Why does your project need diverse volunteers?

There are many ways that involving diverse volunteers can support your project, for example they can:

- Inform the development and delivery of projects, services or activities by bringing in new ideas, approaches or perspectives. They can help you to adapt and identify opportunities to improve what the project does or what it offers.

- Help the project connect, reach with and stay relevant to your beneficiaries and community needs.

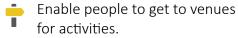- Help to champion or promote a project / activities, e.g. on social media or within the community.

- Provide help with administrative support for online and offline activities.

- Support delivery, or leading, of activities.

- Provide encouragement and support to participants in person, online or through phone calls.

- Enable people to get to venues for activities.

- Support with refreshments.

- Help with evaluation, collate feedback and measure impact.

Being prepared to welcome volunteers

Your organisation needs to be ready for welcoming volunteers and properly informed of the role they will undertake and how to support them.

- Consult with relevant stakeholders within your organisation to understand what volunteer skills or roles you may need and what needs to be in place before volunteers can be recruited.

- Consider whether the organisation's policies and procedures are applicable to paid employees and volunteers. Review your organisational policies, procedures and practices as there may be circumstances where they are unsuitable for volunteers. E.g. a grievance policy may not be suitable for volunteers and a specific policy may need to be implemented, such as a volunteer problem solving policy.

- Ensure safeguarding, health and safety policies are up to date.

- Ensure there is adequate budget to support any volunteer related expenses.

- It's best practice to start with a volunteer policy. This should clearly outline to your employees, volunteers and service users why volunteers are involved.

- Think about any potential barriers to volunteers with additional needs or a disability and how these can be overcome. We have some good practice examples underneath this section.

- It's important that paid employees understand why the organisation involves volunteers. Consider explaining the distinction as part of the induction and discussing it with the team prior to your volunteer programme delivery.

- Inclusive volunteer recruitment and training processes planned.

- Have clear roles that volunteers will play within the organisation.

- If recruiting younger people as volunteers (under 18 years of age) special consideration needs to be given to supporting them and this may dictate the structure of the programme.

- Ensure volunteers will be insured and DBS checked where needed.

- Check that you are keeping volunteers safe during COVID-19.

- Consider how volunteers could be rewarded for their time- such as dedicated celebratory events.

- Undertake a full risk assessment.

Age UK Wiltshire building a volunteer community

Read our article about how our delivery partner Wiltshire and Swindon Sport teamed up with Age UK to build a volunteer community ▶

Top tips!

Ensure your organisation's information is as accessible and appealing to the audience as possible
Could there be more visual information / plain English / different ways to market the same thing? Are representative images used? Also consider providing information in alternative formats, such as braille, to help visually impaired people.

Create a welcoming environment
Do employees / other volunteers understand and appreciate that volunteering should be for everyone, as everyone has something to contribute? Does extra training, such as disability and inclusion training, exist to understand and support volunteer needs?

Be flexible in your approach
Do you match volunteers to roles based on their skills? Are you flexible and making reasonable adjustments to meet individual's needs? For example, providing a seat for someone who may not be able to stand for extended periods.

Clearly define the volunteering roles available
Could they be clearer or would examples of the roles be helpful?

Ensure the environment meets the needs of the audience
Consider whether there should be more pictures and signs to identify where things are / photo boards for those working in the building / lower workstations for wheelchair users / accessible toilets and facilities. Is the organisation clear that reasonable adjustments can be made to support individuals?

Offer adequate and ongoing support for volunteers
Think about induction training,supervisions, and recognition events for volunteers. Does the organisation need to implement any new support measures in the volunteer programme?

Follow volunteer programme best practice
How volunteers are supported will vary from role to role and from volunteer to volunteer. Your organisation needs to offer flexibility and having the volunteers voice in how this is done is paramount. Ask volunteers what would help them within their roles and within the environment.

Resources

Plan for how to make volunteer voices heard within the organisation ▶

Is the organisation flexible in its approach? Do you match volunteers to roles based on their skills? Are you flexible and making reasonable adjustments to meet individual's needs? **Information on matching volunteer roles available here** ▶

Consult with relevant stakeholders within your organisation to understand what volunteer skills or roles you may need and what needs to be in place before volunteers can be recruited. **Information about getting started** ▶

It's best practice to start with a volunteer policy. This should clearly outline to your employees, volunteers and service users why volunteers are involved.

Information on how to create a volunteer policy ▶

Ensure there is adequate budget to support any volunteer related expenses. For more information visit **Volunteering Matters** ▶

Inclusive volunteer recruitment and training processes planned ▶ See volunteer recruitment section for more information.

Information on keeping volunteers safe during COVID-19 ▶

Ensure there is adequate budget to support any volunteer related expenses ▶

Information from Volunteer Matters on managing budgets ▶

Is the organisation making reasonable adjustments for disabled volunteers? ▶

Get Out Get Active

#GetOutGetActive