Sterling
Volunteers

CASE STUDY

DNC Philadelphia 2016 Host Committee

Organization Background

The City of Philadelphia hosted the weeklong Democratic National Convention (DNC) from July 25 through July 28, 2016. To put on this complex multi-day event, the Philadelphia 2016 Host Committee was charged with recruiting and coordinating some 10,000 volunteers, with the goal of having as many local residents participate as possible. Volunteers were sought to fill a variety of roles, from greeters to drivers, and were expected to positively interact with Convention delegates, attendees and media, and showcase Philadelphia as the world-class city it is.

Background

Philadelphia was selected by the Democratic National Convention Committee to host the 2016 DNC. While the DNC was a partisan event, its staging was a non-partisan undertaking and required a huge amount of coordination and planning as well as civic outreach and communication. The budget for the convention's security—of which volunteer screening was a critical part—came directly from federal funds.

Solution

Sterling Volunteers approached the 2016 Host Committee regarding their volunteer screening program and, in Spring 2016, they were selected as part of the formal volunteer screening RFP process. One of the key reasons Hannah Tran, who oversaw the volunteer program for the Host Committee, and the Host Committee as a whole were interested in Sterling Volunteers was its established partnership and easy integration with the TRS (The Registration System) volunteer portal, which the city had purchased to use for the Convention. Sterling Volunteers' simple, flexible platform interface made it easy to add screening options to its volunteer database, allowing volunteers to initiate and even pay for the screening process themselves and place their background check order entirely online. "It eliminated having to send volunteers a bunch of different URLs," says Ms. Tran. "I could run a report easily and see who had signed up and the status of their screening. It was really simple."

Results

Through its open Application Program Interface (API) with the TRS portal, Sterling Volunteers was able to easily integrate volunteer screening into the Host Committee's database. Once a volunteer registered and selected a role or shift, they were prompted to start the screening process. Despite the short amount of time given to ramp up the screening program, the Host Committee was able to screen and vet thousands of potential volunteers. "Sterling Volunteers did as much as possible to make the process fast and efficient," says Ms. Tran. "A new volunteer role or shift would pop up and a new round of volunteers would need to be vetted. They handled it all, no problem."

Key Highlight

Because of the extremely bureaucratic budget and approvals processes, Sterling Volunteers did not become involved with the Host Committee's volunteer recruitment and screening process until early June, just weeks before the start of the Convention. Even so, they were able to screen thousands of volunteers from all over the country as well as other nations quickly and in time for the start of the convention. Plus, thanks to their integration with The Registration System, sign-up and coordination of volunteers was seamless.

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> *We were pleasantly surprised to see that as many as 20% of the volunteers elected to pay for their own background check. We weren't expecting that.*
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> **- Hannah Tran, Volunteer Program Manager, 2016 DNC Host Committee, City of Philadelphia**