

# VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

Getting enough of the right people in the right roles is one of the biggest challenges of working with volunteers. This factsheet is designed to help you think through volunteer recruitment and selection processes to help you find the right people for your work in three easy steps.

## Step 1: Plan your volunteers

Before you recruit new volunteers make sure you:

- **Develop a clear role description** to cover what the volunteer will be doing.
- **Communicate with existing staff** within the organisation about what the volunteer will be doing. Ensure that staff have a good understanding of what volunteering is and why you want to use volunteers.
- Draw up a **volunteering policy** for your organisation. This should cover: your volunteer recruitment processes, expenses policy, complaints and grievance procedures, insurance details, health and safety and risk assessment information, training and supervision arrangements and may incorporate a **volunteer agreement**. A volunteer agreement is a description of the arrangement between the individual and the organisation. It informs both parties of the mutual expectations and arrangements. It is NOT a legally binding document (and should state this).

Having these things in place before you recruit volunteers will ensure all parties understand what is expected of them, demonstrates a fair, transparent recruitment and selection process, and shows that you value volunteers.

## Step 2: Recruitment

There are a number of ways of getting the message out to the general public when looking for volunteers. Whichever method you opt for you need to ensure a clear and concise message. Try to do the following:

- State what the role is, in clear language that is easy to understand.
- State how the volunteer role contributes to the overall aim of the project/ how the volunteer will make a difference.

- Consider the motivations of volunteers, e.g. gaining new skills, meeting people, getting work experience.
- Include the practicalities: when/ where will it take place, who to contact for more information, and whether training will be provided etc.

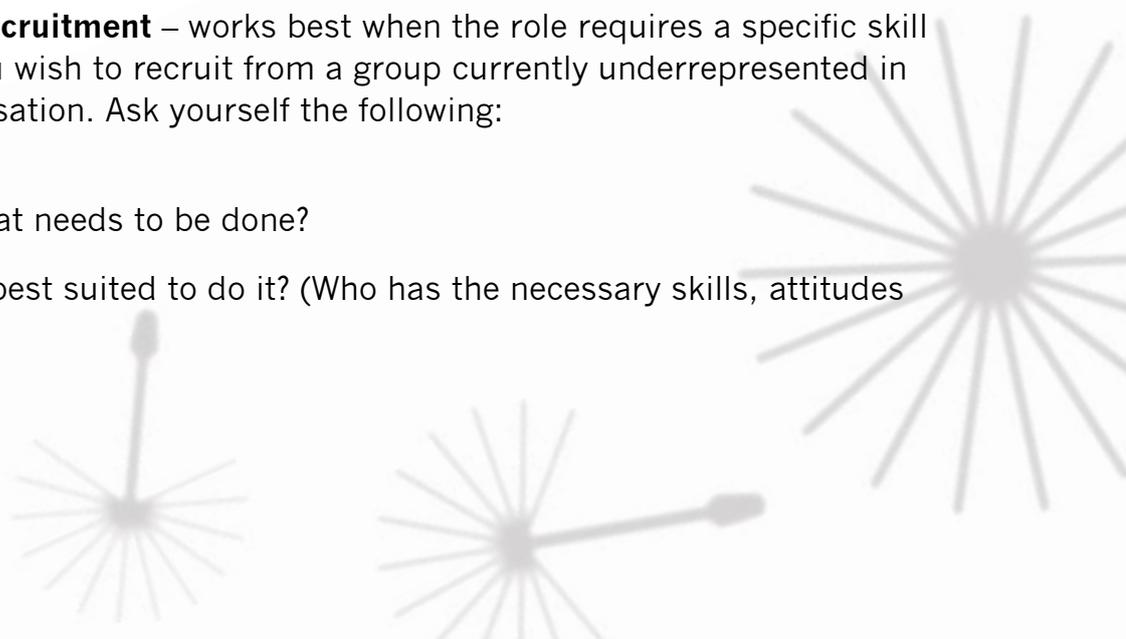
Different types of recruitment techniques:

**a) 'Warm body' recruitment** – when recruiting for roles that apply to most people (because no specific skills are required or because most people can be taught the skills). Methods of 'warm body' recruitment might include:

- **Leaflets/posters** – distributed in libraries, Job Centres, colleges, youth and community centres or even the local supermarket
- **Local media** – place an ad in a newspaper, radio or circulate an advert through community newsletters and email bulletins. Be aware that you may have to pay for adverts in the press, so this cost will have to be considered when you plan your recruitment.
- **Talks, presentations and events** – keep presentations lively or use an interactive method. Perhaps one of your existing volunteers could be trained to deliver presentations or could look after information stands at events. Your existing volunteers are great advocates for your organisation. Be ready to sign people up straight away and follow up any interest quickly. Make a point of specifically asking people to volunteer for your organisation. National *Volunteers' Week* is 1st-7th June every year. This is a great time to get involved in local events and promote your volunteering opportunities.
- **Your local Volunteer Centre or brokerage** – Register with them and they will be able to upload your volunteering opportunities on to the national volunteering database, called '**Do-it**'.

**b) Targeted recruitment** – works best when the role requires a specific skill or when you wish to recruit from a group currently underrepresented in your organisation. Ask yourself the following:

- **What** is the job that needs to be done?
- **Who** would be best suited to do it? (Who has the necessary skills, attitudes or potential?)



- **Why** would they want to get involved? (What is their motivation – e.g. self-help, socialising, career development)
- **Where** can you reach them? (e.g. where might this person work, live, worship, play, shop, spend their leisure time?)
- **How** will you communicate with them? (e.g. posters, classified ads, presentations)

You could start by identifying the common factors amongst the volunteers currently doing the role to show you the kind of person who can do the job. Relevant factors may include background or occupation.

- c) **Network or ‘concentric circles’ recruitment** – a cost-effective method using word-of-mouth but in a more proactive way. It focuses on those people already connected to your organisation. For example, who do your volunteers know outside of their voluntary work? Could you use those links to bring in more volunteers? – for instance, maybe one of your volunteers could put up posters in their place of work. One pitfall of this method is that like attracts like and is unlikely to bring you a diverse group of volunteers.
- d) **Recruiting for diversity** – for many organisations is it important that their staff and volunteer base reflects the demographics of the community that they work within. There are a great many benefits of having a diverse range of volunteers who bring different skills and experiences to your organisation. By using a variety of recruitment methods and accessible marketing material, your volunteer role will appeal to a wider variety of people. You could also consider using positive action initiatives or targeted recruitment to diversify your volunteer base.

## Step 3: Selection

Selecting volunteers is about finding a good match between the volunteer and the opportunity that is on offer. There are a number of selection procedures that are commonly used by organisations involving volunteers. It is important that the procedure you use will reflect the role that the volunteer will do and the culture/ work of the organisation. For instance, volunteers with a higher degree of responsibility can expect to go through a more detailed selection process.

- **Application forms** – keep them simple, only ask questions that are relevant, and state what you will do with the information provided and how you will use it.
- **Face-to-face meetings** – (e.g. informal chats or more formal interviews). This gives you the opportunity to tell the potential volunteer more about the role, the organisation and to answer any questions they have. It's also an opportunity to ask them a few questions to gauge their suitability for the role. Face-to-face meetings are as much about the volunteer finding out about you, as they are about you finding out about them.
- **References** – it is best practice to ask for at least two references. Send the referee information about the role and ask about things like the reliability and suitability of the candidate for your role.
- **Disclosure and Barring Service check** – for volunteer roles that involve regular contact with children or vulnerable adults (e.g. those with mental health problems, the elderly, or people with learning disabilities), a volunteer screening process and a DBS check may be required.

If at any stage of the selection process you decide that a volunteer is not suitable for your opportunity you should inform them at the earliest opportunity and give them clear reasons.



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