



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

LEARNING RESOURCES

/// PILLAR 2: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

SUB-PILLAR 2.5

**Providing a volunteer
induction programme**



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/// Sub-Pillar 2.5

Providing a volunteer induction programme

a/ DESCRIPTION

This sometimes-overlooked aspect of the recruitment process is crucial in helping new volunteers to feel part of your organisation from the outset. Advice and guidance can be found on how to design and implement an induction programme, including volunteer orientation as well as initial training. This should ensure an induction experience that is personalised, informative and welcoming.

b/ KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS – DID YOU KNOW THAT:

Desk research and interviews show that people are likely to have a poor experience of sport volunteering if they are not properly prepared for their volunteering roles.

Unfortunately, our Global Survey results show that:

- Only 13% of organisations said that their volunteers were already trained and qualified when they joined the organisation.
- Most sport organisations only provide induction training for coaches, trainers, instructors and leaders – 81%, officials (referees, umpires, judges etc.) – 83%, and events volunteers (52%).
- Less than 50% provide induction training for board/committee members, administrators/managers, volunteers who support day-to-day activities (catering, transport, bar work etc.) and volunteers who maintain sport facilities and equipment.

When your organisation has recruited sport volunteers, you might benefit from providing helpful induction programmes to prepare your volunteers for their new roles and tasks.

>> CONTENT AREA 1: GOOD PRACTICE IN INDUCTING NEW VOLUNTEERS

New recruits to your sport organisation are likely to be excited about the new opportunity that awaits them, but they will probably also be somewhat nervous about the unknown aspects of the role you have agreed with them. In order to ensure a positive experience for both parties, it is important to formally and informally welcome the new volunteer and ensure they are given all the information they need to perform their role with distinction. This welcoming process is usually thought of as induction, just as professional organisations induct new staff recruits.

- ⊗ **The next content area deals with the detail of putting together an induction programme, but first let's look at the principles of good practice in making sure your new volunteers are properly taken care at the commencement of their volunteering journey:**

Welcome and orientation:

it is important not only to help the volunteer feel at home in your sport organisation, but also to ensure they have all of the essential information they require to navigate around your physical facilities and systems, as well as being introduced to key people.

Communicating the culture of the organisation:

as discussed elsewhere in this Toolkit, it is critical to establish a welcoming and inclusive culture within your sport organisation. One of the purposes of the induction process should be to demonstrate this to the volunteer, adding to their sense of welcome as well as making it clear 'how we do things around here'. Any boundaries or 'ground rules' should be established as part of the process.

Clarifying communication channels:

part of the induction process should enable the volunteer to understand in more detail who to report to and who to consult for information and approval.

Providing a buddy or mentor:

where possible, a new volunteer should be assigned to an experienced individual that can 'show them the ropes' – how everything works and how to get the best from the experience.

Formal training:

this can mean many different things, depending upon the size of your sport organisation and the nature of the volunteer's role. However, it is important not to leave anything to doubt and instead to formally provide the volunteer with any technical training and other information they require. This may be important in terms of legal compliance and safeguarding.

Mutual probation period:

the volunteer, once fully inducted and established in the role, might be having a wonderful experience and will hopefully stay with your sport organisation for many years. However, in order to get to that position there should be an opportunity for both the organisation and the volunteer to evaluate how things are going and for either party to be able to withdraw from the arrangement if it is not working.

Adhering to these principles during the initial weeks and months of the volunteer's time in your sport organisation will maximise the prospects of a mutually successful arrangement. The next content area discusses how to put them into practice.

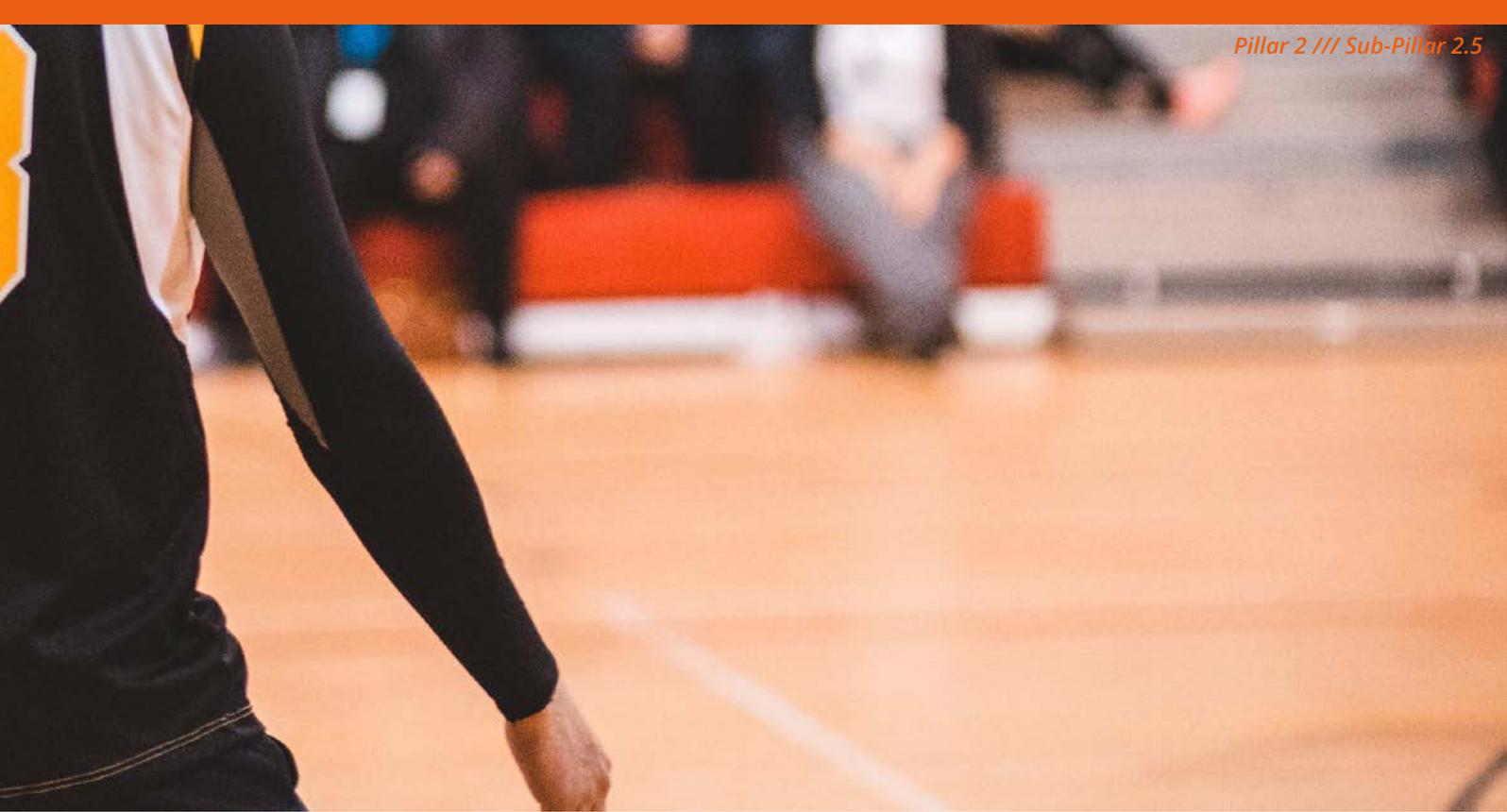


>> CONTENT AREA 2: DESIGNING A BESPOKE INDUCTION PROGRAMME INCLUDING INTEGRATION INTO THE TEAM, FACILITIES ETC.

This section deals with the induction programme for new volunteers, which is not the same as any technical, role-specific training that might need to be offered (this is covered in Content Area 3 of this sub-pillar). Here, we draw upon the principles outlined in Content Area 1 in order to design a personalised induction that is consistent with the induction experiences of other volunteers and ensures that the safe operating practices and culture of your sport organisation are preserved and enhanced. It is important to note that whilst induction and training should be thought of as part of the same process, they are presented here separately in order to isolate best practice in all aspects of the volunteer's integration in your sport organisation.

🕒 Some key questions for you to consider are:

- Duration of the induction process:
- for how long should the volunteer be considered to be on probation?
- Do we need to put on special welcome event?
- This might be relevant in the case of multiple volunteers starting at the same time.
- What are the essentials of inducting someone into your sport organisation?
- What do they need to know on day 1 versus day 51?
- Can information be segregated into essential and desirable categories?
- It will be important not to overload new volunteers with non-essential information.
- Does the volunteer have additional needs that should be accounted for?
- This process should begin as soon as they commence induction.
- Do we have the right people in place to look after the induction process?
- Do we have training and development needs to address amongst our existing volunteers in order to be able to provide an excellent induction experience?



Once these questions have been resolved it is possible to design and provide a suitable induction programme. The volunteer should be notified of when this begins, what it entails and what your expectations will be.

The best way to do this and provide clarity for all parties is to communicate the details of the programme in writing. An email from an official account in the name of your sport organisation is probably the best approach.

👉 **This written communication can confirm all of the essential details, namely:**

- Key dates (particularly the length of any 'probation' period)
- Key people (to whom the volunteer should report with question or comments, details of any buddy/mentor, etc)
- All activities that are induction-related rather than part of the volunteer's main role
- How the volunteer will be informed that the induction/ probation period has ended

The person that oversees volunteer induction does not necessarily need to be the same person to whom the volunteer reports for their regular role, although there should be good communication between the two if they are different people. The nominated induction supervisor may need to be prepared to keep track of multiple volunteers at different stages of their induction programmes, so it is vital that this person is carefully selected and given the resources they need to do the job effectively. With all of these principles and practices in place, it is to be hoped that the volunteer's induction/ probation process ends with both parties wishing to continue the arrangement well into the future!

A 'volunteer induction checklist' template has been provided below to help you work through this process.

>> CONTENT AREA 3: IDENTIFYING AND MEETING INITIAL TRAINING NEEDS

We have highlighted this aspect of the volunteer induction process as a topic in its own right. We have done this as it has the potential to be one of the more complex, critical and resource-intensive elements of the process. As we have stated in other content areas, one of the reasons volunteer training may be necessary is in order to ensure that the volunteer and your sport organisation are complying correctly with relevant legislation focused upon safeguarding, land use, financial management and a host of other aspects of your organisation's business. In addition, sporting federations may require volunteers to be formally trained in order to promote safe sport in all its forms. Depending upon the agreed role, some new volunteers may only require basic, informal training to familiarise themselves with the physical spaces, equipment and procedures that are appropriate to their roles. Others may need to undertake more formal training that could be accredited/ certificated. Whatever position the volunteer's role occupies on the formal-informal spectrum, this should have been identified in advance and communicated when the opportunity was promoted.

At this stage it is important to emphasise that training is a specific form of personal and organisational development focused on enhancing knowledge, skills, and competencies related to specific tasks or roles. It differs from other forms of personal and organisational development, such as coaching, mentoring and broader development programmes, and this is why it has a distinctive place in the volunteer's wider induction programme. Equally, training that is commenced during the induction programme might not have been completed by the end of the induction/ probation period. For instance, a certificated coaching badge might not be assessed for some weeks or even months after the initial training.

The first step in the training process is to identify the volunteer's initial needs based on any skills gaps. A 'skills gap' is the difference between the requirements of a role and the volunteer's existing skills. Even though, in another part of this Pillar, sport organisations are encouraged to conduct rigorous recruitment process when acquiring new volunteers, the 'best' volunteer for a given role might be identified on the basis of their personal attributes and might therefore have a skills gap or two to fill. This is perfectly normal and fine. Remember, what we are talking about here is the volunteer's initial training needs – in Pillar 4 you can look into how best to provide ongoing training and development for volunteers as they progress within in your sport organisation. Once you have worked with the volunteer to identify those formal and informal areas in which training will be required, a programme can mapped out for them.

🕒 Some of the key considerations at this point are:

Essential versus desirable:

which training activities must be undertaken at the initial stage of the volunteer's engagement with your sport organisation, and which are to some or other extent discretionary?

Timescale and phasing:

the dates for the volunteer's training will be dependent upon the availability of instructors, courses, facilities and so on, so timescales should be agreed and communicated in advance. It may also be possible to achieve economies of scale by providing training for multiple volunteers at the same time.

Resources:

what finance, expertise, connections, equipment etc are available to support the training programme?

Additional support:

will the volunteer require expenses to be met, help with transport or other forms of support in order to access and complete the training?

Of greatest importance is the content of the training. If it is being provided within your sport organisation, suitably qualified and experienced people should be on hand to plan and deliver it. Otherwise, you may need to outsource the training, even if it is not a certificated/ accredited product linked to compliance in some way.

🕒 **Training can be provided in each of the seven V4V volunteering categories; here is an example in each case:**

Board or committee member:

attending a short workshop outlining the responsibilities of the board and/ or committee, showing how the volunteer's roles fits into the broader structure, facilitated by experienced board/ committee members.

Administration/ management:

completing an online tutorial in order to be able use accounting software to manage the sport organisation's finances.

Coaching/ training/ instructing/ leading:

undertaking a certificated coaching qualification with attendance at workshops and online/ in-person assessment.

Officiating (referee, umpire, judge etc.):

undertaking a non-certificated officiating course, delivered online.

Organising/ helping to run sport events:

taking part in a briefing led by senior event organisers in which learning is imparted that will be applicable to all future events involving the sport organisation.

Maintaining sport equipment/ facilities:

completing a short, online safety tutorial; being taught 'on the job' by experienced volunteers and recording the outcomes.

Supporting day-to-day sport organisation activities:

completing a short, online cash handling tutorial; being taught 'on the job' by experienced volunteers and recording the outcomes.

These are merely examples. There is an almost limitless selection of training options for you to discuss with and provide for your new volunteer. This is the beginning of what will hopefully be a fruitful association between the volunteer and your sport organisation. Demonstrating a strong culture of supporting volunteers' induction though training will help them to get off to a good start and encourage them to pursue further development opportunities as their involvement progresses.

REFERENCES AND KEY LINKS

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



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VOLUNTEER

V4V PARTNERSHIP:



Coordinator



www.v4v-sport.eu



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