



Skills acquired through  
Volunteering in Sport

# LEARNING RESOURCES

## /// PILLAR 2: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

### SUB-PILLAR 2.2 Finding, attracting and recruiting volunteers



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

## /// Sub-Pillar 2.2

# Finding, attracting and recruiting volunteers

### a/ DESCRIPTION

Do you have problems identifying potential volunteers, attracting and persuading them to contribute to your organisation? This section features resources to support you with this, such as innovative ideas for recruiting your next generation of volunteers. Drawing upon marketing communication good practice as well as established approaches to recruitment, you can also find guidance on how you can run a campaign that is accurate and attractive to potential volunteers.

### b/ KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS – DID YOU KNOW THAT:

Recruiting sport volunteers needs energy, determination and creativity. Our Global Survey results show that sport organisations find recruiting for the following roles either difficult or very difficult:

- Officiating (referees/umpires/judges etc.) – 71%
- Board/Committee members – 69%
- Coaching/Training/Instructing/Leading – 67%
- Maintaining sport equipment and facilities – 65%
- Supporting day-to-day activities (such as catering, transport, bar work) – 60%
- Organising and helping to run sport events – 56%
- Administration/Management – 50%

The Global Survey results indicate the main difficulty in recruiting sport volunteers are:

- Not enough people interested in doing this kind of role – 62%
- Low number of applicants generally – 60%

But we can also see from our Global Survey that most sport organisations only target their immediate network:

- 84% recruit volunteers from current or past members of their organisation,
- 62% recruit volunteers from parents and family of members.

Very few sport organisations look outside their immediate network when they recruit:

- Only 33% target the wider community,
- Only 21% reach out to schools and universities.

Survey results show recruitment methods are also limited:

- 73% simply talk to people and try to persuade them,
- 59% rely on word of mouth,
- Only 39% advertise volunteer opportunities on websites or via social media,
- Only 17% use posters and flyers,
- Only 5% use volunteer agencies or platforms.

When your organisation is considering attracting and recruiting volunteers, you might benefit from looking more widely for at opportunities to reach out to people in the wider community, schools and universities and using less traditional recruitment methods.

## >> CONTENT AREA 1: IDENTIFYING VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT CHANNELS

Recruitment is the process of finding people who are interested in volunteering and showing them how they could add value in your organisation. Recruitment is vital in maintaining and building a strong volunteer workforce, yet our research suggests that recruiting motivated and skilled volunteers is one of the main issues facing sports organisations. Due to advances in technology, we now receive our information differently, so you may need to consider using a blend of recruitment channels and methods to engage with potential sport volunteers.

### ⌚ Planning your recruitment

Sport volunteers become ambassadors for your organisation so it is important to recruit people that are not only passionate and who have the necessary skills and expertise, but who will represent your organisation accordingly. Before you start to engage in a recruitment process, consider the type of volunteer you wish to attract or require and how will you make a good offer to prospective sport volunteers.

- What might attract them to volunteer for your organisation? Think about what motivates people to become volunteers.
- How can your recruitment strategy emphasise the benefits of volunteering and engage with prospective volunteers?
- What are the best channels to use to recruit the volunteers that your organisation needs?
- If you are looking for specific skills, think about where you will find people with those skills. Organisations typically look for attributes and transversal skills rather than technical skills, so it is important to be clear about what you require from potential volunteers.
- Be clear about what you can offer potential volunteers and why they should volunteer with you.
- What is your unique selling point?

You may also wish to consider how your sport organisation can draw upon a diverse range of volunteers who are reflective of the community the organisation serves. These can help to enrich your organisation by bringing to it their own influences, cultures, and life experiences. You may therefore also need to consider using a diverse range of advertising, recruitment materials, and/or outlets to engage with a more diverse range of potential volunteers.

### ⌚ Recruitment channels and ideas

While many of your volunteers are returning as long-standing volunteers, it is important to keep building and growing your volunteer workforce. There are a range of channels that sport organisations can use to engage with prospective volunteers. Don't just rely on one or two recruitment ideas, try different ones and see which ones work the best. Recruitment may involve recruiting sport volunteers from both inside and outside your existing supporter and membership base.

**The simplest method of recruitment is to ask somebody who is already known to your organisation, this may include:**

1. Include call outs in your newsletters.
2. Put notices up on your news boards and advertise on your website.
3. Write out to club members. Ask for them to volunteer and to also help recruit volunteers from their own personal networks. Some organisations have used approaches such as 'refer a friend'.
4. Contact people who have volunteered previously, even if it hasn't been for a year or so. Their situations and availability may have changed.
5. If you are a sports club, registration nights for players can be a great volunteer recruitment tool. They present a great opportunity for recruiting new volunteers, since they are attended by parents who might be new to the area and might be keen to 'stay and play' with their children.
6. In addition, sports clubs could consider approaching retired or retiring players. Each year, a number of players retire, or coaches whose children have moved through the club, come to the end of their involvement. Without a focused effort to keep these people involved, they can drift away.

This approach may be enough but ask yourself if you are really reaching all of the people who may be available and could have something to offer. For example, disabled people, unemployed people, people from marginalised communities and people who are socially isolated may be very passionate about your sport, but they are not in contact with your organisation, so the methods listed above are unlikely to get your message to them. If you really want to diversify and broaden your volunteer workforce and fill all the roles you have, consider the following.

**If you need to go beyond the organisation itself to recruit volunteers, you may wish to consider the following recruitment channels:**

1. Hold an open day or information night at your organisation for prospective members or volunteers to attend. An open day is a great way to bring people from the community to the organisation, particularly those who are new to the area. An open day full of activity will let people see that the organisation is well organised and well managed. It can also be a great way to encourage people to volunteer in the club. Again, ask people to volunteer in specific areas in the club and in an area that suits their particular skill set.
2. Use social media. This focuses on the use of technology to communicate with prospective volunteers. Communications can often be informal but have the potential to reach a wide range of individuals. You could put call outs on your organisation's Facebook page or tweet opportunities via your Twitter account using related hash tags such as #sportvolunteering #volunteer etc. Add photographs of, and quotes from, existing volunteers within your organisation to create a positive image of these opportunities.
3. Contact your local or national volunteer organisation. They can often advertise opportunities for you via their membership.
4. Advertise in your local newspaper or radio. They are often keen to run community stories about volunteers and recruitment drives.

5. Education establishments. Local colleges and universities often have their own volunteering programmes for their students and will share opportunities with them. You may also wish to contact academic staff teaching on sport-related or event management courses (dependent on the nature of the volunteering opportunities) as they may be able to help you target specific students or connect your opportunities into modules and teaching activities. Equally, however, students will return home and may be able to volunteer during college or university breaks. Suitable roles could include involvement in short-term projects, teaching someone a skill or helping organise an event.
6. Employer-supported volunteering schemes. Many companies operate corporate volunteering programmes as part of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. Corporate volunteers are often given a day (and sometimes up to a week) of charitable leave to volunteer with an organisation of their choice. Contact the Human Resource Manager within the company to share your volunteer opportunities. There is also the possibility that an initial volunteer placement may become longer term.
7. Form a partnership with other organisations who use / need volunteers. This may be particularly useful if your organisation runs sports events where volunteers are likely to have the skills to work across different sports etc. If you only need volunteers for a few shifts a year, why not combine your efforts with another similar organisation?
8. Attend local community events. This can be a great way to advertise your sport organisation and recruit volunteers and members.

### **Be flexible!**

Volunteers may bring talents that you had not considered but could add value to your service. Be prepared to adapt or create a role around specific skills and make sure volunteers know you are open to offers.

Increase your chances of attracting a greater number of volunteers by provide a wide range of ways to volunteer. This could involve a blend of regular roles plus 'one-off' events which don't require a regular commitment.

Consider creating team or group opportunities. Offering the opportunity to volunteer as a family, a couple or a group of friends can also attract people.





## >> CONTENT AREA 2: PRINCIPLES OF PROMOTION

Recruiting sport volunteers can be seen as a similar process to advertising (for example, you are selling the benefits of the volunteering) and, as with any advertising, it is critical that you have a clear message. It is therefore important that you have a good understanding of why people volunteer.

Engaging sports volunteers will take more than just saying 'if you want to volunteer, come here'. Sport organisations need to target potential volunteers, make a clear offer to them, and convince them that giving up their time will result in a positive and worthwhile experience. Therefore, it can be useful for those tasked with recruitment in sport organisations to consider how principles of promotion can help to create clear messages and attractive, successful recruitment campaigns.

### 🕒 What is 'promotion'?

Promotion is a marketing tool, used as a strategy between to communicate between the 'sellers' (in this case, the sport organisation looking to recruit volunteers) and the 'buyers' (the potential sport volunteer). By using different promotional techniques, the seller tries to influence and convince the buyers to engage with their 'product' or 'services' (the volunteering opportunities on offer). Promotional activities can include raising the profile of your sport organisation and increasing awareness of the volunteering opportunities it has to offer. Crucially, it also involves making the volunteering opportunities appealing and attractive to potential volunteers.

Promotion is usually viewed as one component of the marketing mix along with product, price, and place. Product in the sense of sport volunteering, relates to the volunteer offer from your organisation. This may include the volunteer roles available and the 'fit' between these and the potential volunteer, but also the other benefits that a volunteer would receive from volunteering at your organisation. This could therefore also include ongoing support, training, rewards and the social benefits accrued from their involvement. 'Price' is less relevant to sport volunteering, whereas 'place' may relate more to where you recruit volunteers from. This is covered in previous guidance on 'recruitment channels'. Whilst the other elements of the the marketing mix will contribute the development of a good volunteer offer, we now focus our attention on promotion, more specifically the development of an effective promotional mix.

## 🔗 Developing your promotional mix

A promotional mix will include a combination of marketing methods including advertising, sales (in terms of engaging and subsequently recruiting potential volunteer), public relations and direct marketing. There are five key elements of a promotional mix which can be used to help guide your efforts to recruit sport volunteers.

### **Advertising.**

This helps to spread the word or create awareness about your sport organisation and is likely to be key in promoting volunteer opportunities. The idea is to reach as many of the right people as possible to maximise your chances of recruiting good volunteers. For suggestions on how to do this see the section on 'possible recruitment channels' [add link]. You may need to consider the suitability of the different recruitment channels for the type of volunteer and the skill set you require.

### **Public relations.**

A key aspect in recruiting new volunteers into your club (and retaining existing volunteers) is to send out the right messages about your sport organisation and how it supports and develops its volunteers. Positive news stories on your organisation's website or via its social media channels can help to create an image of an organisation which values, supports and looks after its volunteers. This can help to supplement adverts or attempts at recruitment as it creates positive images and stories that potential volunteers can see. It may be helpful to coordinate public relations efforts with specific volunteer recruitment campaigns your organisation is running to ensure there is consistency in communications.

### **Direct promotion / marketing.**

This refers to advertising which is directly targeted at potential volunteers. The link above takes you to information on potential recruitment channels. Depending on which of these channels are deemed most suitable as a method to recruit potential volunteers, it is important to ensure the messages and communications used are appropriate to the specific group of potential volunteers you are targeting. For example, if you are attempting to recruit volunteers from colleges or universities you may need to stress the personal development benefits and opportunities connected to volunteering, whereas if you are looking to recruit parents of existing members you may emphasise the value of their contribution to the organisation.

### **Sales promotion.**

Although the recruitment of volunteers does not include financial sales, recruitment still involves communicating with potential 'customers' – in this case, potential volunteers. There may be specific times of the year when your organisation requires more volunteers, for example, to support the delivery of events or if you are a sports club, during the season. Therefore, one important consideration is the timing of any recruitment drives, or in business language, the timing of your 'sales push'. You need to allow adequate time from advertising volunteer opportunities, through recruitment and selection process, any induction or training needed, to ensure that your volunteers are ready to go when needed.

### **Personal selling.**

Who are the best people within your organisation to recruit volunteers? This may be a named volunteer coordinator, or it could be several individuals who are good communicators or have a natural ability to enthuse and engage others. You may also wish to consider using existing volunteers as role models who are able to use their own experience (a form of personal selling) to help recruit other volunteers from similar backgrounds. First impressions are important so choose your representatives carefully!

## >> CONTENT AREA 3: CREATING ATTRACTIVE RECRUITMENT COMMUNICATIONS

By the time your organisation reaches the point of considering its recruitment communications, you will have hopefully identified possible recruitment channels and considered your promotional mix. You now need to think about creating appropriate and attractive recruitment communications. The tone and wording of any recruitment communications, plus any visuals selected may be as important as what you say. Therefore, having a clear strategy for what you want to say, how, and to whom is important.

A good place to start is to assess your existing organisational skill base and available resources. Are there any individuals within the organisation that have marketing or IT skills that could help develop recruitment communications and advertising? Do you have a budget that could be used to help with the production of materials (this could be posters or leaflets through to website design etc)? Consider the best way to use these resources to help you develop attractive recruitment communications.

### 🕒 Here are ten tips to consider

1. **Use language in the recruitment 'ads' that is tailored to and will engage with potential volunteers from specific groups or organisations.** *For example, if you are looking to recruit a volunteer who can help with the organisation's social media output, you may wish to stress the specific skills and knowledge required. This may be different to if you are looking for volunteers who can help with more generic tasks.*
2. **Focus on promoting the benefits of volunteering (again these might be specifically tailored to a target group of potential volunteers).** *For example, being part of a team, social benefits, opportunities for personal development, opportunities to learn more about a specific sport or gain new skills, and the chance to contribute to the local community or put something back into a sport.*
3. **Discuss different levels of commitment from the 'one-hour commitment' to longer term commitments** *Remember, if 20 people are willing to commit one hour per week, that's 20 hours of work. Each recruitment drive should start with the most basic unit of voluntary commitment and give examples of the sort of tasks this might equate to, whilst also providing examples of what a longer-term commitment or contribution might be. You don't want to put prospective volunteers off because they presume that they don't have enough time to contribute.*
4. **Choose appropriate visuals that communicate an image of your organisation as organised, professional, and proud of its volunteer workforce.** *You may also wish to represent the diversity of individuals who volunteer for you and the different roles that they undertake.*
5. **Use stories and quotes from your current volunteers which highlight what the organisation, community and individual can gain from being part of the volunteer team.** *These can be particularly powerful tools in engaging prospective volunteers and can help create a positive impression of your organisation and the benefits gained from volunteering within it.*
6. **Make it snappy! If your communications are too long or text-heavy, they are likely to deter individuals from reading or engaging with them.** *The title or heading used on promotional material needs to stand out from the crowd – just stating 'volunteers wanted' is not eye catching and may be unlikely to generate interest. Consider using humour or unusual titles/descriptions to catch people's attention. These can be coupled with images and visuals for maximum effect. It might be tempting to base your messaging around the shortage of volunteers but try to emphasise positive aspects which highlight the benefits of volunteering within the organisation.*
7. **Consider your unique selling point.** *What might make your organisation or volunteer opportunity different to others?*



**8. Develop consistency across your promotional materials.** *For example, do you have an organisation logo, or organisation colours that could become the foundation for all advertisements or promotional materials? Could you develop an organisational brand and tone of voice that is used consistently – again this suggests an organised and professional organisation.*

**9. Try and use language and images that reflect and welcome diversity.** *For example, if your organisation is located within a diverse community do you need to provide promotional material in different languages etc?*

**10. Make sure the call to action is clear.**

*Once you have piqued someone's interest, how do you want them to respond?*

*Completing an online form, via email etc?*

*Make sure you also provide contact details for where prospective volunteers can get further information!*

## >> CONTENT AREA 4: MANAGING THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Once you have engaged and interested potential volunteers in volunteering with your organisation, it is important to manage the subsequent recruitment process professionally. You may wish to consider setting up a 'recruitment sub-committee' or equivalent who can oversee recruitment activity and ensure that if one member of the committee is unavailable, other members can deal with enquiries from prospective volunteers. You do not want to lose out on potential volunteers because nobody is checking an email account or responding to enquiries. Having a committee or identified group of individuals jointly responsible for managing the recruitment process can also help to share the workload and coordinate an appropriate recruitment process.

The first key task in the recruitment of volunteers is managing the volunteer application process.

### 🕒 Volunteer applications

You should try and provide as much information as you can for prospective volunteers so that they have a good understanding of volunteer roles and responsibilities. This may include providing role descriptions, here and information on your organisation. The more professionally you deal with prospective volunteers the more likely they are to volunteer with your organisation.

As part of the recruitment process, it is good practice to require prospective volunteers to complete an application form outlining their skills, knowledge, and experience and why they are interested in volunteering with your organisation. The information they provide may then form the basis of any subsequent interviews or conversations with the volunteer.

Using a simple application form will help make sure your recruitment process is fair and not too onerous and off-putting to the prospective volunteer. Where appropriate you may want to provide the application form in different languages. If the form is available online, make sure it is accessible to everyone. You can access a template volunteer application form here. Remember some people may need support to complete form – for example if they have dyslexia or a learning disability. This should not stop them for applying to volunteer. Therefore, you may wish to provide an opportunity for prospective volunteers to request additional support if required.

**Remember that the overall aim of any fair selection process is to allow all potential volunteers to give the best of themselves and application forms do not allow everybody to do this.** If you are going to use a form to take details, be clear about what information you need and why. For example, many organisations ask for a volunteer's date of birth when all they actually need to know is if someone is above or below a minimum or maximum age.

### 🕒 Responding to applications

Once a volunteer shows interest in a role within your organisation it is vital that you act quickly and follow up on their application or enquiry quickly. If you leave contacting them for a long period of time they may go elsewhere or presume that you are not interested. Remember the volunteer is usually very keen to do their volunteering role and start as quickly as possible. You may wish to contact them initially by phone or email to arrange a more detailed conversation or interview at an appropriate time. As a minimum, you should acknowledge receipt of their application or inquiry and provide details of when the prospective volunteer can expect a full response.

### 🕒 Considerations for recruiting Young Volunteers

Young volunteers are an excellent resource and ensuring there are relevant opportunities for them could mean attracting a volunteer for life! Think carefully about how to recruit young volunteers and the types of roles they might be interested in.

**Parental Permission** Parental consent should be sought when involving young volunteers. Parental responsibility continues until the age of 18, unless the young person is 16 or older and married or is living independently. Both the young person and their parent or guardian should fully understand what the voluntary work entails.

Provide clear information about the organisation and the work the volunteer is expected to do, preferably via a role description. Make sure that they are aware of time commitments, where the work will take place and how it will be supervised. Often those roles that provide variety and the opportunity to gain experience and learn new skills are more attractive to young volunteers.

### 🕒 Checks and references

Checks and confidentially information should only be requested if it is needed for the recruitment process, do not ask for criminal records information unless the role requires this. It is important to follow your countries guidance on safeguarding and criminal records checks, particularly if your volunteering opportunity involves contact with children or vulnerable adults.

You should only ask for independent references to be provided if you feel you need these to judge a prospective volunteer's ability or appropriateness for a role. However, in certain countries it may be standard practice to ask for references in support of a volunteer role, so again, check the guidance provided by your government. If you do not to request references, these should be from individuals who are at least 18 years old, have known the volunteer for at least 12 months, and who are not a relative. References should be taken on the volunteer's ability to fulfil a particular role, therefore when sending out the request for a reference its good idea to also send a copy of the role description.

References are only the views of another person; their accuracy or detail may be limited. A good informal interview process is far more effective than just relying on a reference as this may well reinforce any information that is given at interview.

### 👉 Do's and don'ts in the recruitment process

- Do** interview or speak to all prospective volunteers. Find out why they want to volunteer, what their interests and skills are and what their availability is. This will not only help determine if they are suitable but also what other roles they might be interested in. Even if you have no suitable roles available at the time of the interview, you may have in the future, and this is a way of creating a bank of potential volunteers you can draw upon in the future if needed.
- Do** clearly explain roles so that people without sport-specific experience (e.g. without coaching qualifications) can see that they can still volunteer and it opens your workforce up to a much larger pool of people.
- Do** create teams of volunteers, for example events team that are committed to helping and can be trained up just to work at events.
- Do** large recruitment drives at intervals throughout the year. This will avoid constant call outs to volunteers, which can become exhausting for the club/event and the volunteers. See guidance on recruitment channels for ideas.
- Don't** recruit volunteers if you have no roles for them. You will quickly lose disengaged volunteers with nothing to do. You most likely will have just lost volunteers that would not only have been very valuable but will tell others not to apply.
- Don't** accept any volunteer that applies. Make sure you interview or speak to them, (even if it is over the phone rather than face-to-face) to ensure they are right fit for the role/s you are recruiting for.
- Don't** recruit unsuitable volunteers just to fill a spot or office bearing position on a committee. In the long term it will create more work.

## REFERENCES AND KEY LINKS

- You can find a template Volunteer Reference Form [Click here](#).
- See guidance on conducting volunteer interviews [Click here](#).





Skills acquired through  
Volunteering in Sport

# VOLUNTEER

## V4V PARTNERSHIP:



Coordinator



[www.v4v-sport.eu](http://www.v4v-sport.eu)



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.  
This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.