



Top 10 Volunteer Essentials

Whether you are creating a volunteering programme from scratch or updating an existing one, there are some essentials that you need to think about and put in place before you start to recruit people.

Here are the 10 essentials you need to cover, with hints and tips from our Members;

1) Get the support of your board, staff and service-users

Make sure that they understand the importance of setting aside time, resources and money, and what your volunteers will get back in return. If your other volunteers, trustee or staff aren't on board with taking on new volunteers, then the volunteers won't feel welcome or part of the team.

“At Opening Doors London, we understand that our relationship with all our volunteers is mutually beneficial and we bring that understanding to all aspects of our volunteering relationships.” [Opening Doors London](#)

2) Don't forget diversity

Just because we work in the LGBT sector doesn't mean we automatically address diversity. Make sure that equality and diversity are included in all the stages below.

3) Define clear roles

Whether you choose to have written role descriptions for each volunteer or a more adopt a more general approach, it is important to plan in advance what volunteers will be doing. If your volunteers don't have a clear understand of their roles, or the purpose of their duties, they won't stick around.

“Developing volunteers: making sure they are trained for the roles they do but also involving them in further training both relevant and for personal development. Volunteer mentors to encourage new volunteers and ensuring they have the skills to lead them into similar paid roles where possible”

[Birmingham LGBT](#)

4) Money matters – budgeting and insurance

Volunteering is not free; make sure you have a budget for it. Also consider the Insurance implications – Speak to your insurance company and ask what the implications are of involving volunteers.

Volunteers can be covered under public liability and/or employers' liability insurance. If volunteers are giving advice, they may also need to be covered by professional indemnity insurance. Check out our insurance partners [here](#).

5) Recruit your volunteers

You don't have to do this from scratch; a number of organisations can help you to recruit. Contact your local Volunteer Centre, universities and colleges' careers and volunteer centres, and don't forget that we can help through advertising your opportunities and through our Trustee Brokerage.

"People volunteer for a whole host of reasons: to give something back; to feel needed; to gain status when they might not have it elsewhere in their lives; for CV building or to find a home/community. It is therefore important that you decide how many of these you want to appeal to and set up your recruitment messages and *retention plans to match with these.*"

The Proud Trust

6) Induction and training

An induction doesn't have to be complicated or too time-consuming, but it is essential. Different volunteers need different levels of training, depending on a) the role they are carrying out and b) their existing skills and experience.

7) Support

Whilst it is important that volunteers feel supported in their roles, this does not have to involve endless appraisals, one-to-ones or forms to complete, just regularly check in with volunteers over a cup of tea too!

"Retaining volunteers is all about communication and support. Ensuring that your organisation keeps in touch with volunteers and asks that they are doing ok. This not only keeps your organisation in the loop, but gives an opportunity to develop that person."

[TAG Support CIC](#)

8) Practical Matters

Don't forget about the practicalities which will need to be addressed when recruiting new volunteers or setting up a volunteering programme:

- Where will the volunteer(s) work?
- What about keys/security?
- Do they need a separate log-in for your IT systems? One each, or would a general 'volunteer' profile be best?
- What equipment do they need?
- Accessibility issues.

- DBS checks, if they'll be working with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- Does your insurance cover volunteer and their work.
- Do you have the skills to support and develop them?
- Do you have the relevant policies in place?

"Managing volunteers is about getting to know them, finding out what they want to do and making sure they have the information, training and opportunity to do it well"

Totnes Pride

9) Involvement

If volunteers are involved in your organisation on more levels than just their immediate role, they will get more from their experience with you, be more likely to stay, and crucially help you to run the volunteering programme.

"In all our dealings with volunteers we aim to support each individual through our professionalism, a firm commitment to meeting their professional and personal needs and engendering a culture that fosters and rewards mutual respect. This enriches the volunteering experience, leads to high retention rates and a satisfying and stable volunteering environment." [Opening Doors London](#)

10) Recognition

Happy, fulfilled volunteers will stay longer, do better, and help you more. You don't need to put on lavish events to show volunteers your appreciation – simple steps, like celebrating volunteers' birthdays, or recognising great work and dedication in mails out can be nice.

Have a think about a small celebration or awards ceremony once a year (whilst still appreciating them the other 364 days of the year!).

" At Proud2Be, we feel it is really important to ensure that all of our volunteers feel valued and included. We do this by providing regular training, asking for feedback and having a volunteer celebration event once a year. We also try our best to offer a variety of different volunteer opportunities, so a diverse mix of people can take part depending on their skills, confidence and capacity" [Proud2Be](#)