



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

LEARNING RESOURCES

/// PILLAR 3: VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION

SUB-PILLAR 3.1

**Maintaining an inclusive,
equitable, volunteer-
friendly culture**



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



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/// Sub-Pillar 3.1

Maintaining an inclusive, equitable, volunteer-friendly culture

a/ DESCRIPTION

In the first Pillar we looked at how you can work towards establishing a volunteer-friendly culture. In this section you will find resources to help you permeate this through the day-to-day running of your sport organisation, turning principles into practice to ensure every volunteering experience is a positive one. Particular emphasis is placed on the pursuit of equity and inclusivity in all your work with volunteers.

b/ KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS – DID YOU KNOW THAT:

When we interviewed long-serving sport volunteers, they highlighted the following positive management practices:

- Good leadership and communication from the organisation
- The importance of organisations understanding the nature of volunteering and showing empathy for their volunteers
- Providing motivational incentives and recognising/celebrating their volunteers' achievements
- Providing suitable methods of compensating volunteers for their expenses
- Making good use of volunteers' time and not wasting their time when they come to volunteer
- Adapting to the needs of volunteers and providing a positive volunteer culture

The same sport volunteers identified negative management practices as:

- Sport organisations profiting from their volunteers' efforts
- Lack of compensation for expenses incurred during volunteering
- Sport organisations not communicating to volunteers how their work is delivering positive outcomes for sport participants and the wider community
- Providing volunteer opportunities which are not appropriate to the volunteers involved
- Lack of early information about volunteer opportunities.

When your organisation is thinking about how to best manage its volunteers, you might benefit from thinking about how you can maximise the positive volunteer management practices outlined above and minimise the negative ones.



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>> CONTENT AREA 1 : MONITORING THE STATE OF THE ORGANISATION'S CULTURE ON AN ONGOING BASIS

A truly inclusive culture within a sport organisation will support all volunteers, irrespective of their background, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and abilities and allow them to work together productively within the organisation. It will embrace and celebrate differences – in experiences, backgrounds, and ways of thinking. This can help to create a sense of belonging and community within the organisation which in turn helps to develop long-term volunteer commitments and ensure that your volunteers have a positive experience.

As discussed in Pillar 1, Sub Pillar 4, culture can be defined as the values and behaviours within an organisation. As such, the culture within an organisation can play a significant role in contributing to a truly inclusive environment. It is therefore important that sport organisation's regularly monitor and review culture to identify what is working well (and to build on these elements) but also to identify any issues and take action to address them.

A strong culture will ensure that these values are understood and embraced by everyone involved in the organisation. A positive organisation culture should be committed to supporting and enabling inclusivity and diversity with all volunteers, members and staff working together to collectively ensure these values are embedded in everyday practices. A weak, negative culture is likely to do the opposite and may result in individuals leaving the organisation or not even joining it, and may contribute to unhappy and demotivated volunteers.

⦿ In general, people continue to volunteer because:

- They feel valued
- They feel their contribution is respected
- They feel part of the group and do not feel excluded from decision making
- They feel a sense of pride that they have contributed to the club
- These are all connected to the development and maintenance of a supportive organisation culture. It is therefore important to monitor the culture of your organisation in a regular basis.

⦿ How can you monitor organisation culture?

1. Listen –

To maintain an inclusive culture, it is important to listen to what individuals within the organisation are saying about the organisation. This could be informal conversations, or comments overheard in passing or more formal interactions such as monthly meetings, annual general meetings, or one-to-ones. You could also undertake an anonymous survey of volunteers to gather feedback. Try and identify what is working well within the organisation with regards to inclusion and diversity, and what could improve and what is lacking.

2. Be proactive about asking for feedback –

you can often gain valuable insight and ideas from those involved in different parts of the organisation. This can also help you to deal with any issues before they become significant.

3. Be open –

you may receive some uncomfortable feedback and it is therefore important to remain open to see and see all feedback as usual and important even if it does not necessarily fit with your own experiences of the organisation. If someone has taken the time to identify an issue, it is likely to be important to them and if you ignore it, it is likely to become a bigger issue. Conversely, take on board positive comments and use these as building blocks to further embed positive actions around inclusion and diversity within the organisation.

4. Be inclusive –

try and ensure that you get opinions from all the different groups involved in the organisation and from all levels. This may mean you need to be flexible about how feedback is gathered to enable all individuals to contribute.

5. Take action –

once you have gathered feedback, it is important to action it otherwise the consultation is likely to be viewed as tokenistic and meaningless. It may also indicate a lack of commitment within the organisation to facilitate a genuinely inclusive culture.

🕒 **How to spot a non-inclusive culture**

The questions below can help you identify how inclusive and equitable your sport organisation is. It is important to consider these with an open mind – it may be that your organisation is very welcoming and well-run but could still do more to embed inclusion and equity within the organisation's practices.

- How diverse is your volunteer workforce and membership? Does it fully represent the communities it serves?
- Could the organisation be more proactive about recruiting volunteers from outside its usual demographic? Research suggests that the workforce within organisations tends to reflect its members and can become self-replicating. Would having a more diverse workforce be beneficial to your organisation, help it to become more successful and inclusive, to therefore attract more members and contribute more fully to the local community?
- Do all volunteers have an equal chance to progress within the organisation?
- Does the organisation tend to lose volunteers quickly – are these volunteers from under-represented groups?
- Do all groups within the organisation have an equal opportunity to influence how the organisation runs and the decisions making processes?

Remember, an inclusive and equitable culture is likely to be instrumental in an organisation's success, growth, and volunteer satisfaction – it therefore makes sense to invest time and effort into maintaining such a culture once established.

>> CONTENT AREA 2 : MAINTAINING AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE THROUGH GOOD COMMUNICATION

Consistent and clear communication to your volunteers is an important element in maintaining a positive volunteering culture. Both formal and informal forms of communication will convey a certain impression of the organisation to current and potential volunteers. It is therefore important that the content and tone of communications support and reinforce an inclusive and equitable culture. Pillar 3 sub pillar 3 provides an overview of different communication methods you can use to communicate and consult with volunteers (and other members of your organisation), this sub-pillar will provide you with guidance on how you can maintain an inclusive culture by using suitable approaches to communication.

🕒 **Tips for developing inclusive communications:**

1. Consider the needs of your volunteers -

this could include language needs, disabilities etc, it may also include consideration of the best methods of communication to use. Not all volunteers may be comfortable using social media for example, therefore you may need to send communications across different formats.

2. You should -

ensure that there is consistency of information and instructions provided to volunteers and ensure all volunteers receive similar messages.

3. Consideration is needed regarding the tone of communications -

use your judgement and commonsense to ensure that messages are appropriate for all and avoid including comments or opinions that could be misinterpreted or misconstrued as slurs, demeaning or inflammatory.

4. Provide an opportunity for volunteers -

to respond to any communications, to ask questions and if needed to clarify information. Ensuring that 'two-way' communication channels are provided is crucial to make individuals feel included and valued.

5. Manage any open communication channels proactively -

delete any comments that are offensive and if made by an individual connected with your organisation address your concerns with that individual. It is also advisable to include a statement on any open communication channels such as social media accounts that offensive comments will not be tolerated.



>> CONTENT AREA 3: TURNING THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY AND DIVERSITY INTO PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are three closely linked values held by many sport organisations that are working to be supportive of different groups of individuals, including people of different races, ethnicities, religions, abilities, genders, and sexual orientations. It is useful at this stage to provide some definitions for these terms, so that we can fully understand their relevance in relative to sport volunteers:

Diversity

is about taking account of the differences between volunteers and groups of volunteers and placing a positive value on those differences.

Equity

refers to fair treatment for all people, so that the norms, practices, and policies in place ensure identity is not predictive of opportunities or volunteering outcomes.

Inclusion

refers to how volunteers experience the sport organisation and their role within it. The degree to which the organisation embraces all volunteers and enables them to make meaningful contributions.

Research suggests that organisations which are diverse tend to be stronger and better able to meet challenges. Therefore, sport organisations should consider how they can embed equity and diversity in your organisation. Think about the practical actions you could take to ensure your organisation is inclusive for all volunteers.

🕒 **Embedding principles of equity and diversity in your organisation:**

1. Lead from the top -

members of boards and committees, and those holding senior roles in the organisation need to be seen to embody and buy into the culture. They need to demonstrate inclusivity and equity in their roles and behaviour in order to encourage others to follow. This can be described as 'purposeful leadership' where leaders provide a compelling purpose and take action for change.

2. Share and celebrate successes of all volunteers -

Use case studies and stories online to highlight the work your sport organisation is doing around inclusion and equity. This can be a great way of attracting new volunteers and members.

3. Ensure that there are multiple ways for volunteers -

to feedback their perspectives and experiences, and to share their stories. This will lead to open dialogue and more positive outcomes.

4. Utilise inclusive recruitment strategies -

does your organisation recruit equitably from its local communities? Could you be more proactive in recruiting a more diverse workforce? Think about how you could use some of the recruitment tips and ideas outlined in pillar 2 sub pillar 2 to help with this.

5. Consider nominating an individual -

within your organisation to lead on matters relating to inclusive and equity. This could be a specific volunteer role or a specific responsibility for a committee member. This should not be a tokenistic appointment - the person given this responsibility should be supported with access to appropriate training and given support to implement new practices or activities to improve inclusion and diversity within the organisation.

6. Try to create inclusive spaces for volunteers –

and other members of the organisation to interact. These can encourage people to get to know each other and help individuals feel part of the organisation. For example, arrange team lunches and other informal events where volunteers can casually connect with each other. If your organisation is large, consider creating a support group or network for volunteers from diverse backgrounds which can help them connect with others who share their experiences.

7. Provide training to volunteers on inclusion and diversity –

you may be able to access appropriate courses from your Governing Body or Federation. You may also wish to consider asking potential volunteers about inclusion and diversity as part of a selection process – see pillar 2 sub pillar 3.

8. Ensure that any volunteer recruitment materials –

you produce or use are inclusive, particularly if you are targeting diverse communities. This could involve on a practice level, getting materials translated or ensuring that the colours used on materials are appropriate for individuals with learning difficulties to read.

And remember, an inclusive culture is a work in progress. You should revisit your organisation's practices, policies, and procedures regularly to double-check that they are fit for purpose and to look for ways of further improving them.





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