



Volunteering Doesn't Happen By Accident

A toolkit to support you to
develop your local
volunteering infrastructure

Volunteering doesn't happen by accident

This document is designed to support partners to come together to assess how well their local volunteer system works collaboratively and consistently to make volunteering a positive, accessible choice for all, and to create an environment where volunteers are truly valued.

Local infrastructure organisations (LIOs) and volunteer centres (VCs) often sit at the heart of these systems: championing good practice, supporting people into meaningful volunteering opportunities, celebrating volunteers, and enabling community-led action.

Designed as a practical workshop tool, this will help partners to reflect on their collective impact, identify strengths and gaps, and agree priority actions. Where a workshop isn't possible, LIOs and VCs can also use it as a straightforward self-assessment.

How to use the toolkit

This document can either be printed and written on during a workshop, or edited as an interactive PDF.

Use the accompanying guidance and case studies to help you understand each theme.

Any questions?

If you have any questions or feedback, contact NAVCA at comms@navca.org.uk.

Section 1: Promoting volunteering

A good system will:

- Celebrate volunteers individually and collectively. Examples include awards and informal, ongoing recognition, celebratory events such as Volunteers Week.
- Celebrate volunteer-led groups.
- Have a range of partners, from service providers to local employers and businesses, committed to celebrate volunteering and the diversity of volunteers.
- Develop a wide range of volunteering opportunities and will ensure that people can engage and take part. As well as structured volunteering, forms of volunteering include:
 - Social action
 - Employee volunteering
 - Short term or one-off volunteer opportunities

What do you already do/have? (strengths)

What areas are less well developed? (opportunities)

Section 1: Promoting volunteering

How much do you know about your strengths? What evidence do you have?

List all the ideas you can think of to further develop your work promoting volunteering.

From your 'ideas list' choose one idea you can do now, one idea you could do with some investment, and one big idea that will take time but could be transformative:

Do now:

Do with some investment:

Big idea:

Section 1: Promoting volunteering

Draw a mind map showing all the partners in your local volunteering system. You might want to note down the assets they bring, how they link to each other and consider how they could help to strengthen everyone's work.

Section 2: Reducing barriers

A good system will:

- Listen to communities about volunteering, their aspirations for change and the things that hold them back.
- Re-shape volunteering opportunities to better meet the aspirations of community members and take action to reduce inequality in access.
- Provide additional support, building confidence and skills with the people who wish to volunteer to reduce barriers to access.

What do you already do/have? (strengths)

What areas are less well developed? (opportunities)

Section 2: Reducing barriers

How much do you know about your strengths? What evidence do you have?

List all the ideas you can think of to further develop your work to reduce barriers to volunteering.

From your 'ideas list' choose one idea you can do now, one idea you could do with some investment, and one big idea that will take time but could be transformative:

Do now:

Do with some investment:

Big idea:

Section 2: Reducing barriers

Plan engagement

Take a few minutes to note down all the places that you might go to begin to understand how people in different communities respond to volunteering opportunities, the things they do to make a difference in their communities, and the way your volunteering work might enable them to do more if they choose to.

Section 3: Policy and practice

A good system will:

- Have a strategy that all stakeholders are committed to. The strategy will have been co-designed, starting from the aspirations and needs of communities, volunteers and those who want to volunteer.
- Put more power to decide in the hands of volunteers.
- Drive up standards in volunteering involving organisations through networking and connections, developing and sharing best practice, resources and providing supportive challenge.
- Understand the progress made through evaluation and impact measurement.

What do you already do/have? (strengths)

What areas are less well developed? (opportunities)

Section 3: Policy and practice

How much do you know about your strengths? What evidence do you have?

List all the ideas you can think of to further develop your volunteering policy activity.

From your 'ideas list' choose one idea you can do now, one idea you could do with some investment, and one big idea that will take time but could be transformative:

Do now:

Do with some investment:

Big idea:

Section 3: Policy and practice

Choose 3–5 main themes. These are the big areas you want to focus on in your strategy. Write them in the left-hand box.

For each theme, list around three things you want to achieve over the life of the strategy. These are your strategic priorities. Write them in the right-hand box.

Themes

Strategic priorities