Why Is Impact Evaluation Around Volunteering Important?

When looking at volunteering within your organisation you have 2 avenues to explore:

1. **The impact of volunteers on your organisation** – what do volunteers bring, provide, enable for your organisation, the financial (social value) of volunteering.

2. **The personal impact of volunteering for the volunteers** – how does it support, develop, affect each person who volunteers for you, what is the personal impact for them of being part of your organisation.

Ways To Evidence the Impact of Volunteers on Your Organisation

This directly links to your volunteer strategy and 'why' volunteers are embedded in your organisation.

- Case studies – STAR template, projects / initiatives, work that volunteers undertake and deliver for your organisation.
- Video stories / audio / visual presentations / reels.
- The outcome of those projects / roles and delivery – e.g. supporting local communities, upkeep of venues, running community cafés.
- The monetary contribution of volunteering for your organisation – could you work this out based on volunteer numbers, hours they work and the roles they undertake (average wage for those roles).
  - Ways of collecting volunteer hours: timesheets, Citizen Coin, signing in / tick sheets for volunteers attending / hours worked, pre-agreed hours with sign in and out then applied to a spreadsheet.
  - Don't forget Trustee hours and hours outside of 'project' time e.g. admin, evening, networking, fundraising.
- Celebration events / volunteer award presentations.
- Volunteer or organisation newsletters.
- Citizen Coin reports.

Ways To Evidence the Personal Impact of Volunteering on Your Volunteers

- This again directly links to your volunteer strategy and policy.
- Is very useful for funders when including costs towards your volunteer programme, volunteer co-ordinator capacity.
- Great for use in volunteer recruitment.
- Case studies – STAR template – Personal story (with consent)
- Video stories / audio / reels
- Questionnaires – when volunteers start and during / end of their volunteering roles to capture progression, development, growth and personal impact.
- Citizen Coin - Volunteering CV.

How Do We Write Up Impact Reports?

- Build relationships with academics / researchers who might support impact reporting – e.g. LinkedIn, Reach Volunteering, Citizen Coin.
- Complete a skills audit, could you specifically recruit volunteers / trustees with this background into your organisation?
- Local research initiatives e.g. HDRC (Health Determinants Research Collaborations).
- Using AI to collate your own data – be careful of errors and false data being included.
- Think about impact reporting that is proportionate to your organisation size.
- How / what will you use impact reports for?

See some of the Impact reports in the toolkit resources folder for examples.

Case Study Templates and Effective Use

- **Adopt the STAR/ Format:** Structure your template around a clear narrative flow:

  > **S**ituation (the context/challenge)
  > **T**ask (what the volunteer/charity did)
  > **A**chievement (the measurable outcome)
  > **R**eflection/Quote (the emotional impact)

- **Focus on 'Outcome', Not Just 'Output':** Ensure the template forces staff to move beyond simple output (e.g. "delivered 10 workshops") to capture the actual outcome (e.g. "10 people gained confidence to seek employment").

- **Keep It Short and Visual:** Design the final template to fit onto one page (or a single digital slide) with plenty of white space. Include placeholders for a high-quality photograph of the volunteer/beneficiary (with consent).

- **Use Tiered Consent:** Include a consent form with tick boxes that allow the individual to choose *how* their story is used (e.g. "digital only," "printed materials only," "used for fundraising bids," or "anonymous quote only").

- **Create a Central Repository:** Store all approved case studies and consent forms in a secure, easily searchable folder (e.g. a shared drive or CRM) so they can be quickly retrieved when a funding deadline or recruitment push arises.

Demonstrating How Volunteers Support Your Organisation's Work

- **Quantify the Time Value (financial Value):** Use the number of volunteer hours contributed and multiply them by a conservative, local wage rate (e.g. the National Living Wage) to demonstrate the monetary value of their contribution to your services in reports.

- **Map Volunteers to Strategic Goals:** In reports to the Board or funders, use a diagram or table to show which specific volunteer roles contribute to each of your three main strategic objectives (e.g. volunteer drivers support the "accessibility" goal).
- **Highlight Service Continuity:** Use volunteers' reliability and time contribution as evidence of the resilience and sustainability of your service delivery, demonstrating that core services would cease or be significantly reduced without them.
- **Provide Commissioner-Ready Metrics:** For services provided under contract (e.g. local government), provide specific data points on how volunteers help you meet contractual KPIs (e.g. "volunteers enabled a 20% increase in home visits, exceeding our Q4 target"). Be careful not to overreach – so commissioners don't see this as you can do more for less!
- **Volunteering is not FREE – it comes with background costs.**

Using Case Studies for Volunteer Recruitment and Funding Bids

Recruitment

- **Match Story to Role:** Use case studies that feature current volunteers who embody the skills, values, and experience needed for the specific role you are recruiting for (e.g. a befriending role story for a befriending recruitment drive).
- **Focus on Impact and Benefits:** Emphasise the personal journey and satisfaction in the case study quotes to attract new volunteers, focusing on the "what's in it for me" factor, like skill gain or community connection.

Funding Bids

- **Evidence of Need and Solution:** Use the *situation* part of the case study to clearly illustrate the *problem* the funder wants to solve, and the achievement/result part to prove your service is an effective *solution*.
- **Use the Human Element:** Embed a concise, powerful quote from the beneficiary in the main body of the bid to humanise your data and

emotionally connect the grant reader to your cause, making the application memorable.

- **Target Specific Funders:** Edit case studies slightly to ensure the language, service names, and focus points align directly with the funder's stated priorities (e.g. if a funder focuses on youth, use a youth-focused case study).

Measuring and Presenting the Impact of Volunteering

- **Utilise Logic Models:** Before starting a project, clearly define the:

    Inputs (volunteer hours)
    Activities (what they do)
    Outputs (immediate deliverables)
    Outcomes (the change achieved for beneficiaries)

- **Measure Difference:** Systematically ask beneficiaries: "if this service had not been available, what would you have done?" This helps estimate the what would have happened and demonstrates the true *added value* of your volunteers' intervention.

- **Report on Volunteer-to-Beneficiary Ratio:** Present the number of volunteers required to serve a specific number of beneficiaries, demonstrating the efficiency of your model compared to fully paid staff provision.

    For example: if Wakefield RDA had 3 riders who needed 3 staff each with them during the session, plus a coach. If these were paid roles that would be 10 staff paid wages so the cost for each rider to cover this would be astronomical and unaffordable. This showcases how volunteers can enable improved accessibility for those in financial need and on low incomes.

- **Create an Annual Impact Infographic:** Present key metrics (total volunteer hours, value of time contributed, top 3 social outcomes achieved) in a visually engaging, shareable infographic for your annual report and social media.

Capturing the Positive Impact Volunteering Has on Volunteers Themselves

- **Implement Entry and Exit Surveys:** Use a standard tool, such as the WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale) or a simple self-rated confidence score, upon induction and again when a volunteer leaves (or 6 monthly / annually) to track personal development and wellbeing change.
- **Document Skills Gained:** Create a log sheet linked to the role description that tracks specific, transferable soft and hard skills acquired (e.g. team leadership, data entry, safeguarding knowledge), which the volunteer can use on their CV. Citizen Coin can be used for this and can produce reports for volunteers.
- **Facilitate Peer-to-Peer Story Sharing:** Dedicate time in team meetings or newsletters for volunteers to share their own "why I volunteer" stories, focusing on the benefits they gain, like reducing isolation or gaining a sense of purpose.
- **Collect Testimonials on Self-Esteem:** In 1:1 supervision or exit interviews, ask specific, reflective questions: "how has volunteering changed your confidence in dealing with new situations?" or "what's is your proudest achievement as a volunteer?" and secure a quote for internal use.

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