

## **Volunteer Usage**

**Many economic development organizations use volunteers to reach out to companies that may be planning an expansion. Great care must be taken when choosing these volunteers. They must be professional, have good communication and listening skills, pay attention to detail, and understand the purpose of the outreach well enough to ask the right questions.**

**Factors to consider when developing a volunteer outreach program:**

- **How will the program be organized?**
- **What companies will be targeted?**
- **Who will conduct the outreach?**
- **What is the objective for outreach?**
- **Who will do the follow-up?**
- **How do you ensure follow through?**
- **What will be done with the results?**
- **How will results be measured?**

**Volunteers can come from a variety of groups:**

- **Economic development organization's board of directors**
- **Advisory councils**
- **Community partner organizations**
- **Educational institutions**
- **Chambers of commerce**
- **City and county government**
- **Existing industry executives**

**Each program should adopt a set of policies on how volunteers will function during visits, and clearly educate them on the purpose and format of visits. KEY POINT: In order to maintain the integrity of the visits, all volunteers must be screened carefully to determine the following:**

- **To ensure that confidentiality is kept. Require volunteers to sign confidentiality agreements.**
- **That the visit is conducted strictly on behalf of the economic development organization, and no personal agendas are presented to the company executive; e.g., a real estate agent trying to get personal business while on the visit.**

**The use of volunteers to conduct business outreach can enhance an economic development organization's credibility. When high-level company executives see that other high-level people in the community are taking their time to conduct personal visits, they are more apt to share relevant information.**