



Let's talk..... Creating flexible volunteering opportunities

Creating flexible volunteering opportunities is essential to attract a diverse range of volunteers with varying schedules, skills, and interests. Here are some strategies for developing flexible volunteering opportunities:

What is flexible volunteering? Flexible volunteering is volunteering that allows for greater freedom with tasks and opportunities. That can change depending on availability, skills and circumstances; flexible volunteering moves away from fixed roles and time commitments.

Why is flexible volunteering increasing in importance? Increased awareness and demand for flexible volunteering opportunities is a natural consequence of Covid and communities organically rising up to address local need, the growth of social action volunteering in general, and the increased use of remote technologies and social media to support volunteering, charitable organisations and causes. Also, people are now used to other aspects of their lives being more flexible. For example, you can now do your weekly shop at 3am on a Wednesday morning. People have the option to choose what they do, when, in what order and how, building their own 'life menus'. This means that more people, but perhaps especially younger people, have similar expectations about volunteering.

What are the benefits? Flexible volunteering opportunities can increase the pool of potential volunteers, and also grow the pool of potential opportunities, as more formal or traditional roles that often-encompassed multiple tasks get broken down. More flexibility also means that the opportunity is more likely to 'fit' the volunteer better, this makes for happier volunteers and often leads to increased commitment from volunteers.

"Volunteers want to be able to volunteer on their own terms, this can be hard for organisations to understand and accommodate, but it is an important principle in creating opportunities that are valuable to new and existing volunteers. Think about how different work areas can be broken down into smaller roles and be flexible to the needs of the volunteer. This will give greater flexibility to both the volunteer and the organisation. It will open the doors to more diverse volunteers, who will stay for longer and tell others about volunteering with your organisation." NCVO Time Well Spent report Jan 19

Different aspects of flexible volunteering When thinking about how to make a volunteering opportunity more flexible, you may like to consider one of four different approaches:

Virtual Volunteering: Embrace virtual volunteering options that allow volunteers to contribute remotely. This can include tasks such as online research, graphic design, writing, or virtual mentorship.



Micro-Volunteering: Break down tasks into smaller, manageable units to accommodate volunteers with limited time. Micro-volunteering allows individuals to make a meaningful impact in short bursts, making it more accessible for those with busy schedules.

Task-Based Volunteering: Structure volunteering opportunities around specific tasks rather than long-term commitments. This allows volunteers to choose projects based on their skills, interests, and the time they can commit.

Flexible Time Commitments: Offer volunteering opportunities with a range of time commitments, such as one-time events, short-term projects, or ongoing roles. This flexibility allows volunteers to choose opportunities that align with their availability.

Project-Based Volunteering: Develop projects with well-defined goals and timelines. This approach enables volunteers to engage in short-term, focused initiatives, making it easier for them to contribute without a long-term commitment.

Skill-Based Matching: Implement a system that matches volunteers' skills with specific projects or tasks. This ensures that volunteers are working on projects that align with their expertise and interests.

Flexible Hours and Scheduling: Allow volunteers to choose when they work within broad timeframes. For example, if an organization has certain hours of operation, volunteers may have the flexibility to choose the specific hours within that timeframe.

Remote and In-Person Options: Provide a mix of remote and in-person volunteering opportunities. This caters to individuals who prefer the convenience of virtual volunteering and those who enjoy hands-on, in-person experiences.

Customisable Roles: Allow volunteers to customize their roles based on their skills, preferences, and the time they can commit. This personalized approach increases engagement and satisfaction.

Training and Onboarding Resources: Develop easily accessible training materials and onboarding resources that volunteers can access at their own pace. This allows them to get up to speed quickly and feel confident in their roles.

Clear Communication: Clearly communicate the flexibility of volunteering opportunities in recruitment materials and on your organization's website. Highlight the variety of roles available and emphasize that there is a place for everyone, regardless of their time constraints.

Feedback Mechanisms: Establish feedback mechanisms to understand volunteers' experiences and continuously improve flexibility in volunteering options. This can involve surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one conversations.



Recognition and Appreciation: Recognise and appreciate volunteers regularly, acknowledging the impact of their contributions. This fosters a positive relationship and encourages continued engagement.

By incorporating these strategies, organisations can create a more inclusive and adaptable volunteering framework that accommodates the diverse needs and preferences of potential volunteers.

Useful resources

Time Well Spent is NCVO's research programme focusing on volunteers and their experience. [Key findings from Time Well Spent 2023 | NCVO](#)

The Community Life Survey is a nationally representative annual survey of adults (16+) in England that aims to track the latest trends and developments across areas that are key to encouraging social action and empowering communities. [Community Life Survey 2021/22 - GOV.UK](#)