

# Volunteering with Friends & Family Chart.

For more information on this topic, see the Grassroots Growth handbook on Shaping a Cohesive Team.

## WHAT IT IS

Often, particularly when starting out, the volunteers who make up the core team of grassroots organizations are friends and family of the founder. There are multiple benefits to recruiting from your existing network to build your volunteer group. However, working with friends and family also comes with a unique set of challenges. The following chart outlines some of those challenges, as well as ways to mitigate them.

WHAT YOU CAN DO	CHALLENGES ADDRESSED
<p><b>WRITE VOLUNTEER POSITION DESCRIPTIONS</b></p> <p>A volunteer position description outlines the details of a role, including the responsibilities, required skills, and time commitment. The position description will preemptively address any expectations of leniency that your friends and family members may have by making clear what the roles are. It can also help you to accommodate different working styles, since you can develop roles for your friends and family that make sense for them as individuals.</p>	<p><i>Expectation of leniency, different working styles</i></p>
<p><b>RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS FROM OUTSIDE FRIENDS AND FAMILY</b></p> <p>Bringing on additional assistance can help to alleviate some of the pressure on your friends and family. It may also help you in the event that your friends and family leave the group, since you will already have other volunteers trained and ready to ensure the organization continues.</p>	<p><i>Expectation of leniency, volunteers who do not share same level of passion</i></p>
<p><b>DEVELOP SUCCESSION PLANS</b></p> <p>Take steps now to make sure that your grassroots group can survive the departure of volunteers – even core members. Those friends and family members who want to see you succeed but don't wish to stay involved beyond the beginning will also feel more comfortable moving on if they know that you've made plans for how to go on after they leave. This, in turn, will protect your friendship.</p>	<p><i>Volunteers who do not share same level of passion</i></p>

### COMPARTMENTALIZE YOUR TIME

Set limits on how much time you spend on tasks for your grassroots group, and leave the rest for friendship or time with family. This will help you negotiate shifting power relations because you and your friends or family will know that between certain hours, you are “on shift.” As with using space to signal the relationship, compartmentalizing your time can also help you to provide useful feedback to your friends and family, and prevent damage to your personal relationships.

*Shifting power relations, damage to personal relationship, challenges providing feedback*

### USE SPACE TO SIGNAL THE RELATIONSHIP

Designate different spaces for different activities. For example, sitting at a particular table in your house might mean that you are completing tasks for your grassroots organization, while sitting on the sofa may indicate that you’re simply getting together as friends. This will help you alleviate some of the discomfort associated with shifting power relations because it may make more sense for you to take on more of a leadership role in certain physical spaces. It can also help you with providing constructive feedback to friends and family members. Additionally, using different spaces to signal different kinds of work may help to prevent long-term damage to your existing relationships.

*Shifting power relations, damage to personal relationship, challenges providing feedback*