

Theme 2 Working with volunteers

Volunteers, like everyone, can face barriers to taking part. This section has ideas for working with volunteers to create a supportive and mutually beneficial experience.

2.1 Addressing barriers to volunteering

This tool shares tips on addressing barriers and supporting volunteers.

Case Study

Barriers to volunteering opportunities

As part of Doors Open Days (Scotland) in 2019 we worked with partner organisations to offer guided tours of Glasgow City Chambers in Farsi (Persian). We chose this after consultation with refugee groups in Glasgow. We had to change some of our usual practices to address barriers.



مراكز دولتي (چمبرز)
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Firstly, we commissioned the translation of the English-language tour script into Farsi and paid in cash, rather than by electronic bank transfer. Many refugees in the UK do not have bank accounts.

We recruited 3 volunteers through the Scottish Refugee Council.

We made posters in Farsi to advertise the volunteer opportunities, as well as the tours. We immediately reimbursed volunteers in cash for all-day bus fare (agreed upon in advance) whenever they attended meetings, training, or were scheduled to deliver a tour.

We had an interpreter present at training sessions and tours so that volunteers could communicate clearly with English-speaking staff at The City Chambers.

We had to be flexible and adapt to changes. One volunteer received a government-issued change of housing notice only 2 days before he was scheduled to deliver a tour and could no longer participate. The tour was delivered by another volunteer.

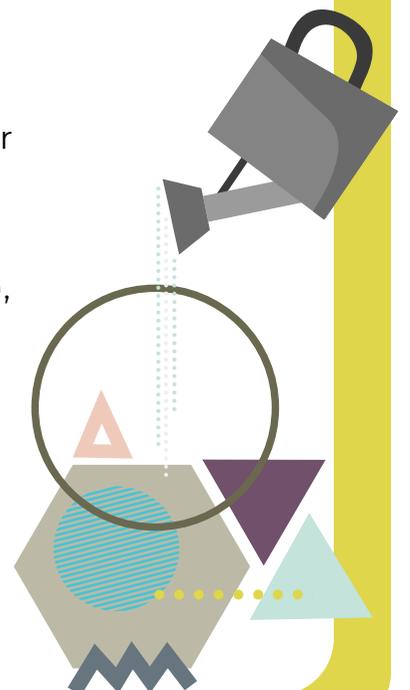
Volunteers were each provided with letters of reference after the project to use when applying for other volunteer positions, education, or paid work.

Tips

Supporting and Valuing Volunteers

- It is important to have a dedicated volunteer support person in the organisation or have it as a clear part of someone's role who has time and capacity to dedicate to working meaningfully with volunteers. Volunteers may have support needs in terms of encouragement, capacity, and ability, and flexible support can be needed to address barriers and include everyone. Let them know who they can talk to, when and how!
- Budget to cover expenses (transport) and refreshments. If you aren't paying volunteers for their time, they should not have to cover out of pocket costs to carry out their duties.
- Consider the range of roles available, and be flexible with the time allotted against each volunteer – some have more time to give due to circumstance.
- Always share background information to the event or activity. This could be through a volunteer pack, an induction session, a video.
- Peer to peer support in pairs or small groups can help volunteers engage. To set it up you can match volunteers, explain how peer support can work and give prompts.
- Can volunteers have a say in choices affecting them? How will you include volunteer voices?
- Always recognise the contribution volunteers make to your events. This can be done in different ways such as presenting a certificate, giving a leaving gift (like tickets to a heritage site), or holding a session that thanks all volunteers.

Glasgow Doors Open Days holds an annual event in the Glasgow City Chambers that celebrates the volunteer contribution to the festival, including awards for venue volunteers.



2.2 Setting goals with new volunteers

Tools for recruiting volunteers and working together to agree goals and expectations.



Tips

Recruiting Volunteers

Volunteering is a relationship between the organisation and the individual person where each benefits from the other's info, expertise, support and input through sharing time, skills, information.

Consider linking with volunteer organisations (like Scottish Council for Voluntary Councils) which support volunteering as their main output – they might be able to recruit people or share template policies.

- Recruitment. Consider barriers people might face in all stages of recruitment. Is it online, paper, do we hold an interview, one to one or in a group? Do we ask for references? Think about alternative formats to make it accessible.
- Treat all info privately and keep contact details safe, as with employees.
- To include volunteers in the organisation, consider simple things such as introducing them to all the staff and their roles and explaining what else the organisation does.
- Make sure that volunteers are not expected to take over employees' day to day tasks, such as answering phones and dealing with general enquiries.

Tips

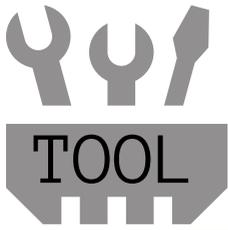
Getting In Touch



Identify a partner that can help introduce you to groups. Some organisations will already have good connections with groups you want to reach.

Ask them for an introduction.

- Communicate clearly: Using shorter sentences and paragraphs, and clear language without idioms makes a text more readable for everyone.
- Be warm and respectful.
- Share all the information they'll need, briefly. This will usually include what, when, where, why and how! If you don't it will take longer to get started.
- Ask what they need. A great starting point for working with new people is to non-judgmentally try to understand their context better. What do they need from heritage events? What support do they need to plan an event?
- Offer what you have. Think about why working together on a project or event would benefit the group or person. Are there any resources or opportunities you could share which might be of value to them? Could you help address any barriers to taking part?
- Be clear about what you can't do. Share any relevant limits on what you can do – for example if you would need a group to organise translation.



Volunteer Agreements



When volunteers start, it's important to share key info and set goals and expectations.

Depending on the context, you might have conversations with every volunteer or use a volunteer agreement which people sign once they come on board.

It could include:

- ✓ • What can volunteers expect? Share what it will involve, why, when, how and where.
- ✓ • What kinds of work will they do? You might include a few options, and ask potential volunteers to circle the tasks they're able to do (website, press, evaluation, etc.).
- ✓ • How should they behave? Share your conduct agreement or code of behaviour. If you don't have a conduct agreement, think about how everyone needs to behave—treating others with respect and without discrimination will be a key point!
- ✓ • What will they get out of the experience? It should be clear what the working relationship will be, and why it might be beneficial or enjoyable.
- ✓ • How can they claim expenses, such as travel costs? Some people may not have bank accounts, so it can be important to have the option to reimburse costs in cash.
- ✓ • Also remember to ask new or potential volunteers about their access needs, so you can work with them to address any barriers which affect them.

You could ask about the volunteer's goals or what they want to get out of the experience, as well as how you could support them to get there.

