

**The Medical Cannabis Advocate's Handbook**

**VOLUNTEER AND  
LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT**



# VOLUNTEER & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Chapter members and volunteers are the lifeblood of ASA. It is important to remember that people come to ASA with different skills and abilities. It is also important to understand that each member may have different needs. For example, new members can often feel overwhelmed and lost at meetings, while veteran members may feel bored or disconnected. Here are some tips on how to develop and retain effective volunteers:

## CULTIVATING NEW MEMBERS

- **Always begin meetings with introductions.** Allow members to introduce themselves if they feel comfortable, and review important information such as scenarios, campaigns, and materials.
- **Create an open environment geared toward education.** Creating discussions that encourage questions and offer explanations is essential to the education of both new and experienced members.
- **Give new members responsibility.** Providing people with responsibilities is a great way to keep people engaged, and holding people accountable for responsibilities they accept can help them feel accomplished. Asking members to prepare a news summary for a meeting, create flyers, or do phone banking are all great ways to help members feel important and included in the community.
- **Call new members to invite them to the next meeting.** New members may need reminders and encouragement to get involved in our community, and some support and reassurance are wonderful ways to make people feel more comfortable and willing to participate in new situations like community meetings or other community based situations.

## KEEPING MEMBERS INTERESTED

- **Focus meetings on action.** While meetings can be educational and fun, always plan to execute some type of action. It is important for people to feel like they are a part of a movement, and there is no better way to do this than by participating in action in the community. Performing actions will help members feel like they are involved in a campaign and not just hanging out with like-minded individuals.
- **Ask for input from all members.** A few vocal individuals can easily dominate a meeting, so it is important to make sure that all members feel like their input is welcome and needed. Facilitators should be aware of the discourse to ensure that nobody dominates and that all voices are heard.
- **Recognize members for their efforts, publicly and privately.** While leaders may know how talented and committed community members are, people need affirmation to feel their importance also. Make sure to give credit when someone has completed a task successfully, excelled on a project or committed their time and energy towards ASA's goals.
- **Encourage members to socialize.** Many people come to activist organizations for the politics, but they stay because of its fun environment. Hosting social events after meetings or on the weekends are great ways to keep the community involved and engaged. Going to movies or sporting events are great ways to not only keep the community active, but also perform community outreach. Be creative and have fun!

## DEVELOPING LEADERS

- **Find out about members' skills, interests, and connections.** Some of the

best way to determine skills, interest and connections is to talk to the members of the community about their interests and activities. You may be surprised by what hidden tools your community can provide. For example, someone might have media experience while another member may like to talk on the phone. Maybe a member has a connection to a local politician. Finding out and utilizing the skills your community provides are key to creating a great movement in your area.

**Define positions and responsibilities.**

Create ways to foster accountability. Some examples of positions may include coordinators for media, fundraising, event planning, and recruitment. It is important to understand that while most people are excited to dedicate some of their time to participating in community outreach and organizing, they are volunteers who might realistically have limited time to dedicate to the movement. Understanding and respecting people's lives and limitations is key to effective community organizing.