


How to create a **Volunteer Strategy**



One of the keys to ensuring the success of your volunteer team is to create a volunteer strategy. This step-by-step guide will help you think bigger and ensure you have a road map to achieving your goals.

What you will find in this guide:

All about creating a volunteer strategy	2 -5
--	------

Extra tips	6
------------	---

 Short tutorial video	7
--	---

  Case study and video	7
--	---

Further reading & references	8
---------------------------------	---

All about creating a volunteer strategy

What is a volunteer strategy?

A volunteer strategy is a useful tool to map out exactly what you want to achieve for your volunteering service and how to get there.

Why do we need one?

Without a strategy, you will soon find yourself distracted by other stakeholders' priorities and unable to oversee the team's performance and recognise the values that they contribute to the organisation.

A volunteer strategy is also a good way to raise your team's profile and will take you one step closer to ensuring your volunteering strategy is included in your organisation's long-term plan.

Key steps to devise a volunteer strategy:



step

1

Set S.M.A.R.T. goals

S.M.A.R.T stands for **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound.**

Specific

The more specific you are with your goals, the clearer your strategy will be. There is a difference between ‘I want my volunteer team to be successful’ with ‘I want my volunteer team to contribute 3,000 hours this year, receive positive feedback from 100 patients, and have 50 requests from staff to ask for volunteers’ support.’

Knowing what success looks like is extremely helpful as it will help you plan the right actions to get there.

Measurable

If you can’t measure success, you won’t know whether you have achieved it. Measurable results are important for you to know whether your strategy is working or if there is something you need to change to make it work. Most importantly, knowing the difference that your volunteers have been making to patients and staff will empower you and your team to continue doing your excellent work.

Attainable

Your goals need to be realistic and attainable to be successful. In other words, it should stretch your abilities but still remain possible.

Relevant

Your goals must be relevant to your organisation’s long-term strategy. Think about how your specific goals can help achieve your organisation’s overall goals, such as reducing the number of complaints, improving patient safety, or simply, improve the Friends and Family test.

Time bound

Having a realistic and flexible time frame is key to the success of the strategy. Setting up deadlines will give your team something to work towards, and focus their energy on completing the work.



step

2

Answer the Key questions

It's important that you take as much as time as you need to answer the questions below. They will help you to develop ideas and plans to ensure the success of your strategy:

- WHO might be affected by involving volunteers?
- WHO needs to be consulted?
- WHO else might help you in achieving the goals for your volunteering programme?
- WHAT roles can be developed to engage volunteers productively, with meaning and value?
- HOW are you going to attract, recruit and select your volunteers?
- HOW are you going to support, supervise, develop and recognise your volunteers?
- HOW do you keep everyone safe?
- HOW to prove and improve?
- WHERE will these actions take place?
- WHO has responsibility to ensure the strategy is being implemented?
- WHEN will you review?

step

3

Identify resources

It is important to identify the resources that you need to achieve your goals. You may want more staff, funding, or training. Knowing what you need will enable you to achieve your goals.

For example, if you want your volunteers to stay with you for more than three years, you need to know what factors will make them stay with you. Is it because they feel supported, recognised, and that their time is well-spent? If so, these factors can be used in communications, recognition schemes, thank-you cards, and gatherings.

step

4

Plan actions

Once you know the resources needed for your strategy, it is time to devise clear and specific actions to implement your strategy.

It's important not to jump straight into big actions that will take a long time. It is best to break actions into small and achievable ones, as this will show immediate results and boost the team's morale. Remember, success doesn't come overnight.

step

5

Monitor your strategy's performance

Make sure to review your performance on a monthly and yearly basis. This will help you to keep track and make changes of the performance if you are not meeting your goals.

Example:

Monthly performance tracker

Goals	Actual	Expected	Note
Recruited volunteers	25	50	

Volunteer management system

There are a few systems out there that can help you manage your volunteers effectively.

For example, [Better Impact](#), [Volgistics](#), [timecounts](#).

A number of our network members use Better Impact to collect data, communicate with volunteers, and measure their impact. If you would like to learn about their experience of using volunteer management systems, please contact the Helpforce [Network Team](#).

step

6

Set up timeline and review performance

Here is an example of how you can set up a timeline to keep up-to-date with your performance:

TIME \ GOAL	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Recruit volunteers												
Devise a new Volunteer management system												
Set up a new Volunteer management system												

Make sure you review your strategy regularly. We suggest doing the review every three to six months.

EXTRA TIPS

A few extra tips to help you create your strategy

It is not uncommon to face challenges when developing a strategy, being aware of them beforehand can help you prepare.

1. Keep it simple - avoid creating a complicated strategy that is impossible to achieve
2. Get buy in from the right people - spend time working with your colleagues to ensure they support your plans.
3. Stay focussed - the NHS is always busy with new targets and priorities which could potentially change the course of your strategy. Try and keep everyone focussed on your goals, this means you will need to be flexible to ensure success.

Template for your strategy:

Volunteering strategy for NHS Trust
 Created by:
 Date:
 Next review date:

Aims of your strategy - Outline your vision for this volunteering strategy:

Set goals - here are a few examples of goals that you can set:

- Increase number of volunteers by xxx amount xxx date
- Increase volunteer retention by xxx per cent by xxx date
- Increase staff, patient and volunteer satisfaction by xxx amount of % by xxx date

Identify resources and plan actions

.....
GOAL - Increase volunteers

OUTPUT - Number of volunteers

PROCESS - Write up volunteer roles description
 - Advertise the role
 - Optimise the recruitment process to make it move quicker

INPUT - Discuss with staff what the need from volunteers
 - Produce advert to promote the roles
 - Review and re-design the process

SUPPLIER - Human resources
 - Time
 - Expenses

Timeline and review

TIME	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
GOAL												



video



Case study

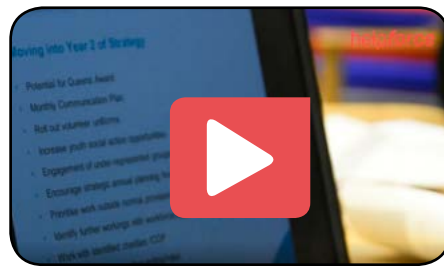
Short tutorial video

Watch this one minute video to find out more on creating a volunteer strategy.



Case study

Watch this video of Mandy Cleaver, Voluntary Service and Community Development Lead at Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, in which she explains step-by-step how her team developed their strategy and how the strategy contributes to the team's success.



<https://www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/downloads/about-us/trust-reports/strategies/2018/volunteer-strategy.pdf>



further reading



Books

“Strategic Volunteer Engagement - a Guide for Nonprofit and Public Sector Leaders” by Sarah Jane Rehnborg

“Volunteer Management - How and Why? A Book on Developing Sustainable Volunteer Environments” by Frederik C. Boll and others

“Business and Strategic Planning for Voluntary Organisations” by Alan Lawrie



References:

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/your-team/volunteers-and-your-organisation>

Top non-profits

<https://topnonprofits.com/5-volunteer-management-strategies-nonprofit-needs-know/>

<https://www.bhcommunityworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Developing-a-volunteering-strategy-Aug-2016.pdf>



Articles

A Unique Model: A Personal Account of an Innovative Volunteer Program by Andy Fryar

Creating a Strategic Volunteerism Plan: We Did It! by Mary Ella Douglas, Melissa Gilmore, Katherine H. Campbell and Marybeth K. Saunders

Moving Beyond Program: Developing a Volunteer Engagement Strategic Plan by Beth Steinhorn



Examples from other organisations:

United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust:

<https://www.ulh.nhs.uk/content/uploads/2016/10/Item-8.2a-Voluntary-Services-Strategy-2016-2019-version-7-12.05.16.pdf>

Charity Anthony Nolan:

<https://www.anthonynolan.org/sites/default/files/Anthony%20Nolan%20Volunteer%20Strategy%202016.pdf>

