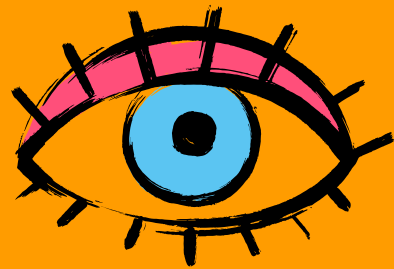


Volunteer Management

An introduction



Who is this guide for?



The introduction in Volunteer Management is intended for any organization that wants to use volunteers. It serves as an introduction in this area and aims to cover the main points of volunteer management. The introduction is structured as follows: After some general considerations, the topic of "recruiting volunteers" and "induction and supervision" is covered. Subsequently, the introduction is devoted to the administrative and legal issues that arise with the recruitment of volunteers. Lastly the workload and the remuneration of volunteers are discussed. The introduction concludes with a general section on other topics.

General considerations about volunteering

There are several reasons why people search for volunteer work: They want to pursue a meaningful activity, they enjoy the work to be done, and/or they want to belong to a community (especially foreign volunteers who are looking for connection). The volunteer organization must be able to meet the expectations and offer the reasons why volunteers want to do the volunteer work. Otherwise, it is necessary to refer to another organization.

Broadly speaking, volunteers can be divided into two categories:

1. the first group are the people who want to work and prefer to be assigned work (e.g. packing envelopes)
2. the second group would like to be involved and plan their own events (e.g. create their own event).
- 3.

In addition, it is important to clarify whether the volunteers want to acquire new skills in their volunteer work or whether they would rather contribute their own skills.

It is important that the organization considers which category of volunteers it is looking for and in which outreach areas it would like to use the volunteers. This should be communicated openly.

Fields of volunteer work

Possible fields of assignment are as follows: Working in the office, event organization and assistance, selective assistance, short assignments online, specialist collaboration, nature conservation assignments, etc.

The activity should not exceed the competence and skills of the volunteer. In addition, in the case of dangerous activities, volunteer work should be avoided and the cooperation should take place with paid and appropriately trained and insured professionals.

After the organization has defined the type of activity for which it is seeking volunteers, it must clearly communicate this in the initial interview with the volunteer. If it becomes apparent that the volunteer is interested in other activities, careful consideration can be given to whether volunteers are needed in those areas. Otherwise, referrals to other organizations should be made.

Volunteers require effort

Hiring volunteers requires a great deal of time and administrative effort on the part of an organization. Therefore, an organization should carefully assess whether it is capable of making this effort. This is because poorly managed volunteer work results in a greater expense than if the work is done by the organization itself.

Recruitment of volunteers

It is advisable to first develop a profile of requirements and tasks. This should define, among other things, the activity for which volunteers are being sought, the scope and time requirements of the volunteer work, and the skills and competencies they should bring with them.

A person responsible for the volunteers must also be named.

It is also advantageous if the roles are clearly defined between the paid and volunteer staff. In this way, potential conflicts can be avoided from the outset.

Once the profiles have been defined, a written job description can be composed. Typically, this will include the name of the volunteer organization; the project and type of work; the objectives, scope and duration of

the assignment; the expectations and competencies that the volunteers should have; and the benefits that the volunteers will derive from their involvement. (this could possibly be presented more elegantly as a bulleted list).

The job posting can be published online or spread by word of mouth. If the organization has an own website or social media, it can be published there as well. In addition, there are also larger platforms on which the job advertisements can be placed (e.g.: www.benevol-jobs.ch). Some cantons also have a specialized office for volunteers, which can be used to search for volunteers.

Training and supervision of volunteers

It is important to introduce the volunteers to their work as well as to show them their tasks and the available infrastructure and resources. The principles and mission statements of the organization should be illustrated to them. They must get to know their assignment location and the team. In addition, they are informed about possible offers for volunteers (exchange, further training opportunities, etc.) and communication channels (e.g.: in case of complaints or questions). A probationary period can also be agreed upon, during which both the volunteers and the organization can find out whether the cooperation is a good fit.

Administrative Questions

How to conduct an initial interview

In an initial interview, it is important to get to know the volunteer's motivation as well as mutual expectations. The organization should clearly communicate what the volunteers will get from the organization (knowledge, expand network, etc.), but also that volunteering will not lead to a permanent position in the organization.

Broadly speaking, the following points should be addressed: Mutual introduction, introduction of the organization, discuss possibilities of employment, interest and motivation of the volunteer, general conditions and the further procedure. If the activity requires special knowledge, it is important to clarify whether the person has this knowledge. The time budget must also

be discussed. In addition, if possible, the competencies and ideas of the volunteer should be addressed.

In [the checklist](#) for the initial interview you will find points that can be discussed in an initial interview.

Outreach agreement

Once you have mutually agreed that you would like to work together (usually after a trial period), it is recommended that you both sign a written volunteer agreement. This should define the expectations and commitments between the volunteer and the organization. The assignment agreement should include the following: The volunteer's personal details; their task; the start, duration and scope of the assignment; the volunteer's rights and obligations (expense allowance, insurance, confidentiality, etc.); the person responsible for them in the organization; the name of the organization, the date and both signatures.

It is advisable to revisit the volunteer agreement after a certain period of time and make any necessary changes.

You can find a template of how volunteer agreement can look like [here](#). The individual points must be adapted to your organization.

Active exchange with volunteers

A constant communication and a lively exchange with the volunteers is important. This also includes regular meetings to discuss the current situation. In these meetings, the tasks can be discussed, but also the work situation of the volunteers can be addressed and possible problems and suggestions for improvement can be addressed.

Compensation for expenses

Expenses should be reimbursed. This includes telephone costs, printing costs or other expenses. Depending on the situation, travel expenses (gasoline, electricity or train ticket) may also be covered.

Expenses can either be reimbursed with a voucher, i.e. according to actual costs, or as a lump sum according to expenditure. For the lump-sum reimbursement of expenses, either an expense regulation, which must be approved by the canton, must be drawn up, or the assignment organization must be a member of Benevol.

Work certificates or confirmations

It is not necessary and it is not common practice to issue a work certificate and would usually exceed the resources of small organizations. However, a confirmation should be issued, in which the achievements and competences of the volunteer are listed and in which he/she is thanked.

Legal issues

Contract with volunteers

Volunteer falls under contract law. There is no need to have a written contract. Verbal consent is sufficient, but a written volunteer agreement is still recommended. Contract law provides that the termination of the contract is possible at any time, by the volunteer or the organization. However, at inopportune times (e.g.: shortly before an event), termination of the contract is not possible.

If the volunteer withdraws at an untimely moment, he/she is obliged to pay for the damage caused by his/her withdrawal.



Insurance

In principle, volunteers should be covered by means of liability insurance and accident insurance.

Liability insurance:

During the activity that volunteers perform for the organization, the organization is liable for the possible damages. Therefore, volunteers should be included in the company's existing liability insurance.

Accident insurance:

Accident insurance coverage must be clarified with volunteers. In principle, accident insurance is mandatory for everyone in Switzerland. Either through the employer (from a workload of 8h/week) or through the mandatory private health insurance. However, to be on the safe side, it is always advisable to clarify this before starting the volunteer work.

Business travel insurance:

If the volunteers travel a lot by private vehicle for their voluntary work, it can be useful to take out a business travel insurance policy. This insurance covers the costs for damage and theft of the vehicles.

Workload

Benevol recommends that volunteering should not exceed 20% of a workload. It often makes sense to extrapolate this percentage over a year. In this way, more than 20% can be worked at times (e.g.: before and during an event), and this can then be compensated for in quieter times.

Compensation and recognition

Volunteer work is not compensated, but volunteers are entitled to written recognition. This can depend greatly on the volunteer's commitment and duration. If possible, the recognition should be personal to the volunteer and not consist of general phrases. It should address the activity performed and highlight the competencies and skills of the volunteer.

Recognition can also include inviting volunteers to the organization's annual dinner or allowing them to participate in networking events and webinars free of charge.

It is also important to show volunteers throughout the duration of their assignment how important their efforts are to the organization and how much this is valued.

Other topics

Dealing with conflicts

Conflicts with volunteers are rare. If conflicts do arise, they should be addressed as early as possible. If the cooperation no longer works, it is better to end it sooner than later.

It is worthwhile to encourage cooperation between permanent employees and volunteers, because conflicts can always arise here.

If the expectations of the volunteers are clarified from the beginning, disappointments and false expectations can be avoided and thus many conflicts can be bypassed in advance.

Monitoring of volunteer work

Volunteer work should be recorded. This is important for recognition on the one hand, but also to see in which areas the cooperation with volunteers is successful, what worked well and what worked less well. This will allow changes and improvement to be made.

Among other things, the following can be recorded: Activities that volunteers performed; the enjoyment they got from the different activities; the amount of time volunteers needed to perform a certain activity; and the effort incurred for the organization.

If there are only a few volunteers involved, the organization can estimate the approximate time spent by asking them individually. Otherwise, it is worthwhile to ask the volunteers how great their effort was and to roughly estimate the rest.

Volunteer Charter

Depending on the size of the organization, it is advantageous to draw up a "Volunteer Work" charter. It should serve as a guideline and does not have to be long. The charter should cover the basic principles of volunteering as well as the basic commitments of the organization and the volunteers. As an example you can have a look at the volunteer charter of WWF Switzerland [here](#).

Sources



Dépliants sur la gestion des volontaires de Benevol: <https://www.benevol.ch/de/merkblaetter.html>

Manuel sur la gestion des bénévoles de la ville de Zurich: https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/sd/de/index/stadtleben/engagement/freiwilligenarbeit/handbuch_fwa.html

Toolkit de gestion des volontaires de la Croix-Rouge: <https://www.toolkit-freiwilligenarbeit.ch/freiwilligenmanagement>



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