



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

LEARNING RESOURCES

/// PILLAR 1: VOLUNTEER STRATEGY AND PLANNING

SUB-PILLAR 1.2 — Understanding volunteering in context



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



/// Sub-Pillar 1.2

Understanding volunteering in context

a/ DESCRIPTION

How well do you understand volunteering and what it means to the individuals who undertake it? Is your organisation obtaining all of the potential benefits of a diverse volunteer workforce?

This section will enable you to research the nature of volunteering in your geographical area and the sport or sector within which your organisation operates. Find out how you can assess the 'bigger picture', including locating and using statistics regarding the levels of volunteering in your area/ sector, as well as insight into extrinsic drivers for volunteering such educational requirements. You will gain a better appreciation for why people volunteer and why they leave volunteering roles.

b/ KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS – DID YOU KNOW THAT:

When planning their strategy, it is really important for sport organisations to understand what motivates people to become sport volunteers.

From our Global Survey of sport organisations:

- ⌚ 85% of survey respondents said that people volunteer because they want to be involved in a sport which they feel passionate about
- ⌚ 68% said volunteers want to be needed, valued and part of a team
- ⌚ 44% said volunteers want to meet people and make new friends
- ⌚ 41% said people want to have fun as part of their volunteering experience
- ⌚ 34% said volunteers want to make a positive difference to the lives of others.



It is also important to know what discourages people from sport volunteering:

- ⌚ 71% of respondents mentioned volunteers' lack of time
- ⌚ 37% said lack of recognition as a volunteer is a problem
- ⌚ 35% said people often lack financial resources to volunteer.

When your organisation develops its volunteering strategy, it will be important for you to consider what motivates people to volunteer and also try to minimise the things which discourage them.

>> CONTENT AREA 1: UNDERSTANDING THE DETERMINANTS OF VOLUNTEERING - INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC FACTORS

Volunteering is a powerful force for good. Great volunteering is where both partners benefit, those whom the volunteer supports and the volunteer themselves. Motivation is fundamental to volunteering and is often distinguished as an intrinsically or extrinsically motivated behaviour.

⌚ Intrinsic factors

Intrinsically motivated behaviour involves engaging in an activity for the satisfaction, or enjoyment inherent in performing the activity. When volunteers are intrinsically motivated, they participate in sports-related tasks because they find them inherently rewarding, enjoyable, and aligned with their interests and values. Volunteers receive an internal reward as a direct result of their activity and/ or from the outcome of the volunteer work they do.

Examples of intrinsic factors:

- They volunteer because they are passionate about the sport/ activity
- They get a sense of personal achievement
- They can make a difference to the lives of others/ help others
- Sense of camaraderie.

🕒 Extrinsic factors

Extrinsic motivation involves performing an activity to obtain external rewards or avoid punishments. Helping others is then a secondary factor, such that extrinsically motivated individuals see volunteering as an investment and may expect external benefits or payoffs because of the activity.

Examples of extrinsic factors:

- They can improve their curriculum vitae (CV) and employment prospects
- They can gain new knowledge and skills
- They gain opportunities to travel
- Opportunities to meet new people/ expand their network
- Receiving tangible benefits like event tickets, recognition, certificates, or other forms of incentives.

Since both extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors can explain why people choose to get involved in voluntary activities, it is important to achieve a suitable blend within your sport organisation. Sports volunteers often have a mix of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. While they may be genuinely passionate about the sport and enjoy contributing to the community (intrinsic), they might also appreciate the perks or recognition that come with volunteering (extrinsic).

Other considerations include:

🕒 Long-term commitment:

Intrinsic motivation has been linked to greater long-term commitment to sport volunteering, such that volunteers are more likely to stay engaged even when external rewards are limited.

🕒 Recruitment and retention:

Extrinsic incentives can be effective in attracting new volunteers, especially in large-scale events or short-term projects. However, to ensure retention and sustained engagement, it is essential to foster intrinsic motivations, such as providing meaningful roles, opportunities for skill development, and a sense of belonging to a community.

🕒 Volunteer satisfaction:

Studies have shown that volunteers who experience high levels of intrinsic motivation report greater satisfaction with their volunteering experience and derive more personal benefits from it.

🕒 Age and experience:

The factors driving volunteer motivations may differ based on age and experience. For example, younger volunteers may be more motivated by extrinsic factors, while seasoned volunteers might be more motivated by intrinsic factors related to personal growth and fulfilment.

As part of getting to know your sport volunteers, try to gain an understanding of their motivations as this will help you to fit them to the activities to which they are best suited. Remember: there is nothing wrong with being extrinsically motivated as long as the volunteer's personal objectives overlap sufficiently with those of your sport organisation.

Over time, if you provide them with a beneficial experience in a supportive environment, they may develop intrinsic motivations and their participation become permanent.

>> CONTENT AREA 2: UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS VOLUNTEERS CAN BRING TO YOUR ORGANISATION

Involving volunteers can add great value to what your organisation does and helps you to achieve your objectives. In many voluntary sport organisations, such as local clubs, there can be a tendency to mistrust 'outsiders' who are potential volunteers, and a desire to 'protect' the integrity of the organisation. However, a healthy process of recruiting new volunteers (see Pillar 2 of this Toolkit) can constantly refresh your sport organisation.

Here are some of the benefits of involving volunteers:

① **Collect relevant data:**

Gather data on the current workforce, including demographic information, skills, qualifications, roles, and performance. To ensure comprehensive data collection, use a consistent approach, perhaps by drawing up a standardised skills survey that all volunteers are asked to complete. This can be followed up with conversations for further clarification and depth. Your own observations as an experienced member of the volunteer workforce can also be valuable.

② **Improve capacity:**

To enable existing personnel to focus on their core tasks. You may be all too familiar with having to try and do everything yourself, so attracting volunteers is the key to being able to more things and do them better.

③ **Efficient resourcing:**

Increasing capacity through volunteering can help you, for example, to be able to provide activities which your sport organisation could not otherwise provide (for free).

④ **Improve diversity:**

You can engage a more diverse range of skills, experience, and knowledge, as well as creating a sport organisation that is more representative of the local community.

⑤ **Flexibility and adaptability:**

Volunteers can provide the organization with a flexible workforce that can be scaled up or down based on specific needs and demands. This adaptability is particularly valuable during peak seasons or when organising special events.

⑥ **Improve quality of service:**

You can draw on a wider range of expertise to improve your organisation or club, or activities. For example, you could seek to recruiting a volunteer board member to provide governance expertise that will improve the decision making of your sport organisation.

⑦ **Innovation and creativity:**

Volunteers can inject fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and creative solutions into your sport organisation. Their varied backgrounds and experiences can lead to novel approaches to challenges and opportunities.

⑧ **Sustainability:**

A strong volunteer programme can ensure that your sport organisation is able to navigate through difficult periods. Satisfied volunteers are also excellent advocates who can help in the recruitment of new volunteers.

Alongside the above, practical examples, there are community-based and strategic motives for involving volunteers:

③ **Awareness raising:**

The more people you have involved outside of your sport organisation, the easier it is to raise awareness about your activities and your profile.

③ **Access:**

This could also include bringing new people to your sport and access hard to reach groups. People that are currently underrepresented in your activities may respond better if your sport organisation includes people with whom they can personally identify (“if you can’t see it, you can’t be it”).

③ **Relationships in the community:**

In a broader sense, participants may engage more effectively with volunteers than any paid staff.

③ **Building community capacity:**

Providing volunteering opportunities can support social inclusion, skills development, and potential routes to employment for a range of people in the local community.

In all volunteering, there is a balance of the benefits gained by the sport organisation and those obtained by the individual.

However, before recruiting, your sport organisation may want to consider:

- The skill level required for specific volunteer roles
- The time, resource, and money you may need to invest in volunteers with training for specific roles
- Sustaining a volunteer programme can be a challenge – from volunteer growth to succession planning.

Further guidance is given elsewhere in this Toolkit, but the principal message here is that in a well-managed volunteer programme, the potential benefits far outweigh the risks and inconveniences.



>> CONTENT AREA 3: IDENTIFYING VOLUNTEERING TRENDS IN YOUR GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

This is the first of two content areas that are designed to give you ideas relating to gaining greater insight into volunteering patterns that may impact your sport organisation. Here, we look at volunteering trends in the geographical area impacted by your sport organisation.

The first thing to do is to identify a geographical footprint that you think is relevant to your sport organisation. You might be a sports club that is strongly identified with a particular community, making your geographical domain very straightforward to determine. If you do not have a such a strong and specific association with a particular geographical footprint, you still might like to pinpoint an area of interest, perhaps because you would like to recruit more volunteers and participants from there.

Either way, it is useful to build up a picture of the volunteering 'scene' in the defined geographical area. In general, volunteering trends are changing with more people volunteering but for fewer hours and shorter lengths of time.

Volunteering patterns in Europe (and beyond) are influenced by various factors, including societal changes, economic conditions, demographic shifts, and the emergence of new technologies. Some of the current trends that may be reflected in your geographical area are:

④ **Diverse volunteer roles:**

Volunteers in Europe increasingly engage in diverse roles beyond traditional charity work. Skilled volunteering, where individuals contributed their expertise and professional skills, is becoming a more popular way for people to give their time.

④ **Youth volunteering:**

Young people continue to actively participate in volunteering activities. Many organisations and governments focus on promoting youth volunteerism through promoted initiatives – can your sport organisation tap into this?

④ **Virtual and remote volunteering:**

Advancements in technology facilitate virtual volunteering, allowing individuals to contribute their time and skills remotely through online platforms. Not all of your new volunteers need to be able to attend your activities in person.

④ **Corporate volunteering:**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are now extremely popular, with many companies encouraging their employees to participate in volunteering activities as part of their CSR programmes. This provides employees with opportunities to engage in community service during work hours.

④ **Social inclusion and integration:**

Volunteer programmes are developed to support social inclusion and integration, particularly for refugees and migrants. Volunteering offers a way for newcomers to connect with local communities and gain valuable skills and experiences, something that should be of interest to sport organisations wanting to embrace the 'power of sport'.

④ **Environmental and sustainability focus:**

Environmental and conservation-related volunteering are on the increase as concerns over climate change and sustainability increase. Could volunteers hold the key to promoting eco-friendly practices within your sport organisation?

Note that these trends relate to all types of volunteering, but since volunteering in sport is so prominent it is reasonable to expect that they will be of relevance to your sport organisation. Other content areas in this sub-pillar look in detail at motivations for volunteering, but all of the above trends may give you some ideas for how to seek out your next influx of volunteers.

To gain further insight into volunteering trends and interests in your defined geographical area, find out who are your local volunteering agencies and make contact with them. For example, in the UK this would entail local agencies such as Doing Good Leeds or national bodies like the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. In Germany you might consult resources like the Vostel online platform. The most important thing is to be aware of volunteering trends in your defined geographical area and be ready to capitalise upon them!



>> CONTENT AREA 4: IDENTIFYING VOLUNTEERING TRENDS IN YOUR SPORT OR SECTOR

This is a companion piece to the previous content area, which looks at volunteering trends within your sport organisation's geographical area of interest. Some of the key developments in volunteering, which are examined in more detail in the preceding content area, are:

- Diverse volunteer roles
- Youth volunteering
- Virtual and remote volunteering
- Corporate volunteering
- Social inclusion and integration
- Environmental and sustainability focus.

Many, if not all of these interests are relevant when we look at volunteering within the sport or sector your organisation is part of. Sport often mirrors society and vice versa, so it is reasonable to expect that the preferences of the wider volunteering community will be found in the sport or sports in which your organisation is involved. As well as the wider trends discussed in the previous content area, sport volunteering is moving in new directions and it is particularly important for your sport organisation to monitor these trends and take advantage of them as you develop your volunteer workforce. Let's examine them in a little more detail:

🕒 **Major sporting events:**

Europe regularly hosts major sporting events, which rely heavily on volunteers to assist with organising, managing logistics, and supporting participants and spectators. Can your sport organisation make a connection to events in your sport or sector to 'capture' people interested in doing more sport volunteering?

🕒 **Inclusive sport volunteering:**

Federations are placing an increasing emphasis on making sport volunteering more inclusive. Efforts are made to engage volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including disabled individuals, ethnic minorities, and various age groups, to ensure broader representation and promote social inclusion. Is it time to diversify your volunteer workforce?

🕒 **Skills-based volunteering:**

Similar to general volunteering trends, sport has seen a rise in skills-based volunteering. Volunteers with specific expertise, such as coaching, sports administration, event management, and marketing are offering their skills to sports organisations. You may be able to connect with interested individuals via your regional or national federation. Organisations such as Sported in the UK exist specifically to link skilled volunteers with community sport organisations – what is your equivalent?

🕒 **Community sports programmes:**

The rising popularity of 'sport for development' initiatives means that significant numbers of people are volunteering in order to use sport as a tool for social change. Connecting with such volunteers can help your sport organisation to forge better relations in the local community, develop interest in your sport and grow your participant base.

🕒 **Recognition and training:**

The importance of recognising and appreciating volunteers' contributions is recognised by sport federations. Support may be available from your sport's federation to help you provide training and support volunteers to enhance their skills and satisfaction in their roles (see Pillar 4).

Understanding current and projected trends in volunteering in your sport or sector will help you stay ahead of the competition when it comes to recruiting the quality and quantity of volunteers you require. Engage with your federation at local, regional and national level to obtain their insights into volunteering in your sport.



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VOLUNTEER

V4V PARTNERSHIP:



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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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