



Spirit's volunteering principles

Between 2014 and 2018 Spirit funding has enabled over 35,000 volunteer opportunities, from high profile event volunteering Hull 2017, Edinburgh Festival City Volunteers, Team Spirit – Athletics, to enabling volunteers to make a difference to their own communities and localities. Almost all Spirit-funded projects make use of volunteers in some capacity. We also know how important high quality and inclusive volunteer management is to the experience that volunteers have. We have therefore developed a set of volunteering principles – having considered the evaluation findings from our funded projects and consulted with a range of volunteer-involving organisations – which we expect Spirit-funded projects to align with.

1. Increasing diversity:

- Disabled and non-disabled people must be enabled to undertake volunteering opportunities together, as equals
 - You must take action to assess the barriers that would prevent disabled people taking part and take appropriate steps to mitigate them
 - Not all adaptations will be complicated or costly but you should include a specific budget for accessibility requirements.

Check out the British Red Cross [Inspired Action Toolkit](#) for more on how to make volunteering accessible. EFDS' [Talk to Me Principles](#) are also useful in planning an inclusive approach to volunteering.

- You should aim for the demographic of volunteers to be broadly representative of the diversity of the local population.
- Whenever appropriate you should advertise volunteering opportunities openly and in places that your target demographic will see and trust, for example local newspapers and websites, community hubs, social media if you want to attract younger volunteers.
- Peer volunteers and mentors – “*people like me*” – can significantly increase the likelihood of participants engaging and staying engaged in the project. You should think about how you can use previous participants as volunteers and attract volunteers with similar lived experience to your participants.
- Financial support (e.g. travel expenses, free uniforms) should be made available to volunteers where this will help to increase the diversity of volunteers involved.

2. Depth and duration of engagement:

- Having a combination of shorter-term and longer-term volunteering opportunities, together with opportunities of varied time commitments, can provide flexibility for volunteers to fit volunteering around their lifestyle and other commitments, for example we know that young people may not feel able to commit to longer term volunteering opportunities, whereas this might suit retired volunteers.
- You need to understand what's motivating your volunteers so you can get the best fit for them as well as their time commitments – a supported application and interview process can help you understand their needs, requirements and aspirations, as well as their suitability for your volunteering opportunity.
- However, we also know that volunteering can have a significantly transformative impact when people volunteer for 6 months or more, so our projects should aim for the majority of volunteering opportunities funded by Spirit should be for a sustained period.
- Some volunteers may become very attached to your project, especially if they have previously been lonely or isolated. You need to think about how you can manage their expectations around the frequency and depth of volunteering on offer and help them find pathways to other volunteering or paid opportunities.

3. Volunteer Management and Safeguarding:

- We expect to see **robust volunteer management** – usually a named and paid position in the project staff team. Volunteer Managers can make a significant difference to the quality of experience for volunteers, and should be responsible for:
 - Developing clear role descriptions for volunteers, including expectations around the time commitment and skills you require
 - Matching of individuals' skills, experience and aspirations with volunteering opportunities
 - Setting and reviewing of goals for individual volunteers – where appropriate
 - Training and development opportunities for volunteers
 - Regular supervision of and communication with volunteers
 - Supporting volunteers to articulate the skills they have developed through their volunteering
- Robust safeguarding arrangements must be put in place to ensure the safety of all volunteers, and participants where volunteers are working with young people and/or vulnerable adults. We will want to see your Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and evidence of how you implement good safeguarding practice in your organisation. The NCVO/BWB guide on [Volunteers and the Law](#) contains important information on safeguarding other legal considerations around using volunteers in your organisation.
- Volunteers' contributions should be recognised and celebrated throughout the programme. You can include an appropriate budget for volunteer recognition.

- If your project engages young people you should incorporate the 6 quality principles of [Youth Social Action](#) into your approach – these have been tested and validated with lots of youth organisations and young people and will help you ensure that the young people on your projects get the best possible experience of volunteering.

Finally,

- Please remember that while volunteers complement and supplement the work of paid staff they should not be used to replace paid positions.

Our offer in return is that we commit to:

- Collect and share learning from across our network of partners.
- Signpost Spirit-funded projects to additional opportunities for their volunteers that we come across.