



Skills acquired through
Volunteering in Sport

LEARNING RESOURCES

/// PILLAR 2: VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND DEPLOYMENT

SUB-PILLAR 2.3 Conducting a volunteer selection process



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/// Sub-Pillar 2.3

Conducting a volunteer selection process

a/ DESCRIPTION

Here you will find support to enable you to conduct a transparent, fair and rigorous selection process that will meet the needs of both your organisation and potential volunteers, including staging interviews if needed. Working in this way will hopefully ensure a better match for all parties.

b/ KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS – DID YOU KNOW THAT:

Recruiting sport volunteers is not like recruiting paid staff. The incentive for the volunteer is not a salary but their own motivation to give their time and efforts.

Our desk research and interviews suggest that:

- When they are selecting sport volunteers, organisations should put more emphasis on soft skills (such as communication, people skills and teamwork) and personal qualities (such as reliability and motivation). These are difficult to teach.
- It is not so important to look for people with the right technical skills (unless they are vital at the start of the volunteer role, for example a coach or official). Technical skills can be learnt after they are engaged.

When your organisation is selecting potential volunteers, you might benefit from finding ways to check their soft skills and personal qualities, including their willingness to learn. Technical skills can always be taught after they are recruited.

>> CONTENT AREA 1: SELECTION GOOD PRACTICE INCLUDING SHORTLISTING

Having conducted a comprehensive and attractive recruitment process, you will hopefully have generated interest from a diverse range of applicants for your sport volunteering opportunities. In most cases it will now be necessary to determine which applicants should reach the next stage of the process and be interviewed to establish whether there is a good fit between them and your requirements for the sport volunteering role. This process is usually known as shortlisting, and involves comparing each applicant to the criteria you set for the sport volunteering opportunity. Producing a clear and fair job description and person specification in the first place makes the process of creating a shortlist of candidates to interview much more straightforward.

④ Shortlisting process

Shortlisting should ideally be conducted by the people who generated the original specification for the sport volunteering opportunity, and the same person or people should also undertake the interviewing phase. It is preferable for several reasons for a 'panel' of more than one person to manage the entire recruitment and selection process, as this allows for a range of opinions to be considered and promotes greater fairness and transparency. However, in the case of many smaller sports clubs the 'panel' might consist of just one person. As stated above, best practice in shortlisting revolves around using the same role criteria you created when originally promoting the sport volunteering opportunity. For clarity and consistency, use a simple scoring system so that each application is treated in the same way as the others. For example, for each criterion you could rank the candidate, based on the information in their application, as Ideal, Good, Worth considering for other volunteering roles or Not Suitable. Otherwise, you could use a numerical ranking system or similar. The most important considerations are to be fair and consistent regardless of the precise nature of your approach to scoring.

Use of a ranking system such as the one discussed above should enable the panel to sift through the applications and only interview those with a genuine chance of being successful. The size of the shortlist you develop will depend upon factors such as the number of applications received and the number of sport volunteering opportunities available in this specific area. As a guide, if you have received a relatively large number of applications for a single role, a shortlist of 3-6 candidates is usually appropriate. You should ideally attempt to interview all candidates that seem to meet the criteria to a sufficient enough extent that they might be suitable, but equally you do not want to make the interview process unwieldy or waste people's time. It may be necessary for the panel to meet more than once to agree the final shortlist – do whatever you can to make the best decision for your sport organisation and the individuals that are interested in volunteering with you.

To summarise:

- If possible, form a panel of more than one person;
- Use the role criteria as your guide;
- Utilise a scoring system to ensure fairness;
- Try and interview all candidates that meet the role criteria.

④ Communicating with applicants

All applicants should have a positive experience of interacting with your sport organisation. This includes making sure that you communicate with them throughout the process. Make sure that each application is acknowledged and that you tell people the key dates by which they will hear back, when interviews will be conducted and so on.

Unsuccessful applicants that do not make the final shortlist should be contacted to:

- thank them for their interest
- offer the opportunity to receive feedback
- encourage them to apply for future opportunities

Try to be as objective as possible in any feedback you provide, illustrating to the unsuccessful applicant how they did not meet the criteria for the role on this occasion and making constructive suggestions as to how they can further develop themselves. As part of the selection process, the panel might also identify applicants that were not suitable for the specific opportunity under consideration but who might be a good fit for other roles within your sport organisation. Do not miss this chance to maintain contact with them and discuss other ways they can get involved.

They have shown interest in starting or deepening their involvement with your sport organisation, so take the opportunity to engage them!



>> CONTENT AREA 2: HOW TO CONDUCT FAIR INTERVIEWS

Volunteer interviews are a key tool in any recruitment and selection process. This is a great opportunity to meet the people face-to-face and find out if they really have the skills and personal qualities you are looking for. As you are recruiting for volunteer positions, there is no need to make the process overly formal and intimidating. Indeed, rather than use the term 'interview' you may prefer to simply say that you will invite the potential volunteer in for a 'chat'. Despite this, it is important that all applicants are treated fairly throughout, hence the shortlisting process discussed in the preceding section.

🕒 Purpose of the interview

Volunteer interviewing is primarily about exploring whether there is a 'fit' between the sport organisation and the prospective volunteer. In addition, a key aspect of the interview is to allow the potential volunteer to decide whether they would like to volunteer for your sport organisation.

The volunteer interview can be used to:

- Find out their reasons for volunteering
- Discuss the volunteer's background and skills
- Be very clear about the volunteer role and what it involves
- Determine the volunteer's level of interest in a particular role and whether they have the necessary skills to perform it
- Find out from personal interaction with the applicant whether they really do have the attitudes and personal attributes you are looking for
- Establish whether the volunteer has other interests and skills that might be used to create a different role for him/ her
- Share information about your organisation and consider whether the volunteer would fit comfortably into the work environment
- Give the applicant a positive impression of your organisation and what it seeks to achieve – motivate them to be part of what you are doing
- Discuss their expectations of volunteering in your organisation
- Explore what support, if any, the volunteer would need when volunteering
- Respond to the volunteer's questions and concerns
- Negotiate how the role could be made more flexible/adapted to meet the volunteer's personal circumstances.

🕒 Preparing for the interview

Before the interview takes place, you should check with the volunteer if they have any support needs or accessibility requirements and take these into consideration when deciding where and when to conduct the interview. It is also worth checking whether the volunteer would like to know in advance what you will intend to discuss with them.



The panel conducting the interview should prepare by:

- Ensuring that you have a suitable location for the interview – somewhere quiet where you will not be interrupted
- Making sure that the volunteer is clear on where the interview will take place and who they will be meeting
- Considering the layout of the interview space – try and make it friendly and informal
- Gathering the role descriptions for which volunteers are needed; this makes it easier to offer alternative options to someone who may not be suitable for the specific role they are applying for
- Having a list of questions or topics that you would like to discuss with the volunteer (these may be specific to certain volunteer roles and can be based on the role description)
- Ensuring that any questions you may ask are open-ended (i.e.. that require a detailed response as opposed to 'yes' or 'no') and use simple wording
- Having any additional material to hand that you may need (such as forms or policies)

🕒 **Conducting the interview**

You can choose to meet the prospective volunteer on a one-to-one basis or with another person – this will be determined by the make-up of the 'panel' that created the role criteria and conducted the shortlisting exercise. If there are multiple people involved in the interview, assign specific questions to each person so that the interview runs smoothly and competently. Interviews should also take into consideration any communication needs of the volunteer – for example, volunteers with a learning disability may have difficulty maintaining concentration. Try to keep the interview reasonably short while covering all the points you want to cover and giving the applicant an opportunity to speak and ask questions.

Although the interview should be informal, it does need to have some structure. There will be specific information that you need to provide about the organisation and volunteer role, and information that you will require from the volunteer.

Tips for conducting a good interview are:

- Start by explaining the purpose of the interview, to put the person at their ease
- Have a list of the information you want to give the volunteer, and what you want from them, but don't let it stifle natural conversation. You might want to tell them about:
 - The aims of the organisation, the benefits it delivers for participants and the wider community and the vital role of volunteers
 - The role description for the volunteer
 - How they will be supported
 - Your expectations regarding equal opportunities, health and safety and other volunteer conduct
 - Any financial compensations they will receive for expenses
- What benefits they might get from joining your organisation, such as uniforms/tee-shirts, social events, training, travel with the teams, volunteer reward schemes
- Give them real-life scenarios about the kind of problems which volunteers have to solve and ask them what they would do
- Don't forget that you also want to find out about their level of motivation, whether they really understand what volunteering is about, if they really have the time, and whether they will prove to be reliable
- Provide space for the volunteer to talk about themselves and ask questions
- Ensure both parties know what the next step in the process is and when it will take place

It's good practice to keep a record of your questions and the potential volunteer's responses.

🕒 **Potential interview outcomes**

The interview may close by making an offer of a volunteer role or explaining that a decision has been made not to make an offer at this time. If an offer of a role is made, you may wish to give the volunteer time to consider whether they still want to volunteer for the organisation. Agree a date by which they will confirm their decision. You may also want to provide information on what the next steps would be should they accept the role. You may also wish to negotiate with the prospective volunteer, for example, if they have skills your organisation requires, but are not able to commit as much time as you would like. Ideally, try and agree a suitable compromise that suits both party's needs.

If a decision is not made during the interview, the potential volunteer should be told how and when they will be notified of the outcome. If the applicant is not offered a role, let them know why, as this will help them think about whether they really want to do this type of work. This should always be done sensitively.

Possible reasons for rejecting volunteers include:

- There is no suitable role
- The volunteer has expectations that the organisation cannot meet
- The volunteer's values substantially differ from the organisation's values
- The volunteer refuses or is unable to comply with the organisation's requirements (references, training commitments, etc)



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VOLUNTEER

V4V PARTNERSHIP:



Coordinator



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