



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

LEARNING RESOURCES

/// PILLAR 2: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

SUB-PILLAR 2.4

**Agreeing expected
volunteer contributions**



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Agreeing expected volunteer contributions

a/ DESCRIPTION

Building upon the volunteer role descriptions you will have already developed, this section will support you in working with each newly appointed volunteer to agree how the role should be implemented, including the levels of responsibility and time input being asked of the volunteer.

b/ KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS – DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Survey results show that the biggest barrier to sport volunteering is lack of time (72%).
- Therefore, organisations must show flexibility in negotiating win-win situations that suit both what the organisation needs and what the volunteer feels they are able to contribute.
- Desk research suggests that potential volunteers can be discouraged if they feel they are making a long-term commitment. Many sport organisations now benefit from offering ‘micro-volunteering’ opportunities for short-term roles.
- Interviews with sport volunteers indicate that they welcome having a clear description and understanding of what the sport organisation wants them to do.
- When you are agreeing what you want the volunteer to do in your organisation, you might benefit from negotiating flexible arrangements which meet the volunteer’s personal situation and availability. Offering small ‘micro-volunteering’ opportunities at the beginning may help to draw them in to volunteering on a longer-term basis when they begin to see the benefits.

>> CONTENT AREA 1: AGREEING THE LEVEL OF TIME COMMITMENT WITH THE NEW VOLUNTEER

The advice in this section applies principally to new volunteers entering your sport organisation, but the principles apply equally well to situations in which you are working with existing volunteers to 'renegotiate' their commitment. The recruitment process (and accompanying role descriptors) should have provided an opportunity to clarify expectations, contributions and time commitments, now it's time to finalise the details of the volunteer's engagement with your sport organisation.

A key aspect of providing positive volunteer experiences, is that your volunteers understand what is expected of them, and what support they will receive in return from the sport organisation. A common reason for losing volunteers is confusion about their role, responsibilities, and expectations. This section of the toolkit will therefore provide suggestions and advice on how to work through this process with sport volunteers.

⦿ Volunteer agreements

Many organisations use a formal document as a means of recording expectations and any agreed commitments made between the volunteer and the organisation. If this approach is used, the document needs to be a two-way agreement, which outlines what the sport organisation and the volunteer can expect from each other.

This may be phrased in terms of 'rights and responsibilities' or 'hopes and expectations'. Volunteer agreements are being used more widely nowadays to clarify and record the agreement between a volunteer and organisation for future reference. The agreement is not put in place just for the organisations benefit, they also ensure that the organisation provides a good volunteer experience and that the volunteer receives appropriate support to get what they want out of the arrangement.

Therefore, the key aspect of any agreement is to focus on achieving a 'win-win' situation i.e. that any agreement works for the organisation and the volunteer. It is really important for the organisation to take full account of what the volunteer can contribute and take account of the time they have available, their level of commitment, skills, other commitments and personal resources. Ideally, the organisation should try to 'fit around' what the volunteer can offer. Many volunteers are concerned about making long-term commitments and if the organisation senses this, it may be better to offer some 'micro-volunteering' opportunities first. When making an agreement, it might also be important to consider what the volunteer's motivations/incentives are and try to ensure some of these are addressed.

A volunteer agreement may be a documents which is signed by the volunteer and a representative of the sport organisation, although it is important to note that this is an aspirational document, not a legally binding obligation. If a signed document feels too formal, you don't have to adopt this approach. It is however important that there is clarity for both the organisation and the volunteer around expectations, therefore you may wish to consider how you would work through this process and ensure an 'agreement' has been reached. For example, discussions on expectations, roles and responsibilities could be undertaken in an interview and then reinforced via an induction process. The key aim here is to ensure that agreement is reached, irrespective of whether it is formalised in a signed volunteer agreement statement or more informally agreed. This establishes the commitment on both sides, as well as recognising the roles and responsibilities for both the sport organisation and the volunteer.



>> CONTENT AREA 2: CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS, INCLUDING TO WHOM THE VOLUNTEER IS RESPONSIBLE

The benefits of using a volunteer agreement

🕒 **To summarise the previous discussion, the benefits and limitations of using a formal volunteer agreement are:**

For:

- Provides a written understanding of the relationship and expectations between the volunteer and sport organisation
- It establishes what each party can expect from the other and can be used to help ensure both parties fulfil their commitments.

Against:

- There is a risk that the formality of a volunteer agreement may be off-putting to volunteers
- The agreement is not legally binding, so is ultimately dependent on the commitment of both parties to fulfil

It is also important to ensure that a volunteer agreement does not sound like an employment contract. Therefore, although you may discuss time commitments, you may wish to avoid including these in a written agreement and instead focus on agreeing specific roles and responsibilities. In addition, agreements to provide training for volunteers and details of how volunteers can claim reimbursements for legitimate expenses (and what these might include), could also be included. You may also wish to state very clearly in the volunteer agreement that this is not a legal contract with the volunteer.

👉 What an agreement should cover:

- A brief introduction thanking them for becoming a volunteer and your commitment to them.
- Their name and your organisations name.
- Their volunteer role, responsibilities, and start date. Roles and responsibilities should ideally be set out in a role descriptor.
- Expected time commitments associated with their role. 'Time commitment' can be defined in a number of ways and is dependent upon the role. For instance, you may require someone for one, forty-hour week a year to support a major event, whilst another might be required for four hours a day for six weeks to support summer camps, whilst another might be required for three hours every week to officiate at regular competitive fixtures.
- A named person with the organisation to act as their main contact and who can provide additional support if required and who the volunteer can contact if they are not available as planned or if they are experiencing any issues.
- Your commitment to them, which could include providing them with adequate information, training and support, equipment and clothing so that they can carry out their volunteering role.
- Details of any other perks or benefits they may receive through their volunteering, for example free attendance at events etc.
- Details of how they can claim back any legitimate expenses associated with the role, and what these are.
- What you expect of them: i.e. to perform to the best of their ability, to adhere to the organisations ethos and to meet time and duty commitments as agreed.
- Details of when the agreement might be reviewed with the volunteer so that if needed, adjustments can be made to help everyone get the best from the arrangement.
- Signature of both parties.
- A final sentence emphasising that this is not a legal contract, for example "this agreement is not a legally binding contract between us and may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. Neither of us intends any employment relationship to be created, either now or at any time in the future".

You can find an example of a voluntary agreement below.

Finally, you might ask your volunteers to keep a record of the time spent supporting your sport organisation's work. As well as helping you to recognise the contribution made by your volunteers, this kind of data can be useful in funding applications and other mechanisms for building the capacity of your sport organisation.

REFERENCES AND KEY LINKS

- You can find a Volunteer Agreement template [Click here](#).



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VOLUNTEER

V4V PARTNERSHIP:



Coordinator



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.
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