



Skills acquired through  
Volunteering in Sport

# LEARNING RESOURCES

## /// PILLAR 4: VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

### SUB-PILLAR 4.2 — Supporting internal volunteer progression



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

## /// Sub-Pillar 4.2

### Supporting internal volunteer progression

#### a/ DESCRIPTION

A motivating factor for some volunteers is to be able to assume greater levels of responsibility as they become more experienced. For those willing to take on higher levels of seniority, it is usually necessary to support them through training and other forms of skills and competence development. This section will assist your organisation to engage with your volunteers to identify and discuss their aspirations for progression, as well as plan and manage any 'promotions'.

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

Desk research and interviews carried out through the V4V project suggest that succession planning is vital to sport organisations and volunteers.

From the Global Survey on sport volunteering:

- 23% of organisations said volunteers see few opportunities to progress in their roles

#### >> CONTENT AREA 1 : IDENTIFYING VOLUNTEERS' ASPIRATIONS FOR INTERNAL PROGRESSION

Internal progression is about supporting and developing your volunteers to progress within your sport organisation – this can mean taking on additional responsibilities and/or more senior roles. To facilitate progression, you will need to be aware of your volunteers own personal aspirations. Do they want to take on more responsibility? Do they want to work towards taking on a more senior role? Once you know what their aspirations are you can start to develop a plan in order to help them fulfil these ambitions. The previous sub-pillar provided advice on how sport organisations can develop training and development programmes for volunteers. Before you get to this point, it is first important to identify your volunteer's aspirations. These should be based on the volunteers' own aspirations, and not be imposed on them by the sport organisation.



🕒 **There are several points at which you can do this:**

**1. During the recruitment phase**

It is good practice to ask about your volunteer's aspirations during the recruitment phase, for example, during an interview or informal conversation about the volunteer role and the individual's hopes and expectations connected to this. You may wish to ask questions such as:

- What do you expect us to offer to you?
- What are you expecting to share with us?
- How do you expect to develop and progress during the volunteering experience?
- Is it your intention to work professionally in this field and you hope that the volunteering experience will help you in that goal?

By identifying aspirations before the volunteer commence their volunteering, you can put in place initial training and development to support them into the role, whilst also being aware of longer-term aspirations and hopes. Importantly, this also provides you with the opportunity to manage expectations if the volunteer has aspirations that your organisation cannot fulfil. This means the volunteer will make an informed decision about whether to continue their volunteering journey with your organisation.

This initial conversation will enable the volunteer coordinator (or equivalent) to assess what type of aspiration the volunteer has.

**A. Professional:**

The volunteer wants to become part of the employed staff at a certain point or work professionally in the sector.

**B. Emotional:**

The volunteer wants to contribute to the vision and mission of the project because they feel themselves connected with the purpose.

**C. Leisure time:**

The volunteers want to invest free time in activities to know more people, live a healthy lifestyle and enjoy new things.



If you detect that the volunteer holds number 1 as their strongest aspiration, you can accompany the volunteer along the volunteering process in a very specific and strategic way.

Being clear from the beginning can promote a good long-term relationship between the volunteers and the organisation promoting engagement, commitment and proactive learning. Indeed, volunteers who feel that their aspirations and goals are aligned with the organisation's mission and values are more likely to be engaged and committed to their role. Moreover, when volunteers know that there is a pathway for progression within an organisation, they are more likely to invest time and energy in developing the skills needed to achieve their goals: you never know, but you may have in front of you the next Director or Coordinator of one of the areas of the Club or sport centre.

## 2. During their volunteering

Once the volunteer is embedded within the organisation, you will need to 'check-in' regularly with them to assess whether their aspirations have changed. Unsurprisingly, once the volunteer becomes settled and familiar with the organisation, they may change their aspirations. Therefore, it is recommended that you undertake regular 'reviews' with your volunteers. Ideally, these should take place annually and include a review of their progress / performance / enjoyment in their current role whilst also discussing future aspirations. The annual review can then be used as the foundation for the creation of, or changes to, their training and development plan (also discussed in the previous sub-pillar). This can then guide conversations with other volunteers / staff within the organisation about how to facilitate the volunteer's development and internal progression. This will once again contribute to the volunteer having a good and formative experience within your organisation.

Depending on the size of your volunteer workforce, you can undertake reviews in different ways. If your volunteer workforce is relatively small, you can have one-to-one discussions. These can help you to better understand their goals, interests, motivations, ambitions and aspirations. If your volunteer workforce is large, you may need to include volunteer aspirations as part of an annual volunteer survey. This could include questions on their own career interests, potential skills they want to develop, and their willingness to take on additional responsibilities, leadership or roles within the organisation. As with all surveys, it is then important that you act on the information gathered – this may involve follow-up conversations with specific volunteers who have expressed certain aspirations to progress within the organisation.

## 3. After volunteering (i.e. lapsed volunteers)

It can be useful to maintain a database of lapsed volunteers – this enables you to contact them periodically to see if they are interested in returning to volunteer. It may be that their personal circumstances have changed or that their aspirations have changed and undertaking a volunteering role may now enable them to fulfil these. Utilising a database enables you to share more opportunities to volunteer, invitations to events and also job offers which may help your organisation fill any shortfalls in volunteer role.



## >> CONTENT AREA 2 : TAILORING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO ENABLE VOLUNTEERS TO ASSUME GREATER RESPONSIBILITY

Once you have identified the aspirations of your volunteers, you will need to identify, source or create development opportunities for those volunteers to enable them to progress within the organisation. This will support volunteers to expand their role and contribution or take on new roles and responsibilities. This can help the organisation to meet its strategic goals and also support the personal development of your volunteers, increasing their skill levels and attributes, and increasing their confidence and sense of fulfilment.

Your organisation may wish to consider the following actions and development opportunities for its volunteers to enable them to take on more responsibility:

### **1. Creating opportunities for leadership roles:**

Offering leadership roles to your volunteers can provide them with the opportunity to take on greater responsibility and contribute to the organisation in a meaningful way. Those roles could be as the main responsible person of a team area, a member of a board, an honorary member of a group, a volunteering coordinator or a volunteering trainer.

### **2. Offering certifications or special learning courses:**

Your organisation can give volunteers the chance to become experts or to approach different subjects or tools that would become beneficial for them and you. For example, First aid courses, leadership workshops, IT skills workshops, emotional intelligence training, sport management training, and specific coaching or officiating courses.

### **3. Regular communication about new or enhanced volunteer roles and future jobs:**

If you have identified the aspirations of your volunteers, you can specifically target certain volunteers with opportunities that meet these aspirations. This provides you with the opportunity to match the skills and attributes of volunteers to certain positions and also recognises the volunteers' contribution to the organisation. This will enable the volunteers to assume different roles and responsibilities while keeping them motivated and engaged.

### **4. Promote self-assessment tools:**

You can provide access to pre-existing self-assessment tools like the 'Youthpass' or 'Lever Up' that your volunteers could complete to reflect on their volunteering experience, skills, interests, and aspirations. These tools could help your volunteers to identify their own goals and aspirations for internal progression.

### **5. Carry out observation and feedback:**

You could observe your volunteers in their roles and provide feedback on their performance. Through regular feedback, you may gain insights into their strengths, interests, and aspirations, and identify potential areas for growth and internal progression.

### **6. Arrange informal conversations with other members of employed and volunteer staff:**

You can arrange informal conversations with staff members (paid or unpaid) who engage closely with your volunteers to gather comments about their aspirations. Staff members may have observed volunteers' interests or motivations and can provide valuable feedback on their potential for internal progression.

### **7. Develop a peer-to-peer feedback system:**

You can encourage your volunteers to provide feedback to each other and share their aspirations for internal progression. Peer-to-peer feedback can provide insights into each other's strengths, interests, and goals, and create a supportive environment for identifying aspirations. This might also involve volunteers undertaking self-reflection both on their own volunteering experiences, achievements, and future aspirations.

### **8. Provide mentoring support:**

You could allocate mentors to volunteers to guide through taking on additional responsibilities or a new role. The mentor should meet regularly with the volunteer with the aim of guiding and providing support to them. This could include dealing with issues connected to their role or problem solving, and identifying the learning acquired during their volunteering experience. A mentor allows volunteers to discuss matters they might not feel comfortable about sharing with other volunteers, staff or the volunteer coordinator. The mentor should have prior expertise in volunteering and a direct/indirect knowledge of the organisation and of the volunteering activities.

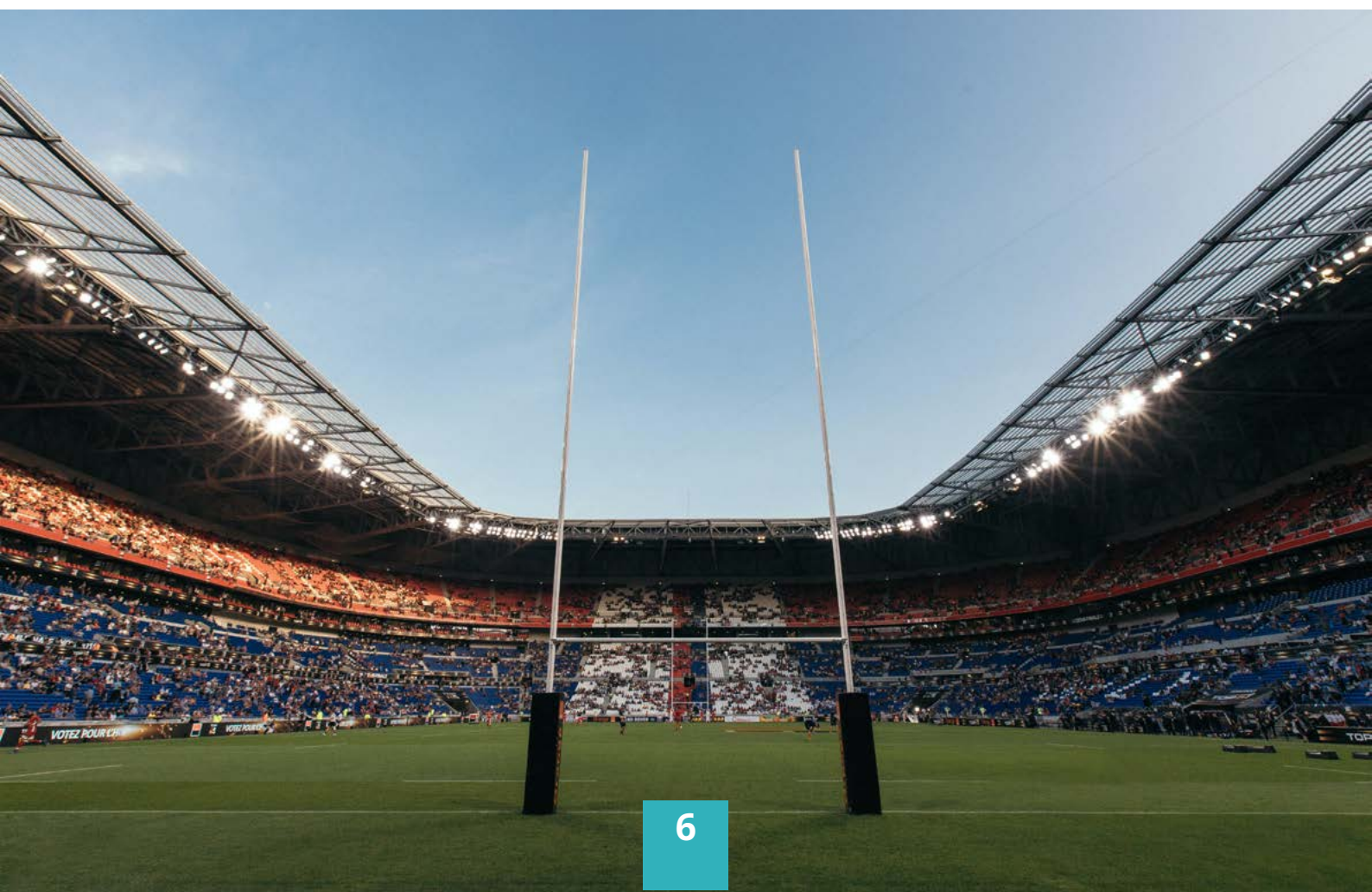
### **9. Job shadowing:**

Your organisation could offer volunteers a “job shadowing” exercise with someone that is already working in the role they aspire to (this could be another volunteer or a paid member of staff). This will give the volunteer the chance to see if the role is something they would like to do or not, and will also give the person in the role the opportunity to see the potential of the volunteer and share knowledge with them.

### **10. Networking time:**

Your organisation can invite the volunteers with internal aspiration progression to events where they can express their motivations to people in the organisation or wider sector, so they can start promoting their experiences and finding opportunities to fulfil their aspirations and ambitions.

The blend of development activities will depend on the volunteer and the nature of their personal aspirations. However, it is key the development plan should be agreed with the volunteer and then reviewed regularly to ensure that it is supporting the volunteer to develop as expected. You may also need to consider providing additional support to volunteers to help them to take advantage of some of the development opportunities and activities identified – this could be as simple as being encouraging to providing resources to help them access specific opportunities.





## >> CONTENT AREA 3: SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS THROUGH THE PROCESS OF INTERNAL 'PROMOTIONS'

Internal promotion refers to an internal candidate being promoted to a new position (or assuming greater responsibility within their current role), instead of the organisation hiring an external candidate. Supporting your current volunteers for internal promotions is beneficial for both the volunteer and your organisation. As the volunteer knows your organisation, their adaptation to the new position will be faster and is likely to require less support than an external candidate.

However, it is important to consider the skills and attributes of the volunteer. It is not beneficial to offer an internal promotion to a volunteer in an area that is not suitable for the volunteer's ability and personal development aspirations, or which they are unable to acquire the necessary skills for through training or personal development activities.

### 🔗 You can support a volunteer through the process of internal promotions by:

#### **1. Matching a volunteer's aspirations, skills and attributes to specific volunteer roles or job opportunities:**

Consider their existing qualifications, skills, attributes and experience – if there is a new opportunity in the organisation be proactive about opening this up to specific volunteers. It can be both beneficial for them and for your organisation to offer this opportunity to your volunteer. It provides the volunteer with a sense that their efforts and expertise is recognised and valued, helping to demonstrate and create a positive culture within the sport organisation. Other volunteers can see that colleagues are being rewarded and recognised for their hard work and may also seek promotions and additional development opportunities.

#### **2. Providing support and assistance with any application or recruitment processes:**

This could be part of the responsibility of the volunteer coordinator or specific mentors, but it can be extremely supportive and reassuring for a volunteer to receive feedback and assistance with any applications or interviews. This is especially important for volunteers who may lack confidence or are inexperienced in going through recruitment processes. Many volunteers may also be unaware of the skills and attributes they possess and struggle to identify and articulate them to others.

#### **3. Crossmatch volunteer skills and attributes with other roles within your organisation:**

Many volunteers possess transferable skills but may be unaware of how these translate into other roles. For example, a volunteer that supported the logistics team at several sports events may be suitable for positions that will require skills like project management, time management, client service and team management. A volunteer that has been engaged for many years in club activities, has good human relationships with the users and board members and is experienced in administration because of their contribution in different activities, can be suitable for a position like coordination of an area or guest service.

#### **4. Provide feedback on promotion successes (and failures):**

It is important that a volunteer understands what they did well to secure an internal promotion, but also why they may have been unsuccessful. Any feedback provided should be sensitively communicated to avoid deflating the volunteer and discouraging them from applying for internal promotions in the future.

#### **5. Provide support to the volunteer in their new role:**

Once the volunteer is in their new role, it is important that support is provided to help them settle into it. They should be provided with a point of contact where they can receive support and guidance. This could be in the form of a mentor or a nominated individual with expertise in an appropriate area.



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.