



# Volunteer Job Planning & Recruitment

Volunteers provide crucial compost site operations support and it's important that they be provided a range of opportunities for getting involved. These opportunities should appeal to different experience levels and available time commitments – from one-time activities (for example, bin construction, sign making, a compost sifting party) to regular compost site support (for example, material receiving, layering, turning, or monitoring piles). Compost Teams or Stewards are encouraged to think as broadly as possible about the types of tasks they make available, to leverage whatever skills those involved might be willing to offer. This tip sheet provides ideas for the different roles and volunteer activities that are needed for a successful community composting site.

## Compost Site Managers/Coordinators/Stewards

Having one person or a small team in charge of project development and operations oversight will help keep the project organized and ensure proper site maintenance, education, and communication.

### Tasks may include:

- Recruiting & training site volunteers
- Engaging partners, community leaders, & other supporters
- Ongoing communication with volunteers, neighbors, community members, partners & supporters
- Assessing site needs & priorities
- Fundraising/grant writing/resource development
- Overseeing site participant training
- Delegating site development & ongoing maintenance tasks
- Sourcing materials (feedstocks, tools, etc.)
- Adding feedstocks to the system; moving the composting materials through the system
- Ensuring proper system maintenance (troubleshooting) & record keeping

## Compost Site Volunteers Tasks May Include:

- Site development, including bin construction
- Receiving food scraps & other feedstocks
- Monitoring food scrap intake & other feedstocks
- Layering & turning compost
- Monitoring the compost process & recordkeeping

- Sifting finished compost & distributing compost for use or sale
- Providing user education (for example, creating signage, training new volunteers, community outreach)
- Other activities, dependent on the skills of individual volunteers (for example, fundraising, wider community engagement, partnership building)

## Feedstock Generators & Finished Product Users

These two groups are often (though not always) the same: those who contribute food scraps and other materials to community compost sites (“generators”) and those who benefit from the finished compost.

Depending on your system management structure, feedstock generators:

- Contribute food scraps and/or other compost inputs (dry leaves, animal bedding, manure, etc.)
- May be involved in basic layering & turning of the compost, when they drop off their food scraps and/or other compost inputs, or other volunteer activities

The use or distribution of finished compost should be a compost team decision. Common options include: use on community garden, plantings around the community compost site, distribution to team members, product sales (see [Community Composting Regulations Tip Sheet](#)).

## Recruiting Volunteers, Supporters, and Partners:

- **Convert feedstock generators and/or compost users into compost volunteers:** Whether the compost site is located at a school, community garden, neighborhood park, or other community location, one of the best places to find support for your compost operation is among those already invested. For example, a school might involve a class of students to be in charge of regular food scrap hauling & pile maintenance.
- **Clubs, employee volunteer days & other social groups:** For jobs requiring many hands, such as building the compost system or sifting finished compost, consider involving others in the local community who might be willing to lend a hand. Combining a compost workshop with a work party is a great way to draw a crowd! Union members, students, & others may be willing to volunteer for short-term tasks.
- **Extension Master Composter or other compost experts:** Contact your local Extension office to find out if your community compost project is eligible to be a “Master Composter Project”. Compost experts, with a range of skills, can provide project oversight, maintenance & support, troubleshooting, compost workshops, & more.

## Things to Consider When Recruiting Volunteers

- **Level of interest in project:** Passion for the project goes a long way to building committed & engaged volunteers. This may be an interest in compost or it might be another aspect of the project, like community-building or reducing food waste.
- **Ability to commit to a project:** The level of commitment doesn't necessarily impact the involvement of a volunteer; however, it should affect the type of task you assign. For example, a volunteer with only a low level of commitment to the project would be best suited for participating in a work party or when extra hands are needed, rather than being put on a regular maintenance schedule.
- **Amount of time available & when:** Prior to recruiting, estimate how long each task will require for completion, & whether it's a one-time commitment or ongoing task. When recruiting, take an early assessment of the time volunteers have available & when. This will help you match volunteers with the appropriate tasks, in addition to developing the compost team work schedule.
- **Knowledge/skills/comfort level with tasks:** While volunteers may require training, assessing the knowledge, skills & comfort level of each volunteer will help to determine what training & oversight will be needed, as well as matching volunteers with a job they can accomplish & hopefully enjoy.

Adapted from [Vermont Community Garden Network](#).

Other Community Composting Tip Sheets to consult: [Local Opportunities, Issues, and Priorities Evaluation](#); [Community Composting Regulations](#).

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