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Before you recruit

People who want to volunteer have a wide range of opportunities to choose from. They tend to choose the opportunity that offers the best 'fit' to their personal motivations and interests.

Before you recruit, think about how you can make your organisation appealing for potential volunteers. What are the benefits of volunteering for your organisation in particular? Ask yourself:

- **What do you do and how is it inspiring?**
  Feeling connected to a cause or your organisation's specific purpose can be a strong motivation.

- **What makes your group unique?**
  What would make a volunteer choose you rather than another organisation with a similar mission?

- **What development opportunities can you offer?**
  What is interesting, exciting or challenging about the roles that you can offer? How could your volunteering opportunity help someone develop professionally or gain experience? For example, could volunteers access training, develop management skills or work directly with your users?

- **How could being part of your organisation benefit a volunteer?**
  Some people volunteer to help build confidence, give life a bit of structure or because they want a sense of belonging. Others may be coming to it after a period of illness, isolation or caring for family members. Perhaps you can offer a friendly, supportive environment where volunteers feel part of a team.

Everyone is different, and reasons for volunteering will vary. Give some thought as to what sort of motivations might fit well with the opportunities you have. Some volunteers will relish a challenge, others may prefer something where they don't need to think too hard. Some volunteers want to learn or gain experience, others may have years of experience or professional skills and want to give something back.

Developing a volunteer role

It is a good idea to have clear volunteer role descriptions which set out what volunteers can expect to be doing and how you will support them to do it.   Use the **Volunteer Role Template** to help you draft new role descriptions.

Role descriptions for volunteers can be more flexible than those for paid staff. You may also sometimes be able to respond to what volunteers can offer and create a role for them, but it is still a good idea to set out the tasks clearly, and explain the support you will offer.

Clear role descriptions are key to volunteer recruitment, but they also help you to manage volunteers too. They can help keep volunteers focused, motivated and can help you address problems because the expectations have been made clear at the start.

Volunteering opportunities that are vague or unclear about what's expected can lead to recruitment difficulties and a high turnover of volunteers. Recruitment is more likely to succeed if opportunities look interesting, welcoming and rewarding.

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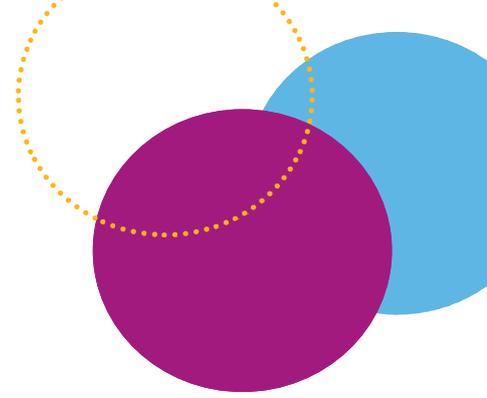
To get started, list all the tasks that volunteers could do within your organisation. You can then group these tasks in to roles, for example by grouping all the admin tasks or the customer-facing tasks.

The **Volunteer Role Template** has tips and hints to help you. Make sure you include:

- Benefits to the volunteer
- Information about your organisation
- Role title
- Tasks and responsibilities
- Location
- Hours
- Skills and attributes required
- Other information or restrictions

Try to express skills and attributes in a way that relates directly to the role. For example, if the role involves telling lots of people about your organisation's work, you might say 'able to speak confidently with a wide range of people' rather than 'bubbly and outgoing'.

If there are other restrictions on what kinds of volunteers you will accept – such as age restrictions or a need for male or female volunteers then say so, but you need to be sure that they are essential to the role. If there are restrictions, you need to explain why. Restrictions should not be discriminatory or based on stereotypes about certain kinds of people.

Manage risks

If the role is part of a new project or is something your organisation has not done before, make sure you consider the risks and build in reasonable measures to manage or deal with those risks. This could include risks to the volunteer, to clients or service users, or to the organisation as a whole. See **Sheet 20 'How to find out more'** for links to more information on how to assess and manage risks.