

Upskilling Volunteer Managers in Sport | UVMIS

Guide for Volunteer Management at Sport Events



ENGLISH

“Upskilling volunteer managers in sport” (UVMIS) project aims to set a new standard, and to lay the foundation for transforming the offering of sports volunteer management qualification in Europe, by creating a full Higher Education level curriculum, detailing what and how professionals need to learn, to tackle contemporary and future critical challenges.

The Project is led by Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University in collaboration with partners including Centre for European Volunteering, Dutch Hockey Association, ENGSO, NR Sports Volunteering Solutions, IGNITX, French Federation Sport and Leisure Profession, CSV Trentino, and Vytautas Magnus University.

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Introduction to UVMIS and this Guide

This guide has been developed as part of the “**Upskilling Volunteer Managers in Sport**” (UVMIS) Erasmus+ project. It belongs to a series of four complementary guides developed to support sports volunteer managers across Europe:

- 1 - European Code of Ethics for Sports Volunteer Managers
- 2 - Guide to Sport Volunteering, Solidarity and European Values
- 3 - Guide on the Role of Sports Volunteer Managers in Facilitating Inclusive Sports Volunteering to Facilitate Culturally Sensitive and Inclusive Sport Engagement
- 4 - Guide on Volunteering in Sports Events.

At the core of UVMIS lies the idea that addressing the sports volunteer management issues of tomorrow requires a better trained, qualified and recognised volunteer manager. A professional that can think and act strategically and is equipped with the latest skills and scientific concepts to organise effectively. Through the state-of-the-art report, it was found that there is an overall lack of resources throughout Europe for training sport volunteer managers to this level.

UVMIS contributes to closing the gap between European countries and addressing the overall need by creating new training opportunities and resources which raise the capacity of sports organisations and communities to offer competitive and noncompetitive sports. The main results, consisting of higher education curriculum aimed at experienced sports volunteer managers and four practical guides on ethical codes, EU values in volunteering, inclusive volunteering and event volunteering addresses the needs of volunteer managers and sports organisations in acquiring the necessary skills and insights and sets a high standard for future resources and qualifications for sport volunteer managers. Through the state-of-the-art report and policy brief (forthcoming in 2026), it is shown the need in Europe and provides recommendations for decision makers to improve policies around sports volunteer management training and qualifications.

Read more about UVMIS and find project results [here](#).

For a better understanding of the guide, it is important to distinct two different approaches to volunteer management (Meijs, Hoogstad, 2001):

- **Membership Management (MM)** describes organisations like local sports clubs where volunteers are a cohesive, existing group with a strong, shared culture. Expectations are often implicit, recognition is based on long-term service, and volunteers dedicate many hours.
- **Programme Management (PM)** is used for specific, time-limited projects, such as large or smaller scale sporting events. This model involves recruiting volunteers for defined roles, tasks and responsibilities.

This **Guide on Volunteering in Sports Events** aims to provide a succinct and practical tool that sport event volunteer managers could make use in their efforts to run volunteer programmes effectively. It is designed to support sport event volunteer managers by offering a clear, practical, and evidence-based resource. It should be read and followed in conjunction with the other 4 guides that were developed as part of the UVMIS series and is organised into numbered chapters, each focusing on a key aspect of volunteer management—from recruitment and training to diversity and inclusion, recognition, and legacy planning. Each chapter combines best practices, real-world examples, and tools to help managers apply the content to their own contexts. This guide also includes 3 annexes available in English on the [UVMIS project website](#) with testimonies and interviews (Annex 1), case studies and activities (Annex 2), and a theoretical framework of Volunteering in Sports Events (Annex 3) to deepen understanding and encourage reflection..

Recruitment & Selection

To ensure strong alignment between **volunteer motivations, skills, and event needs**, this section explores evidence-based strategies for effective **volunteer recruitment and selection**. Recruiting and selecting volunteers for sport events is a crucial aspect of **volunteer management**. It is essential to have a well-thought-out strategy in place to attract volunteers who are motivated, committed, and capable of contributing effectively to the success of the event.

Recruitment in sport organisations is frequently **informal**, often relying on **personal networks**. To be effective, organisational needs must be translated into **benefits** that align with volunteer motivations. This personalised, motivational approach matters: individuals are four times more likely to volunteer when personally asked, demonstrating the value of appealing to what volunteers hope to gain rather than simply outlining what the organisation needs (NCVO, 2023; Women in Sport, 2018). For sport organisations that organise their own regular sport events, , partnering with their **network of members or sport clubs** in the case of national/regional federations is important in attracting volunteers who are both committed to the sport but also wish to help their broader community to realise the event. To attract **diverse groups**, such as ethnic minorities, partnering with local community organisations is highly effective, allowing recruiters connected to these communities to highlight opportunities (Activity Alliance, 2025; Koutrou, 2025; Koutrou & Kohe, 2024). Additionally, **diversifying advertising** and recruitment materials ensures broader engagement with potential volunteers.

To strengthen and diversify the volunteer workforce, sport event organisers should explore various **recruitment strategies**. Internal methods include leveraging newsletters, notice boards, websites, and direct outreach to **club members, former volunteers, and retiring players**. For external recruitment, consider **open days, social media engagement, collaboration with local volunteer organisations, advertising in local media, partnering with educational institutions, exploring employer-supported volunteering schemes, and attending community events**. Focusing on the

volunteer's personal gain, tailoring positions to specific interests, and adopting **proactive recruitment methods** that highlight the benefits of sport volunteering are also vital (Jackson et al., 2019).

In this section, best practices related to volunteer recruitment and selection in the context of sport events will be explored. Additionally, you can find some theories on these two points in **Annex 3** about the theoretical framework of Volunteering in Sports Event.

Recruitment

Best Practices for Volunteer Recruitment

Applying **marketing principles** to volunteer recruitment can be highly effective. This includes identifying **target audiences**, creating **compelling messages**, utilising various **communication channels**, and developing a strong **brand presence** to attract volunteers to sport events. The suggestions below can further enhance your recruitment practices at various sport events.

Targeted Communication: Tailor your recruitment messages to specific audiences based on their interests, motivations, and demographics. For example, if you are recruiting volunteers for a marathon, target running clubs, fitness enthusiasts, and community organisations with a passion for health and wellness.

Utilise Multiple Channels: Reach out to potential volunteers through a variety of channels such as social media, community events, volunteer fairs, word-of-mouth, and online platforms. By diversifying your recruitment efforts, you can cast a wider net and attract a more diverse pool of volunteers.

Engage Current Volunteers: Encourage your current volunteers to refer friends, family members, and colleagues to volunteer for upcoming sport events. Personal recommendations can be a powerful recruitment tool and help expand your volunteer base particularly for local, regional and national or recurring sport events of a smaller scale. In membership-based sport organisations, existing members often have strong ties to the club or federation, making them ideal ambassadors for recruitment. Their ongoing involvement and sense of belonging can help foster a sustainable and committed volunteer community.

Offer Training and Development Opportunities: Highlight the training and skill development opportunities available to volunteers and how they may gain certificates for skills and competencies gained. Many individuals are motivated to volunteer to gain new skills, knowledge, and experiences that can benefit their personal and professional growth. Clearly communicating these opportunities also helps establish mutual expectations between the organisation and the volunteer—an important aspect of Psychological Contract Theory—which contributes to a more positive and committed volunteer experience.

Create a Positive Volunteer Experience: Emphasise the enjoyable and rewarding aspects of volunteering for sport events. Showcase testimonials from past volunteers, highlight the impact of their contributions, and provide a glimpse into the exciting and fulfilling experience they can expect.

Volunteers' Portal

Volunteer programmes are increasingly being managed using **electronic systems**. The **Volunteer Portal** is a system for managing volunteers and their data, as well as conveying information related to recruitment.

As an example, “**Rosterfy**” is a tool used by organisations such as UEFA, FIFA, Special Olympics, and the European Games. The panel collects data related to **registration and recruitment interviews**. It facilitates actions related to **assigning roles to volunteers**, conducting **training**, and **scheduling** tasks. In this portal, **volunteers can track the status of their applications**, and at which stage they are. It also enables them to obtain necessary information. The portal serves as a knowledge base about the event and the subsequent steps or requirements that volunteers must meet. It facilitates the **allocation of volunteers to their roles, tasks, venues, or cities**. It also allows for a quick response in case of unexpected situations related to the presence of volunteers and their roles (Polska Komitet Olimpijski, 2024).

Selection

Best Practices for Volunteer Selection

This section highlights some practices to consider when developing your volunteer selection process. Depending on the nature and scale of your sport event and the available roles, it may be that these practices are not always implemented. However, it is considered good practice **to be clear** about what **roles** you need to fill, what **types of skills** you need from your volunteers, and to include some **form of interviewing or assessment**. Doing so helps ensure that volunteers are matched appropriately to roles, which improves their experience, enhances operational efficiency, and **reduces the risk of disengagement or drop-out**, and further enhancing retention of volunteers. Even in smaller events, applying these principles—where feasible—can contribute to a more professional and inclusive volunteer programme (Jackson et al., 2019):

Clear Criteria and role/ task Descriptions: Develop clear selection criteria and role/task descriptions for volunteers at sport events. Outline responsibilities, expectations, qualifications, and skills required for each role to attract suitable candidates and set clear expectations. This should be done in collaboration and agreement with all the stakeholder departments and functional areas that will need volunteers working for them at the event (e.g. sport, accommodation, spectator services, transport and others).

Structured Interview Process: Implement a structured interview process that includes standardised questions, evaluation criteria, and scoring methods to assess candidates consistently and fairly. Conduct interviews in a professional and respectful manner to create a positive candidate experience.

Reference/Background Checks: For roles involving athlete welfare, health and safety, or medical support, reference and background checks or verifications of required certifications are particularly important. Contact previous supervisors or mentors to verify reliability and suitability. Reference checks are also essential for any volunteer that will have contact with vulnerable people whether athletes/ players, other team members or the public.

Training and Onboarding: Provide comprehensive orientation and role-specific training to ensure volunteers are well-prepared. Include training materials and ongoing support to help volunteers succeed in their responsibilities.

Feedback and Evaluation: Establish mechanisms to gather volunteer input throughout the event and conduct post-event evaluations. These insights help improve future recruitment and selection processes and demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.

Challenges in Volunteer Recruitment and Selection

This section summarises some of the **key challenges** experienced by sport event volunteer managers in their **recruitment and selection activities**.

Competition for Volunteers: In a competitive volunteer market, attracting and retaining volunteers for sport events can be challenging. Organisations must differentiate themselves by offering meaningful roles, clear benefits, and a positive experience aligned with volunteer motivations.

Volunteer Retention: Retaining volunteers after recruitment can be difficult, especially if they do not have a positive experience or feel disconnected from the sport event organisation. This is particularly relevant for recurring sport events that primarily rely on their existing volunteer networks for support. Implement strategies to engage, recognise, and appreciate volunteers to foster loyalty, commitment, and long-term involvement (Koutrou and Kohe, 2024). In such cases, adopting a membership management approach can help strengthen ongoing relationships with volunteers, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and sustained engagement

Matching Volunteers to Roles: Poor role matching can lead to dissatisfaction and drop-out. Organisations should invest time in understanding volunteers' preferences, strengths, and motivations. Pre-event surveys and skills assessments can help identify knowledge gaps and guide placement (Koutrou, 2021).

Time and Resource Constraints: Limited staff and time can hinder thorough recruitment and selection. Investing in online volunteer management systems can streamline processes such as recruitment, scheduling, and shift allocation, saving valuable resources.

Diversity and Inclusion: Ensuring equal access and representation in volunteer programmes is essential. Local organising committees (LOCs) should actively reach out to diverse communities and remove barriers to participation. For example, Paris 2024 pledged to support 3,000 volunteers with disabilities, including options to volunteer with carers (IPC, 2023).

Designing Effective Recruitment Messages

Designing effective recruitment messages is critical to attracting and retaining volunteers who feel connected to both the event and its purpose. Clear, personalised communication can help bridge **organisational needs** with **volunteer motivations**, increasing the likelihood that individuals will not only sign up but also remain engaged. When volunteers understand how their **contribution matters**—to the event, the community, and their own personal development—they are more inclined to participate and maintain involvement over time. Drawing on principles from **Social Exchange Theory, Expectancy Theory, and Psychological Contract Theory**, well-crafted messages can create a sense of **value, achievable contribution, and mutual commitment** between volunteers and organisations.

With this in mind, effective recruitment messages typically include the following **core elements** (Stallings, 2007):

The statement of need.

Effective recruitment messages focus on the **positive outcome** the volunteer helps create, rather than what the organisation requires. For example, rather than “Volunteers are needed to carry out recycling tasks,” use “Help us deliver an eco-friendly, environmentally responsible event.”

How the volunteer can help.

Frame this directly, using “You can help by...” instead of “Volunteers are needed...” to foster a **personal connection** and help volunteers understand directly how their actions make an **impact** on the client and the community. For example, you could state: “You can help by being a friendly and informative point of contact for those visiting the X event”.

Benefits to the volunteer.

Clearly articulate how the position **benefits** the volunteer, whether through general organisational perks or specific role advantages. Highlight your **unique selling point** to engage prospective volunteers effectively. For example: “involvement with X event will help you make a difference to your community, develop communication and networking skills, and will provide mentoring and training opportunities”

Effective volunteer recruitment often leverages **existing volunteers** as role models, provided they exhibit specific characteristics. Ideal volunteer recruiters are (Stallings, 2007):

Satisfied: They demonstrate genuine contentment with their current volunteering, indicating sustained engagement.

Enthusiastic: Their passion for the organisation and its mission is evident and infectious.

Articulate: They possess the ability to clearly and compellingly convey their positive experiences to others.

Connected: They have established relationships with the individuals or groups being recruited, fostering trust and receptiveness.

The example below is a recruitment message and a role/ task description that follows the principles discussed above. It was developed to recruit international volunteers for **PlayGreen**, a former


Erasmus+ Sport funded project that aimed to **promote eco-friendly and environmentally responsible attitudes in sport by developing volunteer capacities in the context of sport events**. It was led by **Ecoserveis** and **ENGSO** was responsible for communications and the training of volunteer mentors and volunteers (Playgreetproject.eu, 2025).

As mentioned earlier and highlighted in the example below, the ideal **volunteer position description** should contain the following elements:


- Position Title
- Supervisor (reporting requirements and supervisory assignment)
- Goal or purpose of the position (Why was the position created and how does it relate to the purpose of organisation?)
- Major responsibilities (What are the key expectations of the volunteer?)
- Time commitment (Hours, dates, days, length of time commitment needed by volunteer, amount of flexibility, whether the role could be carried out off-site, online or both alongside on-site, and other role/task-sharing arrangements)
- Qualifications (required and desired)
- Location of the role (Where will the volunteer report to undertake the activity or can all or some of it be done off-site?)
- Key skills required by the volunteers
- Benefits to Volunteer (e.g., training for specific industry/transferable skills that could be developed; free meals, tickets, free parking, admission, reimbursed expenses, perks such as uniforms or event apparel, opportunity to make a difference, etc.)
- Date of position design or re-design (Review should occur yearly for recurring events)
- Supervisory and reporting requirements and whom to contact for further information about the role

It is important to note that **volunteer roles should be revised for every event**, to ensure role descriptions are accurate and relevant. For membership-organisations with standard and ongoing membership roles in their calendar, volunteer role review should occur more frequently. For programme management, event-based roles, these should be revised per event.

Example Volunteer Recruitment Message with role description



Join PlayGreen and become a Green Team Volunteer



Co-funded by
the European Union

Mission
Be part of our journey to promote environmentally sustainable behaviours in sports

About the Opportunity
A Green Team Volunteer is an ambassador of positive Actions towards protecting and improving our environment, starting from sports. It has been shown that the environmental impact of sporting activities is high, and Green Team Volunteers will help in fighting the climate crisis by proposing new and creative ways of reducing this impact and make sport events more environmentally sustainable. If you are aspiring towards influencing and changing the behaviour of the people around you, to help them in making improvements to their local environment, we need you!

Role Responsibilities

The role involves organising 5 environmentally sustainable grassroots football tournaments within a 6-month period, with the mentorship and support of your local Football Association in your respective countries. You will be able to provide creative solutions and ideas on how each football tournament could be 'greener' raising environmental awareness and promoting sustainable behaviours within your community.

Why get involved?

- Keen to make a difference in providing solutions to minimise the ecological impact of sport events
- Develop and improve event coordination and planning skills
- Develop or improve Human resource management skills
- Opportunities to travel abroad at selected events
- Mentoring and training opportunities
- Opportunity to be part of pan-European team of sport and environment enthusiasts

What are we looking for?

- Self-motivated with some knowledge of event planning or sport organisation is helpful, but not necessary. Your local football association and a team of Sport sustainability experts will support you
- Ability to contribute as part of a team of Green Volunteers who will engage together to drive forward positive change collectively
- Ability to communicate, liaise and engage with other volunteers, participants and members of your Football Association

Key Skills Required

- Good communication skills
- Able to contribute as part of a team, while taking initiatives where necessary
- Willingness to travel abroad to engage in relevant pan-European activities
- Passion and commitment towards driving positive change
- Some level of English understanding would be helpful, but not necessary

Key Skills that will be gained

- Teamwork
- Environmental awareness
- Leading people
- Time-management
- Event planning and organising
- Communication skills

Hours: Flexible

Expenses:

Your expenses are fully covered by your Local Football Association. (e.g. your travel from and to the meetings organised as part of the activities and any international travel related to the project.

Contact for further information: Provide contact details as appropriate.

Volunteer Training and Development in Sport Events

Volunteers are pivotal to successful sport events, dedicating their time and energy to support smooth operations and positive participant experiences. To help volunteers feel confident and prepared, **it is important to design, deliver, and evaluate training programmes that foster learning**

and encourage long-term engagement. In this section, you will explore effective practices for building training and development approaches that equip volunteers for their roles while strengthening their ongoing connection to the organisation.

Designing and Delivering Effective Volunteer Training

Effective **training is a cornerstone** of sport event volunteer management, ensuring volunteers are confident, capable, and aligned with the event's goals. Training design should reflect core principles **of programme management, HR management and inclusive practice**, and typically includes the following elements:

Training Needs Analysis

Before developing training content, organisers should conduct a Training Needs Analysis with all functional areas, stakeholders and operational departments to identify required **skills and knowledge**. This combines **quantitative methods** (e.g. surveys) and **qualitative insights** (e.g. interviews, focus groups) to tailor **training to volunteer capabilities and preferences**—an essential step in workforce and personnel planning and HR strategy.

Core Training Components

Volunteer training programmes often follow a staged approach:

Orientation Training: Delivered at scale, this introduces volunteers to the event's mission, values, and operations. It fosters cohesion and a shared sense of purpose—key aspects of programme management.

Role-Specific Training: Focuses on the tasks volunteers will perform. Clear role definitions support performance and retention, aligning with HR management principles. For example, London 2012 offered targeted training for Volunteer Drivers, including route familiarisation and navigation tools.

Venue-Specific Training: Conducted on-site, this includes layout familiarisation and simulations. It integrates sustainability, accessibility, and health and safety—critical for risk and operations management.

Leadership Training: Supervisors require separate training to develop coordination and team management skills. This supports strategic leadership development and succession planning.

Disability Awareness and Inclusion Modules: Inclusive events must ensure all training materials are accessible. Modules on disability awareness (e.g. Activity Alliance, 2025) reflect inclusive management values and promote equity.

Training Delivery Strategies

To maximise engagement and learning outcomes, organisers should:

Incorporate Hands-On Learning: Use simulations and practical exercises (e.g. Ironman walk-throughs) to build confidence and real-world readiness.

Encourage Peer Learning: Foster collaboration through mentoring and experience-sharing (e.g. Birmingham 2022), building community and reinforcing informal leadership.

Use Technology-Based Learning: Offer flexible formats such as online modules and video tutorials (e.g. Tokyo 2020), accommodating diverse schedules and learning styles.

Provide Feedback and Reflection Opportunities: Daily debriefs and performance feedback (e.g. Lausanne Youth Olympics) help volunteers improve and feel valued.

By integrating these elements, sport event organisers can deliver training that is strategic, inclusive, and aligned with broader management goals—ultimately enhancing **volunteer performance** and **event success**.

Training Evaluation

Post-training, **evaluating** the volunteer training programme's **effectiveness and impact on learning outcomes is crucial**. This involves assessing **objective achievement, volunteer satisfaction, and the impact** of the training on volunteers' **knowledge and skills**. Below there are some key considerations for effective evaluation of volunteer training. You could consider implementing one or all these strategies depending on the size and resources within your sport event organisation.

Feedback Surveys: Administer feedback surveys to gather volunteer opinions on training programme relevance, effectiveness, engagement, and suggestions for improvement.

Skills Assessments: Measure the training's impact on volunteers' knowledge and skills by comparing volunteers' performance before and after to identify improvements.

Observations: Observe volunteers during the event to assess their performance and application of the training, providing feedback for improvement.

Post-Training Support: Offer on-going support, resources, tools, and guidance to reinforce learning and support long-term development.

Challenges and Best Practices

Training volunteers for sport events involves navigating **limited resources, time constraints, and varying experience levels**. To address these challenges and improve training effectiveness, organisers can adopt the **following best practices**:

Collaboration: Partner with organisations experienced in volunteer management (e.g. Red Cross, city councils) to share resources and deliver joint training sessions on topics like first aid and crowd management.

Continuous Improvement: Use volunteer feedback to refine training materials and briefings. For example, post-event surveys can inform updates to next year's orientation.

Recognition and Rewards: Motivate volunteers through cost-effective recognition such as “Volunteer of the Day” awards, social media shout-outs, certificates, and event apparel.

Flexibility: Provide both online and in-person training options, and schedule sessions to accommodate volunteers’ work and family commitments.

Leadership Development: Create opportunities for volunteers to grow into leadership roles, such as shadowing experienced team leads at recurring events.

Volunteer training and development are essential for successful sport event volunteer management. By applying best practices, conducting needs analyses, and continuously evaluating programmes, organisers can **optimise volunteer performance and ensure event success**.

Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteer Programmes

Building **inclusive volunteer programmes** that reflect, and respect community diversity requires both practical strategies and an understanding of the theories that inform them (You can find some theories on this topic included in Annex 3 about Theoretical Framework of Volunteering in Sports Events). **Diversity** refers to the **presence of differences among individuals**—including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and abilities. **Inclusion** focuses on **creating environments where all individuals feel welcome, valued, and respected** for their unique qualities and contributions. Embracing diversity and fostering inclusion are central to the effectiveness and sustainability of volunteer programmes (Nichols & Ralston, 2011).

In the **Guide 3** of this series of guides, you will find more details on Diversity and Inclusion when addressing the role of Sports volunteer managers in facilitating inclusive sports volunteering to facilitate culturally sensitive and inclusive sport engagement

Strategies for Promoting Diversity and Inclusion

Sport Event Organisations can employ several strategies to foster diversity and inclusion within volunteer programmes for sport events. **Actively recruiting from diverse backgrounds**, including individuals of different ages, genders, ethnicities, abilities, and socio-economic statuses ensures the volunteer base reflects the **diversity of the community** (Nichols and Ralston, 2011). Beyond recruitment, implementing **training programmes on diversity and inclusion issues** is vital. Educating volunteers on unconscious bias, cultural competence, and inclusive communication equips them to collaborate effectively with individuals from all backgrounds.

Moreover, **creating cross-cultural engagement opportunities**, such as cultural celebrations or diversity workshops, promotes mutual understanding and respect. Fostering these leads to a more cohesive and inclusive volunteer community.

Volunteer Recognition

Recognising volunteers in meaningful and motivating ways is essential for reinforcing their **value**, supporting **retention**, and building a lasting **legacy**. Effective recognition goes beyond token gestures; it involves aligning volunteer roles and appreciation with **individual motivations and needs**. Recognition should be ongoing, timely, personal, and genuine, ideally delivered by the volunteer's direct supervisor (Gunn, 2023; Stallings, 2007). This section explores key principles and practical strategies for designing and delivering recognition approaches that support sustained engagement and nurture committed, thriving volunteer teams.

Volunteer Recognition Approaches

It is crucial to acknowledge that volunteers value **different forms of recognition** that align to both internal and external rewarding systems. Organisations should therefore employ a diverse range of formal and informal approaches, ensuring that recognition is personalised and resonates with the individual. **Formal** recognition approaches help develop community spirit among volunteers and attract others to join as volunteers. **Informal** recognition approaches include the everyday expressions of appreciation that convey to volunteers how essential their contributions are to the **success** of the event. This adaptive strategy, coupled with continuous learning and development opportunities, significantly contributes to **long-term volunteerism** and the overall success of sports programmes.

For instance, recognition can manifest through offering **increased responsibility**, involving volunteers in **decision-making**, providing **professional development** such as mentoring and training courses, or offering **tangible rewards** like kit and travel expenses. Ultimately, a comprehensive recognition strategy, tailored to the unique contributions and preferences of volunteers, is essential for fostering a committed and thriving volunteer teams

Ultimately, event organisers should combine recognition strategies to align and respond to **different volunteer motivational needs** such as, for example, for those who are motivated by social interaction, by influence and power and by accomplishments. There are some examples below that could be effectively utilised in your event's volunteer recognition efforts (Activity Alliance, 2025; Gunn, 2023; Stallings, 2007):

- **Daily recognition activities** (such as acknowledging in internal newsletters the 'Volunteer of the Day') highlighting case-studies where volunteers made a difference. By publicly acknowledging contributions, the volunteers' sense of purpose is further reinforced and feel that their unique contribution is valued
- **Professional References** for career-enhancement and **Certificates of Participation**: These initiatives add value particularly for those volunteers who wish to develop their career opportunities and networks by participating in a sport event

- Opportunities to **experience the sport event** (e.g. in the opening and closing ceremony or rehearsals). Being part of the celebration strengthens the emotional commitment of the volunteers with the event itself.
- **End-event celebrations:** These events celebrate and publicly acknowledge the impact of volunteers, it is a great way to see the meaning of their impact and the tasks they had carried out, offer opportunities to meet people and make new friendships and connections, and reinforce the personal connections and attachment to the event, all stakeholders involved and organisation.
- Ask your **clients/beneficiaries** of your sport event (e.g. athletes or members of the Event owner- e.g. a sport federation) to come and thank your volunteers and explain the impact their efforts had on their lives and the sport. One example of this is Jamaican Olympian Hansle Parchment famously tracked down a volunteer, Tijana Stojkovic, who paid for his taxi to the [Tokyo 2020 Games](#) semifinals after he got on the wrong bus, and he later repaid her kindness with his gold medal, a Jamaican shirt, and the taxi fare money. Following the 2021 event, the [Jamaica Ministry of Tourism](#) also extended an all-expenses-paid trip to Jamaica for Stojkovic, recognising her instrumental role in his gold medal win.
- **Talk to your volunteers** and explain how the tasks they are doing make an impact to both your sport event and others

Plan your event volunteer programme with legacy in mind

Regardless of scale, sport events that involve volunteers should aim to foster a **lasting legacy of community volunteering** and building a volunteer community. Indeed, sport events inspire volunteering and community engagement in the broader sense, but inspiration alone often fades (Blackman et al., 2017; Koutrou, 2025; Koutrou & Duignan, 2025).

Volunteer legacy is not automatic and must be embedded from the outset in the bidding and planning process of the event. London 2012's experience showed that even with 70,000 Games Makers, enthusiasm waned when **post-event structures** were lacking. Below there are some recommendations for Sport event organisers to consider when planning for volunteer legacies:

Define Clear, Meaningful Post-Event Pathways

It is imperative that volunteers are provided with structured **pathways** to continued engagement with similar or other sport events and the community. Without such pathways, volunteers' initial enthusiasm fades and they drift away. It may be useful to consider integrating **transition opportunities** showing next steps after the event or sharing useful contacts and organisations to facilitate continued volunteer engagement after the event. You can also consider hosting **workshops or similar sessions** so that volunteers understand how the skills developed through your event could transfer to other volunteering contexts in the future.

Prioritise Inclusion from the Outset

Structural barriers including high **costs** of volunteering, complex **application processes** and limited outreach to disadvantaged communities or organisations that support inclusive opportunities may hinder the **inclusion** of broader groups as volunteers in your sport event. To make it more inclusive, consider to:

- Partner with **grassroots organisations** to reach communities.
- Offer **subsidies**, flexible scheduling, and accessible venues.
- Streamline volunteer **application processes** with support where needed.

Plan and Resource Legacy beyond the Event time

Ensuring that volunteering legacy is **achieved needs sustained investment** as seen in examples of London's 2012 Join In Volunteer Legacy Scheme and the extended funding model of Birmingham's United by 2022 initiative which preserved volunteer engagement opportunities post-event. To facilitate this, consider to:

- A timeline of phased **funding** post-event (e.g., 1–3 years).
- Budget plans for **volunteer network management** and continuity.
- **Governance structures** ensuring oversight beyond event wrap-up.

Leverage Knowledge Transfer & Recognition

Apply **knowledge management** frameworks and facilitate knowledge transfer between events. By capturing the knowledge generated through the management of the volunteer programme at one event including the volunteer **skills and institutional know-how** you can further benefit future sport events and local communities. You can consider developing:

- **Post-Event Debriefs and Documentation:** capturing what worked, volunteer experiences, best practices.
- **Credentialing & Recognition:** badges, certificates, or digital portfolios that volunteers can carry forward.
- **Satisfaction Surveys:** capture post-event feedback, and loop satisfaction into planning continued opportunities.

Events are inspiring for local communities, but the volunteering momentum fades fast if it is not sustained. Only through deliberate planning, equitable inclusion, long-term resourcing, and pathways for continuing impact can volunteers become catalysts for enduring community transformation (Koutrou, 2025; Koutrou & Duignan, 2025).

Conclusions

Good **volunteer management** at sporting events is essential to the success and sustainability of these events. This guide highlights the main **challenges** currently faced by sporting event organisers and offers the **best strategies** for addressing them, always taking into account the interests, needs and perspectives of volunteers.

Firstly, **recruitment and selection** processes play a key role in success, as finding good volunteers will determine the success of the event. To this end, when recruiting volunteers, it is necessary to send **motivating** and specific messages that align individual motivations with the needs of the event. Applying **marketing principles**, leveraging diverse **communication channels**, and involving current volunteers as **ambassadors** significantly improve recruitment results. Additionally, structured selection protocols with clearly defined roles and expectations contribute to the proper assignment and subsequent retention of volunteers.

Second, comprehensive **training and development** of volunteers is essential. Training programmes must be tailored to needs and delivered using inclusive and engaging methodologies. Key elements such as **hands-on learning**, **peer collaboration**, **flexible formats** and **ongoing support** foster a cohesive volunteer community that is prepared for the challenges that may arise in the process. Subsequent evaluation of training through **performance assessments** will always ensure continuous improvement of programmes and events.

Thirdly, it is essential to emphasise **diversity and inclusion**, further developed in Guide 3, to create equitable volunteering opportunities that reflect the communities being served. Inclusive training that takes **cultural differences** into account enhances the social impact of volunteering programmes.

In addition, **recognition** of volunteers is emerging as a key factor in maintaining their commitment. Personalised and meaningful recognition, ranging from **informal** daily thanks to **formal** references for professional development, encourages volunteer motivation and strengthens emotional ties to the event and organisation. In addition to fostering their long-term commitment to volunteering, formal recognition through the validation of skills acquired during volunteer activities also enables **professional improvement** and better job opportunities, which can make it easier for vulnerable groups such as **migrants** to enter the labour market.

Finally, planning for the **legacy** of volunteers must be integrated from the early stages of event organisation. Without a plan for the **sustainability** of the event's results and continuous follow-up with volunteers, their enthusiasm will dissipate. Legacy planning involves establishing clear **next steps** for engagement after the event, encouraging **inclusive participation**, and institutionalising **knowledge transfer** for the benefit of future events and communities.

In summary, volunteering at sporting events represents a dynamic but complex **ecosystem**. A strategic plan for volunteer management, specific training, inclusive practices, concrete recognition, and legacy planning allows for the full potential of volunteers to be harnessed as invaluable contributors to sporting events and **community development** in general.

For further information on the management of volunteers in sport clubs and events, please visit the links below:

[v4v project tool](#)

[Sport New Zealand Toolkit](#)

[Good Sports Toolkit](#)

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