, I Wish

- **Objective:** To unearth unspoken problem areas in a team so that they can be addressed.
- **Materials Needed:** 3 x 5 cards, pens
- **Estimated Time:** 20 minutes
- **Instructions:**
 - Point out the importance of periodically checking on the levels of team cohesiveness, cooperation and member satisfaction. Tell participants that the activity will be one of those periodic check-ups.
 - Hand out 3x5 cards to everyone, and ask them to write their answers to the following questions on the cards, one per card. (Let them know that they don't need to sign their names and encourage them to be honest about their experiences.)
 - If you could change anything about the team's mission or its way of operating, what would you change?
 - If you could change anything about your role on the team, what would you change?
 - Collect the cards, and group them by theme. Then, ask individuals or small groups (depending on the size of the team) to synthesize the information from one group of cards and report back to group.
 - Be ready to provide decisions about what may need to change, either during the meeting or in the near future.
 - After individuals have reported back, ask participants to reflect on the experience and share their thoughts with the group.

Questions for Reflection:

- What do you like best about your role and functions on the team?
- If you were king or queen for a day, what would you change about the organization or the team?
- What could we do to make your job better or easier?
- What prevents us from making these changes?
- What might we gain from making these changes?

Norming: How Should We Proceed?

- **Objective:** To help identify team norms, set goals and introduce touchy topics in a fun way.
- **Materials Needed:** Flip chart (or dry erase board) and markers
- **Estimated Time:** 30 minutes
- **Instructions:**
 - Prepare a flip chart with two columns, one with “worst” and one with “best” written above.
 - Ask participants to call out the best and worst characteristics of teamwork or give examples of good and bad teamwork, behavior in meetings or productivity they have experienced.
 - Write their answers under the appropriate column (you may need two people to write, if there is a lot of energy).
 - For each item, ask participants to share their reason for putting it on the list.
 - Ask participants what actions they can take to be more effective based on the “best” list and a few things they can change or improve upon from the “worst” list.
 - Develop team norms based on what is identified.
 - After the group has completed their list of norms, ask participants to reflect on the experience and share their thoughts with the group.

Questions for Reflection:

- Which of the items on the lists do you think the team will have difficulty with?
- Based on this discussion, what topics should we specifically address in future meetings?

Performing: Pipe Dreams

- **Objective:** To inspire creativity in team members.
- **Materials Needed:** Three pipe cleaners per person, prizes
- **Estimated Time:** 10 minutes
- **Instructions:**
 - Before the meeting, place three pipe cleaners at each seat. Unless someone asks what they are for, do not explain until you are halfway through the meeting.
 - At that time, tell participants that they are free to use the pipe cleaners to make a personal sculpture. Urge them to be creative, and reiterate that they can make anything they want (but, say no more).
 - At the end of the meeting, ask the team to pick a winner, and give them a prize.
 - Give special prizes to those who combined their “resources” or used additional items to build something that uses all of their available “tools.”
 - Take digital photos of the sculptures and post them to remind the team to be creative.
 - At the end of the meeting, ask participants to reflect on the experience and share their thoughts with the group.

Questions for Reflection:

- How curious were you when you saw the pipe cleaners?
- If no one asked their purpose, why not?
- Why did you wait to be told what to do with them?
- Why did most (or all) people work individually? If you worked as a team, who initiated the idea?
- If you didn't use other materials, why not?

Adjourning: What If ...

- **Objective:** To provide an opportunity for team members to prepare contingency plans for potentially disastrous situations.
- **Materials Needed:** Sponge-type or “Koosh” ball, flip chart (or dry erase board) and markers
- **Estimated Time:** 20 minutes
- **Instructions:**
 - After a brief review of brainstorming rules (no critique, quantity not quality, active listening, everyone shares, etc.), tell the group they will get practice handling future problems.
 - Ask participants to think of a recent experience that featured “Murphy’s Law” (what can go wrong, will go wrong).
 - Form dyads or triads and ask them to decide on one problem that could go wrong during the course of their project or during implementation.
 - Start by tossing a ball to one group. Ask the group to present their problem to the larger group, stating it as “what if ...?”
 - Then instruct them toss the ball to another team who must then provide a solution to their question. The team that now has the ball then presents their problem to the larger group, stating it as “what if ...?” and tosses the ball to another group who must offer an answer, and so on.
 - Whichever team catches it must provide one solution no matter how farfetched. Other teams may also chime in after they have shared their solution.
 - Record the problems and solutions as they are shared on a flip chart and make sure every team has had a chance to share a problem.

Questions for Reflection:

- What prevents us from seeing our own solutions?
- Why is it we can see solutions to others’ problems so easily?
- What implications does this exercise have for our work?
- How may others react to the “solutions” we have developed during this project? How will they affect others? What do we need to prepare for as we implement them?