

Train Them

Volunteer training can take on a number of different forms based on your event, your team, and your time. If the words “volunteer training” sound intimidating, think again and think outside the box! On the following pages, we’ll include training materials for each event. But first, consider how you’d like to train the volunteers you’ve recruited.

In-Person

Meeting with volunteers in person is a great way to develop relationships with the individuals who are giving their time and energy to college access work in the community. You can host an in-person training at your school and include a tour of the facilities to familiarize your volunteers with your location. This option is great if you have volunteers from a wide variety of organizations but can be difficult for volunteers to attend due to commitments outside of work hours.

If many of your volunteers are from the same organization, consider hosting a training during their lunch break or before or after a group meeting. While you won’t be able to provide a tour of the school, you will likely have better attendance.

Webinar

Webinars are great for busy schedules! You can host the webinar live at a time that works well for you and record the webinar so that you can share the recording with those who aren’t able to make it. Free webinar software that has worked well for Path to College participants includes Zoom, OpenMeetings, and MeetingBurner.

Information Sheet

Adapting an information sheet from this guide can be a great way to organize your thoughts and make a plan of how you want to use volunteers. This sheet can be emailed out ahead of the event and also printed for volunteers to reference on the day of the event.

Volunteer Information:

College Application and Exploration Month

Most volunteers will know that the college process involves applying to one or more schools, but it will help to provide them with context for why your school is hosting a whole month of fanfare about college applications. Use volunteer training as an opportunity to “set the stage” for college access work throughout the school year. Below is text you can put in a flier or email to volunteers giving them an overview of the event, application process, and next steps for students.

What is College Application and Exploration Month?

College Application and Exploration Month is a statewide event sponsored by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and CollegeforTN.org.

What is the goal of College Application and Exploration Month?

The goal of Tennessee’s College Application and Exploration Month is to build excitement around the college application process and provide every graduating Tennessee high school senior the opportunity to apply, with a focus placed on first-generation students and students who may not otherwise apply to college. We define college as any formal education after high school.

How do I address questions about application fees and fee waivers?

For colleges that require an application fee, students can use credit/debit cards online for some colleges or print their online application(s) to mail with a check to the college(s). Should students have questions about eligibility for fee waivers, please refer them to their school counselor.

What are their next steps?

In order to be eligible for financial aid, college applicants must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible beginning October 1 of their senior year. The earlier students complete and submit this form, the better! Also, refer students to the “Now That I’ve Applied, What’s Next?” handout that their teacher or school counselor has given them.

Volunteer Information: TN FAFSA Frenzy

When recruiting community volunteers, be sure to consider how much “hands on” work you’d like them to do with students and the FAFSA. You will need to do more extensive training if volunteers are working one-on-one with students and families as opposed to volunteers who are helping with the sign-in process and logistics.

Volunteer Information: College Planning Night

As with any large event, volunteers can be a huge asset when it comes to logistics like signing students and parents in and handing out fliers. For College Planning Night, however, volunteers from local higher education institutions and from the TSAC outreach team can take on special significance by helping present information.

Content experts on financial aid and college admissions won’t need training about college access, but it’s recommended that you share the PowerPoint presentation with them ahead of the event so that each presenter is aware of the content and the order of the night.

These volunteers will likely be eager to include information and materials about their college. Consider providing a table for each presenter that they can man before and after the event. This will allow volunteers to bring college swag and materials (which parents and students love!) and is an incentive to your volunteers who are eager to interact one-on-one with prospective students and families.

Volunteer Information: College Signing Day

The spirit of celebration that surrounds College Signing Day makes for a fun event for students and volunteers alike. College Signing Day often involves multiple grade levels celebrating the college-bound senior class, which can create many volunteer opportunities around managing logistics. Volunteers can support teachers in helping direct students in and out of an event location, distributing tee shirts, signs and stickers, and in serving up any refreshments.

College Signing Day is also a great time to engage some high-profile volunteers from your community to speak to the senior class and offer their congratulations to your seniors. Consider engaging local business leaders, particularly those who may have attended your high school themselves.