



GUIDE FOR MANAGING EVENT VOLUNTEERS

Good volunteers can be crucial to a successful event. These individuals take part purely because of their enthusiasm and commitment, and will be excellent ambassadors for your event.

Volunteers can provide valuable assistance throughout your event, from the pre-event planning and delivery stage, through to transportation, registration, ticketing, public information and media relations.

You can guarantee contractors, sponsors and participants alike will all come into contact with your volunteers.

Although your volunteers are likely to be hard-working and committed, it is nevertheless essential you provide them with training, just as you would any other member of staff. It is only when your volunteers have a clear idea of your aims and objectives for the event that they will be able to work together as a unit.

They are part of the team and should be valued as such.

Recruiting

In order to get the best and most suitable volunteers, you will need to demonstrate the appeal of your event. You should stress that being a volunteer will give them the opportunity to:

- make a contribution
- be part of an event
- gain useful experience and job satisfaction
- meet new people.

Requirements

While many positions for volunteers require little more than dedication and enthusiasm, others will need to be filled by those with specialist skills. It is important you specify these requirements to get the best volunteers for the roles needed.

You should:

- identify and outline the skills needed
- determine the different types of roles available
- stress the need for flexibility.

Duties

Working at events is hard work, whether as a volunteer or unpaid member of staff. You must ensure your volunteers are willing to work long days for a significant period of time.

In order to keep them contented in their jobs, you should:

- calculate the basic hours for which your volunteers will be needed
- identify the locations they will be required to work

- determine dates and times you will need them from and until – bearing in mind that this will be from before the opening day of the event until after closing
- state clearly what roles and responsibilities they will have
- inform your volunteers of all of this well in advance.

Training

Your volunteers will need to be well-trained to enable them to fulfil your expectations, and to be confident in their work. All volunteers should go through generic basic training, which outlines the aims, objectives, and ethos of the event, and you may need to provide some specialist training in particular areas:

- identify what training you will be providing
- decide how and when you will deliver it
- produce and distribute written training materials well in advance.

Providing for volunteers

You will need to give your volunteers something in return for their hard work.

Some things will be purely practical, such as uniforms so that they can be identified easily. You may also need to provide food and drink while they are on duty, bearing in mind that they may need to eat at different times during the day, and sometimes outside of usual catering outlet hours.

You may also want to consider giving your volunteers something ‘extra’ to show your appreciation. This could be something such as a small gift, or a certificate to quantify the training they have received and the experience they have gained:

- select and order a range of clothing, suitable for both male and female volunteers of varying ages and sizes
- decide how you wish to feed volunteers – e.g. a financial allowance, tokens
- decide on any extra gift you may wish to give
- make sure they are managed competently and are thanked/recognised for all their efforts before, during and after the event.

Criteria

If you’re advertising for volunteers, before you do so – identify the criteria you will use to choose your volunteers. You may wish to consider areas such as those listed below:

- a minimum age (this would usually be 16)
- possession of a driver’s licence (if driving would be a useful skill)
- understanding of the activity/service you are providing
- good communication skills.

Application procedure

To enable your volunteer recruitment to run smoothly, you should settle on your application procedure early. Outline the process to those applying for volunteer positions so they are aware of how their applications will be treated. Consider the following questions:

- where do they apply to and by when?
- will you take applications over the internet, or by email?
- will you acknowledge applications from everyone?

- when will the interviews take place and in what format?
- will you write to those who are unsuccessful?

Applicants should be made aware of, and systems should be implemented to deliver and collate all of this information.

In conclusion

The following factors should be central to your volunteers programme:

- respect for your volunteers
- clear communications with individual volunteers - before, during and after the event
- training schemes, where appropriate with a fair work schedule
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- the provision of food, drink and gifts, where appropriate
- the opportunity for individual volunteers to have a rewarding experience.