

Volunteer Management Cycle

There are five key areas to cover in developing or reviewing a volunteer programme:

1. Plan
2. Recruit
3. Train and support
4. Motivate, Recognise, and Reward
5. Listen, Evaluate, and Review

The following tips have been put together to help you think about your volunteer programme and what you want to get out of managing volunteers.

Plan

Questions to consider when planning a volunteer programme or role:

- How does the volunteer's role help us to achieve our goals?
- What will they be doing?
- How much time will it take? (How often will they need to do it; per week, per month?)
- Does the role/s need particular skills? (Do they need to be fit if they have to walk a lot or carry things? Do they need to be able to read and write well? Do they need to know more than one language? Do they need to know counselling and listening skills or how to use a computer?)
- If they do need particular skills, can you train them or do you know someone who will be able to?
- Why do we need a volunteer for this role? What additional value does this add? (E.g. Can we reach more people? Use local resources? Involve the beneficiaries themselves? Educate the community about the issue? Get more enthusiasm?)
- Who will manage the volunteer?
- Do they need equipment or a place to do their job properly? If so, is it affordable?
- Does this volunteer position provide meaningful activity for the volunteer?
- Does our staff understand the purpose of using volunteers? Do they value them?

Recruit

Make sure your group truly represents the community you serve. If not, think about how to attract more women or men, or people with disabilities. When and where you hold meetings or trainings will change the people who can attend. If you want to attract certain kinds of volunteers, find out why they are not already involved and what might attract them.

- Match the kind of positions you require with skills. For example, you may want to recruit someone with IT skills to help create a website. Put this in

the volunteer description. If you are recruiting lots of people to work with in the community, do you want people to be friendly and able to work in a team?

- List reasons why someone would want to volunteer with your group and what they would be contributing.
- Let people know you need volunteers everywhere you can. A small phrase and phone number on every leaflet, on your website, or on posters can pay off (E.g. Interested in volunteering with us? Call 084 555 555, etc.)
- Recruiting volunteers is easier if you describe the task clearly and what is involved – ‘Help Old People’ could actually mean, ‘go to visit an older person in their home, for an hour once or twice a week, and find out how they are’
- Encourage existing volunteers to recruit their friends and family or other personal contacts. Existing volunteers are the best advertisement and can explain benefits and skills needed. However, if you do not want all your volunteers to be the same, don’t just rely on this.
- Get your group well known in the community. If you are known, and known for the fact you use volunteers, people will soon approach you.

Train and support

- Welcome your volunteer from day one. Can the CEO or Director visit the first day of the training to meet the volunteers?
- Is there a named person in your group or organisation that the volunteer can go to for help?
- Do volunteers get the chance to meet and talk to each other (new volunteers can be paired with existing ones, so that they learn and get support)
- Train your volunteers to be able to do their job including, for example:
 - An induction to the organisation and what it does, key names and contact numbers for help and support
 - Their role, and how it helps the organisation, how many hours they work, expenses and how to get them, what they will be doing
 - Walk the volunteers through where they will work, show them where to get food and drink, transport, where to get the bus, toilets, how to get the computer working, etc.
 - Health and safety, how to keep themselves and the people they work with safe from harm – including equipment they need to use. E.g. Do women need to work in pairs in some areas or in the evening?
 - Information about the topic they are working on (e.g. Mental Health) and technical skills needed (e.g. legal rights, mental health awareness, and listening and counselling skills)
 - Inclusion – awareness on disability issues and other reasons that people are not included in community life and how it can be improved

- Provide certification and a letter to show what the volunteer has learnt.
- Check in regularly with your volunteer to see how they are doing
- Provide an induction and training pack. Where this is not possible, give pens and paper for volunteers to record things.

Motivate, Recognise, and Reward

Regular recognition of volunteers helps keep volunteers involved and motivated. Here are some ideas that do not cost much:

- A regular verbal thank you or a written letter or card
- A certificate for trainings carried out
- An award and small gift when someone reaches 200 hours, or after one year of service
- A t-shirt to identify them as a part of your organisation
- A visit from the CEO at volunteer events
- Someone important in your community who would be willing to come and say thank you on behalf of the community and have their photo taken
- Throw an annual party or help volunteers enjoy a social event, day trip, or visit to another organisation to learn
- List and measure what your volunteers achieve or particular success stories and make that information available in your Annual Report or your newsletter, e.g. 'through a volunteer corner'

Listen, Evaluate, and Review

Begin by:

- Asking your volunteers how they think they could be engaged more effectively, through an annual survey or at other times
- Asking your volunteer board members how they are involved in the organisation's work
- Collecting stories of your volunteers and publishing these internally; what can you learn from them?
- Finding out about any complaints from volunteers or beneficiaries. Do people know how to complain and feedback?
- Considering an exit interview when volunteers leave to find out their opinions
- Considering a 'suggestions box', so people can anonymously write ideas and put them in the box
- Possibly asking volunteers to write a report on their work when they finish, if their role is for a set period of time

Use what you find out to help plan for the next batch of volunteers!