



Skills acquired through  
Volunteering in Sport

# LEARNING RESOURCES

## /// **PILLAR 3: VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION**

### **SUB-PILLAR 3.5** **Coordinating volunteers and managing turnover**



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



## /// Sub-Pillar 3.5

# Coordinating volunteers and managing turnover

### a/ DESCRIPTION

Regardless of whether the size of your organisation, it is necessary for at least one person to be responsible for the ongoing coordination of the volunteer workforce. In addition, volunteers' engagement in sport organisations is always life-limited, so it is operationally critical to plan for succession. This section therefore includes some practical management resources to help you to coordinate and manage your volunteers. This includes tools to help you respond to volunteer resignations by mapping the gaps they will leave and identifying and supporting their successors.

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

The Global Survey results show that 60% of sport organisations find managing volunteers either difficult or very difficult.

The main difficulties sport organisations identify are:

- Volunteers not available when we need them (82%)
- Volunteers do not have the same motivation as paid staff (25%)
- Volunteers are not as reliable as paid staff (22%)
- Volunteers do not have the same skills as paid staff (21.3%).



When you are thinking about the best ways of coordinating your volunteers, there are some important lessons, for example:

- Plan well ahead and give your volunteers early information about when they will be needed
- Reinforce your volunteers' motivation by giving them positive and constructive feedback
- Plan how you allocate responsibilities to your volunteers so that they match their availability
- Plan their work and put them together with more experienced people so that they get the chance to learn new skills.

When it comes to volunteer retention:

- 71% of the Global Survey respondents reported a lot or some difficulties retaining volunteers.

The main reasons for retention difficulties were reported as:

- Time constraints (77%)
- Changes in personal circumstances (56%)
- Volunteers do not feel the long-term benefits of volunteering (31%)
- Volunteers do not feel their contributions are recognised and celebrated (31%).

These findings reinforce the importance of being flexible in matching volunteering opportunities to the individual needs of your volunteers and of recognising and celebrating their achievements.



## >> CONTENT AREA 1 : IMPLEMENTING APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS FOR EACH VOLUNTEER

Once volunteers are recruited and onboard, it is essential to implement an appropriate supervision arrangement for each volunteer. By doing this, you can make sure that you build a comfortable and supportive environment for them. It also gives the organisation a way of monitoring the volunteer to ensure that they are operating safely. You should aim to provide the right level of supervision and support to your volunteers throughout the time they are volunteering. This can depend upon the demands of their role, what you can offer, and what is best for both you and the volunteer.

### 🕒 Why is supervision important to volunteers?

- To ensure that volunteers understand what is expected from them
- To get feedback for their involvement and contribution
- To identify areas for improvement for their future involvement
- To ensure that they feel properly supported and that their work is appreciated and important.

### 🕒 Why is supervision important for organisations?

- To track the amount of time the volunteers are spending in their role and to ensure that this is manageable
- To understand how the role and the demands are perceived by the volunteers. This will help to identify potential risks, particularly in relation to emotional burden and to safeguarding
- To establish a clear understanding of the tasks and issues involved in the volunteer role
- To identify volunteers needs, for example additional training or guidance
- To identify potential issues or problems that need to be addressed.

### Implementing supervision arrangements

It is important to inform the volunteers about how they will be supervised and supported. Some volunteers may see support or supervision meetings as a distraction from the reason they wanted to volunteer in the first place. You should aim to make sure they understand it is for them to feedback about the organisation, others in the team and their role, and to ensure that the organisation is supporting them appropriately. Ideally hold supervision sessions at convenient times that fit within their usual volunteering pattern to reduce placing additional burdens on the volunteer.

### 🕒 How can you supervise the volunteers?

- Directly observing their work
- Asking for feedback from those responsible of the volunteers' management
- Asking for feedback from other volunteers
- Creating buddying systems (either alongside other volunteers or a paid member of staff) – these have the advantage of making sure there are two people present in any situation
- Volunteer meetings where peer support and discussion is encouraged
- Formal supervision meetings which allow for a regular one to one discussion following a set agenda
- Less formal, but regular meetings (including by online channels) that have the same purpose.

### 🕒 Some key questions to ask:

- What has gone well or what do you like about what you did?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What support do you need from me or others?
- Have you got any concerns about others you want to share?

The volunteer should receive clear direction from you and your management committee or trustees, feedback on their work, support and advice, and if needed an opportunity to vent, fret, and question both their own actions and other's actions. The supervision activities should you ensure that you have a clearer understanding of the tasks and issues involved in the volunteer role, and the volunteer's perception of how things are going and any additional needs they have. They can also be a useful way of gaining views and ideas from the volunteer about the organisation as a whole.

### Providing feedback to volunteers

This is discussed in more detail in the previous sub-pillar [add link to pillar 3 sub pillar 4], but it worth considering briefly here too. There are different ways that you can provide feedback to volunteers through supervisory activities:

- Create a feedback form with ranked scales that will enable you to rank the work of the volunteer. If you are using one, this can be presented to the volunteers before they start their mission. Over time, the form can be reviewed to monitor if the volunteers have made any progress in their activities. Be aware though, that volunteers may disagree with your rankings, so a scale such as this should be used to prompt a open discussion rather than be presented as final.
- You can use one-to-one meetings as part of an ongoing feedback model. These can be in a more formal, or in a less formal setting. These give volunteers the chance to have uninterrupted time to discuss their involvement, review their performance and identify any components that might affect their experience. Through one-to-one meetings, you can also get to know your volunteers on a more personal level.
- Direct supervisors or line-managers of volunteers should provide feedback as they are the most suitable people to assess their involvement and to identify ways to improve their overall experience.
- One-to-many meetings can also be a good mechanism for passing feedback to volunteers involved in the same task or project. This way they might get a better idea of the impact of their overall work. It can also be an opportunity to strengthen the bonds within the team by addressing issues that haven't been discussed in other settings. This also has the benefit of not singling out individual volunteers, so may be an appropriate way to bring up issues or areas for improvement that are relevant to multiple volunteers.

The key aspect of establishing supervisory arrangements for volunteers is that the volunteer is clear on these arrangements and their purpose. It is important that volunteers have a named individual within the organisation who is responsible for their supervision and whom they can approach with any issues or problems.

## >> CONTENT AREA 2 : DEPLOYING YOUR VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE TO ENSURE KEY TASKS ARE FULFILLED

You have hopefully recruited volunteers with the right skills, knowledge, and attributes by following some of the good practice guidelines outlined in pillar two [add link to pillar two]. Now that you have recruited your volunteers, you need to deploy them. The process of deployment involves allocating volunteers to specific roles and ensuring that you have enough volunteers to cover all the necessary aspects of those roles, activities, or tasks.

### ⌚ Before deploying your volunteer workforce, it is essential that you have considered:

- All the tasks and activities that need to be fulfilled by your volunteers. Individual tasks and activities can be grouped into more complex volunteer roles. It is important to make sure that these are clearly defined and time bound. Ideally, you should create volunteer role descriptors to ensure that the volunteer and the organisation is clear on the responsibilities and duties connected to each role.
- Your available volunteer workforce. This should include the number of volunteers available and the dates and times of their availability. It is also important to keep track of their skills and abilities.
- Which volunteers are suited for each role and would work well and complement each other. If there are tensions between certain volunteers it may be important to ensure that they are not asked to work together. Alternatively, you may wish to team certain volunteers up because they work effectively together.

Once you have considered the points above, you should be able to match your volunteer needs with the available volunteer workforce.

### ⌚ Other considerations to bear in mind:

- Make sure that the availability of the volunteers hasn't changed since you were last in contact with them
- Send (and if necessary, re-send) the role description to the volunteer to prevent discrepancies and clarify expectations
- Give volunteers some time to get acquainted with the rest of the team before starting their volunteer tasks
- If necessary, provide training to volunteers to make sure that they get used to the technicalities of the roles
- If you work with big groups of volunteers identify team leaders who can improve the overall communication flows and act as contact points for volunteers.

### ⌚ Whilst tasks and activities are being completed, it is also important to:

- Keep an evidence of all tasks and follow their completion status.
- Check in regularly with volunteers to ensure that they are still happy in that role and have everything they need to undertake it. This applies equally to short-term and long-term volunteers.
- Use team leaders or nominated volunteers to feedback on the completion of key tasks or update on progress. If needed, you can then make tweaks to volunteer deployment if additional support is required etc.
- If tasks are completed earlier than expected, consider reallocating volunteers, or finishing their missions earlier.
- Try to create fellowship within the volunteer groups.
- Reward volunteers when tasks are completed (you can find ideas of how to do this in the previous sub-pillar)







## >> CONTENT AREA 3: IDENTIFYING AND PLANNING FOR GAPS LEFT BY VOLUNTEER RESIGNATIONS

Although most volunteers are very committed, at some stage it is likely that your organisation may need to replace volunteers. This could be due to a change in the circumstances of that volunteer or because their time at your sport organisation has naturally come to an end. There may be some circumstances where volunteers leave because they are not happy volunteering within the organisation.

The first step to dealing with volunteer turnover and attrition is to understand why volunteers leave or reduce their involvement. There could be many reasons, such as personal or professional changes, burnout, dissatisfaction, lack of recognition, or mismatch of expectations. In these cases, it is important to find out and assess whether the organisation could have done anything to prevent this from happening. This gives you an opportunity to see if the situation can be remedied or/and to ensure that it doesn't occur again in the future.

### 🔗 Therefore, when a volunteer quits, it is important to:

- Ask for feedback – try to understand why they have decided to make this decision
- Explore options – will they be available to help in the future, or they don't want to volunteer ever again for your organisation
- Show them praise and thank them for the contribution they have made. You want the volunteer to leave on good terms
- You may also wish to ask them to recommend replacements or for ideas on how you could recruit new volunteers with the right skills, knowledge and attributes to replace them.

### **Planning for volunteer succession**

You may also wish to plan ahead and put processes in place that help the organisation to minimise the disruption that a volunteer leaving may cause. Succession planning is planning for when a person who currently holds a key position or important skills moves on or is no longer available. Succession planning is also about retaining current volunteers as well as engaging new volunteers. By taking a few extra steps, you just might keep some of your best volunteers from leaving in the first place. In addition, by cultivating your volunteers and building up your relationship, you can help ensure that they have nothing but good things to say about you and your work.

Creating succession plans doesn't mean making your key volunteers replaceable. Instead, it's a method you can use to make the volunteer experience more enjoyable and more rewarding. At its core, it's about developing and retaining talent. A succession plan helps you nurture those volunteers so they can gain the skills and experiences they want. And it helps your seasoned volunteer's step back from positions they no longer enjoy. The result is a happy, nurturing relationship. that's critical to your organisation's success and reputation.





### 🕒 Steps you can take to support volunteer succession:

- Ensure that you recognise and reward your volunteers for the work they do – this helps to create a successful organisation culture, helping to retain existing volunteers and making your organisation a desirable place for other people to volunteer.
- Undertake a skills audit of volunteer needs regularly (ideally each year) to ensure you know exactly what type of volunteers you require.
- Build capacity within the organisation via the implementation of a training plan to ensure that there are multiple volunteers with the key skills, knowledge, qualifications and attributes needed for key roles. This can help you to redeploy volunteers to cover gaps or promote volunteers into more senior positions as needed, without leaving the organisation vulnerable should a key volunteer leave.
- To replace sudden resignations or no-shows, have a back-up list of volunteers that can come in and fill in on a temporary basis.
- If you suspect or have been told that a volunteer is likely to step-down, start looking for a suitable replacement as early as possible. This can involve looking inside the organisation, and externally. You may need to be proactive to identify and recruit a suitably skilled replacement.
- Have open conversations with volunteers about future organisational needs – some may volunteer to take on additional responsibilities and/or shadow others so that they understand what those roles require should they need to fill in or replace other volunteers. This involves identifying up and coming volunteers who are ready to step-up when needed.
- Build succession into volunteer roles – every few years check whether existing volunteers want to carry on, or would like to step-down, reduce their contribution, or change roles. This is about being proactive in how you manage your volunteers and can help to minimise disruption.

By implementing these steps, you can ensure that your organisation is not disadvantaged when a volunteer leaves. Instead their contributions to the organisation are celebrated, and their leaving is viewed positively as creating an opportunity for the development of other volunteers, or as a chance for the organisation to recruit new volunteers with additional skills who can contribute positively to the ongoing development of the organisation.



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## V4V PARTNERSHIP:



Coordinator



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

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