



Volunteering Empowers

Collection of Tips for Hosting Volunteers with Fewer Opportunities or Family Commitments





Introduction

Every civil organisation and institution aims to implement successful programmes and carry out meaningful social work, often pursued with dedication and even passion. To do so, they usually need additional support. On the other side, many people are looking for opportunities to help and support good causes, as the vast majority of people enjoy feeling helpful and making a positive impact. Volunteering is a great way to bring these two sides together, providing solutions, a sense of fulfilment and a community experience.

Everyone wants to be a successful volunteer and implement a successful volunteer programme. However, goodwill, openness and opportunity alone are not enough. Professional preparation and thoughtful planning are also essential.

Organisations sometimes feel uncertain because difficulties or questions arise regarding hosting volunteers, and they seek guidance on these matters.

The purpose of this publication is to provide useful tips to host organisations on how to think ahead, plan, and prepare when receiving volunteers.

The publication may also be useful for organisations that already have volunteers but feel that some things are not running as smoothly as they should, since it can provide new ideas and inspiration for their ongoing activities.

This collection of tips is therefore not a set-in-stone professional manual, but rather a thought-provoking guide based on practical experience in volunteer management, offering ideas and insights.

Our goal is to encourage and inspire those who have already started working with volunteers, so that when they encounter obstacles, they have something to hold onto. This helps them move forward by recognising that the problems they experience are common, normal, and manageable. The collection also provides guidance to those who are just planning to host volunteers or work with specific target groups and would like to get a brief overview of what working with volunteers entails.

The collection is based on the experiences of the **Talentum Foundation for the Support of Volunteering** and the **Archdiocesan Office for Family Ministry of Alba Iulia**.

Since 2002, the Talentum Foundation has been organising volunteer management trainings, workshops, organisational development initiatives, volunteer projects, and volunteer actions. The organisation has implemented programmes in cooperation with other organisations (volunteer programmes in hospitals, theatres, museums, kindergartens, retirement homes, and senior clubs) and regularly hosts international volunteers.

In 2024, the Talentum Foundation explored hosting volunteers with fewer opportunities, specifically people with disabilities. We have gained extensive experience and can say that this area of volunteering is effective, offering social value that is highly needed in today's world. It should also be noted that this is a specialised area of volunteering, requiring greater preparation and attention, but the results are well worth the time invested and convey a profound social message.



Family-based volunteering and within that, spousal volunteering, is the mission of the **Archdiocesan Office for Family Ministry of Alba Iulia**, which has extensive practical experience in this field. The organisation aims to strengthen support for families through family-based volunteering and to create a more inclusive environment where people of all ages and family connections can find space to help others through their own cooperation.

Both organisations went through the same development process:

- They identified specific areas of volunteering.
- They deepened their knowledge and gained practical experience in those areas.
- They expanded their volunteer programmes by integrating these specialised fields.
- They built greater social impact and credible volunteer management.

This publication aims to introduce readers to these two special experiences and areas of expertise, encouraging them with tips for thoughtful volunteer hosting.



Organising volunteers
**Volunteer
management**

In order to understand the tips properly, it is necessary to talk about volunteer management:

Volunteer management encompasses the planning, organising, and monitoring techniques and processes used by host organisations, including the elements and methods for the effective and fair engagement of volunteers.

The tips in this publication always refer back to elements of volunteer management, making it clear in which area a given situation or problem can be resolved.

1. Before hosting volunteers, the host organisation should consider its operational framework.

FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS (i.e. static components)

WHY?

Why does our organisation want to host volunteers?

Organizational motivation

WHAT?

What activities would we like to assign to volunteers?

Scope of tasks

WHO?

Who will the incoming volunteer work or interact with within our organisation?

Internal environment

WHERE?

What is the working environment of our organisation, which determines the conditions for hosting volunteers?

External environment

HOW?

What is our organisation's approach to working with volunteers?

Organizational foundations

2. Once volunteers start arriving, each one is different, so their management needs to be flexible, adaptive, and dynamic.

PROCESS ELEMENTS (i.e. dynamic elements)

Recruitment

Inviting volunteers to join the organisation. How does the organisation present itself in a call for volunteers, and how does it clearly define the tasks for which it is seeking support?

Selection

Selecting the right person when several candidates apply. Who do we want to work with?

Introduction, preparation, orientation

If volunteers are familiar with their tasks and the purpose of their work, they will be able to work successfully, which means our programme will also be successful! Those who have already been trained may be open to performing other tasks as well.

Coordination (Coordinator)

Assigning and supervising tasks, handling sudden changes and resolving problems. All of these are key to ensuring a safe working environment, which is why a guiding person is essential.

Mental support (mentor)

Volunteers may be involved in activities where they experience deep emotions, encounter difficult life situations, or find it challenging to remain impartial and focus solely on the task. It is the host organisation's responsibility to set boundaries and provide mental support when sending volunteers into challenging environments.

Motivation

Everyone has a driving force that inspires them to volunteer. Motivation taps into this energy, supporting and encouraging it. This is what makes volunteering a meaningful experience and what helps retain volunteers in the long term.

Monitoring, evaluation, feedback

This is often associated with fear and the idea of assessment, but it should be done in a supportive, forward-looking manner. The goal is for the volunteer to gain a full understanding of their work, recognise its importance and be able to perform tasks to a high standard.

Acknowledgement

Time constraints should never be an excuse! Volunteers give their time and enthusiasm to the organisation. Expressing gratitude must be an essential part of hosting volunteers.

Farewell

Sometimes it is time to say goodbye. There are moments when we want to initiate it, we just need to find the right way. There are times when the volunteer feels the need to step back but is unsure how to end their involvement. "Disappearing" is never an acceptable solution, even if it might seem easier.

Documentation

Long-standing collaborations involving many volunteers demonstrate how essential documentation is. When we total the volunteer hours at the end of the year, we can be pleasantly surprised by just how much support we received throughout the year!

You can read more about the elements and practical aspects of volunteer management in the Talentum Foundation's online publication [Szervezz ÖMlevel!](#), available in Hungarian and Serbian.



Hosting volunteers is an experience that gives wings to an organisation! Not only because it allows a lot of work to be accomplished, helping to achieve a good cause, but also because volunteers bring fresh perspectives, new ideas, and often new connections to our organisation. However, all of this only becomes effective, successful, and socially valuable if the organisation pays proper attention to volunteer management, invests energy in preparation, and ensures that actions are guided by careful planning.

In short: good collaboration with volunteers starts with the energy invested and leads to great results and valuable partnerships.



Volunteering and Hosting Volunteers with Fewer Opportunities

Volunteering of People with Fewer Opportunities

The purpose of volunteering is to bring in people whom we can trust with tasks, who can work independently, efficiently, and accurately, who can take some of the workload off our shoulders, and whose work makes our programmes and day-to-day operations run smoothly. We could also say that they become our "extended hands", enabling us to accomplish more tasks and thus contributing to the success of our mission.

However, volunteers may also be people who struggle with some kind of disadvantage, whom we might not initially think could assist us. How can we prepare ourselves to work with them effectively? How can we directly invite them to take on tasks in which they can express themselves, in which they can experience success, and which do not require too much investment on the part of the organisation?

Groups of People with Fewer Opportunities:

- People with disabilities who live with permanent physical, intellectual, mental, or sensory impairments that, in combination with various other barriers, may limit their full, effective, and equal participation in society.
- People with health problems who live with serious or chronic illnesses or other physical or mental health conditions that prevent them from participating in activities.
- People with deficiencies in education and training systems who are a low achievers, early school leaver, NEET (not in employment, education, or training) and/or low-skilled.
- People with cultural differences who belong to a national or ethnic minority that may affect their communication (language) skills.
- People who have difficulty adapting to social integration and have limited social skills, such as people with a criminal record, people affected by addiction or people leaving institutional care, single parents, widows, etc.
- People experiencing economic hardship who live at a low standard of living, have low incomes, are in debt, and/or face financial problems.
- People who experience discrimination and find it difficult to cooperate or participate in a programme due to prejudices related to their gender, ethnicity, religion, or age.
- People facing geographical barriers who feel isolated from opportunities and need time and financial resources to access volunteering opportunities.

Hosting Volunteers with Fewer Opportunities

It is possible that our organisation has already worked with someone who fits one of the above descriptions, or perhaps we currently have a volunteer who requires more support in their work. Perhaps our organisation has already considered how to deal with a situation that is not so smooth and straightforward, one that does not fit the "classic" model of volunteer recruitment. So we may already have experience in this area, whether it be difficulties, positive experiences, or an intention not to send anyone away because they are not efficient enough at performing a task.

As we read through the collection of tips, let us draw on our experiences, but let us take a step back to the planning and decision-making phase and start our volunteer management plans again as follows.

- 1 The first step is to get to know and understand the characteristics of the target group.
- 2 The second step is to consider at the organisational level whether we want to and are able to work with them. If so, which types of groups with fewer opportunities can our organisation welcome openly, and which cannot?
- 3 The third step is to look around the organisation to see with whom and where people with fewer opportunities can volunteer.
- 4 The fourth step is to prepare our colleagues and the workplace for their arrival.
- 5 The fifth step is to be present during the activity, observe carefully what works and what does not, and then conduct an evaluation and provide feedback at the organisational level.

Remember: Until we get to know people with fewer opportunities, we often do not realize that many of them are fully capable of contributing valuable work to our organisation with proper preparation and support. People with fewer opportunities are capable of working hard to achieve their goals, learning well, and performing their tasks precisely, especially when they feel safe in their environment.



Tips for Volunteering and Hosting Volunteers with Fewer Opportunities



Nowadays, the focus has shifted toward people with fewer opportunities, and we often hear that they should not be excluded. However, we may feel uncertain about how to host them as volunteers. Is it really offensive and exclusionary if we do not know how to work with them and do not plan to do so?

When planning volunteer hosting, the very first step should be to examine our organisational motivation and then reflect on our own feelings. This reflection takes place within the organisation, with the manager and colleagues discussing it. This is the place for honest organisational collective thinking, where everything can be said. It is necessary to speak openly, but we must not stop at saying that we are afraid that in this efficiency-seeking, task-oriented world, there is no time for volunteers who are not skilled, not capable, etc.

At this stage, we can also talk about what happens when a tender requirement is to involve people with fewer opportunities, or when we see that accepting people with fewer opportunities gives us an advantage in the tender, or when we hear that it is appropriate to accept people with fewer opportunities.

It is reasonable to ask ourselves: Are we willing to open our doors? How should we open them? How can we prepare? And when is it acceptable to say no?

TIP

Let's talk about our fears, and then seek information about what we are afraid of. For example: What risks might accepting a person with fewer opportunities as a volunteer pose to our organisation?

The first thing to consider is whether we are actually able to host a person with fewer opportunities, or whether we operate in such a specialised field that, even with the best intentions, inclusion is not feasible. Is it safe for our clients or compatible with our mission to involve a person with fewer opportunities as a volunteer? Can we genuinely prepare them in a way that their presence does not represent a risk, but instead creates real value? Under no circumstances should we force inclusion if it appears risky for clients or for the performance of our tasks.

Once we have decided that we would like to host a volunteer with fewer opportunities under safe conditions, the next step is to get to know the characteristics of those we wish to work with.

Colleagues should also be prepared for this process, and a good way to do so is by openly discussing fears, such as:

- What could potentially go wrong?
- How can we handle problematic situations?
- What must be avoided at all costs within the organisation?
- What can we prepare for?

This should be followed by a trial. Let's test ourselves and our organisation through a volunteer action.

A volunteer action is a short, simple activity carried out for a cause, where the invited person volunteers in a protected environment. This activity does not yet require long-term commitment; rather, it serves as a trial of cooperation. We get to know the applicant, and they get to know our organisation. It becomes clearly visible how we are able to work together.

It is important that the action is actually useful, but on a small scale. It should involve shorter, simpler, less risky tasks, such as reading to the elderly, walking dogs together in the local park in the afternoon, doing crafts with children in the afternoon, etc.

Afterwards, we should reflect on our experiences. What did we feel? Which of our fears proved to be valid? How did we resolve challenges? Most importantly, we should examine what was useful in the cooperation and what was a positive experience for both us and the volunteer.

From here, we can gradually build further with smaller or larger tasks and programmes. If something does not work, we should acknowledge it openly and not force it. New experiences should be integrated into our volunteer engagement practices and used as a foundation for further development.

How can we know what a person with fewer opportunities is truly capable of? What tasks can we actually assign to them?

Every volunteer has a different personality, so even if we call on several volunteers for the same task, everyone will perform it a little differently. If we want volunteers for a longer period of time, or for a task where a volunteer has a lot of responsibility, then it is necessary to get to know the person we are hiring, to see their abilities and how they perform tasks.

The other side of success is a well-assigned task that the volunteer can perform, that they understand precisely, and in which they can provide us with useful help.

Every person with fewer opportunities is different, even if there are official categories. It is far more difficult and uncomfortable to take a task away from someone halfway through because we realize it does not match their abilities. The most uncomfortable situation, however, is when we do not withdraw the task at all, but instead quietly avoid each other because neither side dares to say that this is not what they expected or intended.

TIP

The introductory period is essential in volunteer recruitment, when we see the person we are recruiting at work and they begin to familiarize themselves with our organisation. This is even easier when volunteers work in teams, as it becomes even more apparent who is good at what and what we can build on. A person with fewer opportunities may often not be as skilled, fast, or efficient as others.



It is important to assess their abilities and discuss this with them. Typically, in an honest conversation, people with fewer opportunities are willing to talk about what works for them and what does not. We should always emphasize that we recognise their difficulties, thank them for being open about them, and value the fact that feelings and experiences can be shared honestly.

After that, encouragement and forward-looking conversation help when we point out that there are positive things alongside the disadvantages, and that there is a place for them among us. It often happens that a person with fewer opportunities is unable to perform a full range of tasks. In such cases, we should break down the tasks into smaller, easier to learn areas with less responsibility. This way, they can still help and be useful to us, but with a more patient approach and tasks better tailored to their needs, the risk of failure and disappointment is much lower for both sides.

After completing the volunteer tasks, it is worth holding an assessment meeting where there is space to express the key words and feelings that can later serve as a strong foundation for further development. (e.g., What went well? In which areas were you the most independent? Which task was the most difficult for you to complete?).

For people with fewer opportunities:

- start by giving them smaller tasks,
- work together through voluntary activities,
- get to know them,
- assess their abilities,
- and then build further tasks on this foundation (whether smaller or more complex).

A common question is what to do when a volunteer with fewer opportunities is eager to come more often, but the task is not something they are truly able to carry out. In such cases, is it acceptable to assign a “fake task”? Or can we assign them a small part of the task, which we highlight from the whole task, just to make them feel useful? Yes, it can be a solution to give them a smaller task, or even one that we have specifically included in the activities for the volunteer's sake (“fake task”). Our goal is to bring joy, usefulness, and attention to someone through volunteering. In these situations, it is important to emphasize that even though the task is small, it is still part of a larger whole that is important to our organisation.

What should we do when one of our colleagues treats a volunteer differently and refuses to work with them because their clothes are in poor condition?

Civil society organisations always work together in a more informal way; they like to stick together. Everyone wants a workplace where friendships can form, interests overlap, colleagues have coffee together, and talk not only about work but about life as well. When we open our doors to volunteers and make room for those who live in poorer circumstances, the difference becomes more apparent. However, we know that volunteering with us is a great experience and a step forward for these volunteers.



Newcomers may have different styles, dress differently, and behave differently. Sometimes cooperation is not easy, not only because of professional differences, but also because of differences in lifestyle, and conflicts can often arise between colleagues and volunteers.


TIP

If we decide to be open to working with people experiencing economic hardship, we should identify the characteristics that may be uncomfortable for us. Let's get to know our colleagues' fears! Let's prepare them for the new situation! Let's talk to them about what might be uncomfortable for them and what would make it acceptable! Often, simply having these conversations already helps resolve fear, as colleagues themselves suggest good ideas, adopt a more accepting attitude, or recognise that, in service of the organisation's mission, this openness is sometimes necessary and respond with understanding.

This situation can be unpleasant not only for colleagues, but also for the arriving volunteer, who may feel ashamed of their clothing.

One of the best solutions to differences in clothing is for the organisation to provide a "uniform" for its volunteers. This not only helps mask visible differences, but also makes the organisational identity and sense of belonging clearly visible, forging the group into a community.

Uniforms can vary greatly, with the simplest solution being the use of capes. They can also be T-shirts, jackets, vests, and even full uniforms. The key point is that a uniform not only protects those wearing it, but through shared colours, logos, or text, it also creates a common identity and a unified appearance. In doing so, it helps reduce visible differences and strengthens the organisation's image.



With environmental awareness and economic considerations in mind, uniforms can also be unified simply through colour (e.g., everyone should have a green T-shirt), which anyone can purchase freely, even from a second-hand clothing store or charity shop.

In addition to uniform clothing, lack of hygiene, unkempt hair, and cigarette smell can present additional challenges that require personal, individual solutions. This may involve a conversation with the volunteer, who may not even be aware, in a new environment, of how these characteristics are perceived. If these issues are communicated not as irreparable faults but as solvable matters, there is a chance the person will be willing to make changes for the sake of belonging to the community and continuing their volunteer work. At the same time, it must be clearly understood that not everyone responds well even to a kind feedback, and it may happen that the volunteer reacts with anger and chooses to leave. Not every situation can be resolved, sometimes we have to let someone go.

It may also be the case that we choose to compromise and accept a certain level of discomfort in order to retain the volunteer, to encourage them, to give them recognition, and to gradually shape and support them through volunteering over time.

A young person with mild autism has applied in response to our volunteer call and was accompanied by one of their parents to the information session. Are we required to accept every applicant in all cases?

The recruitment of volunteers is followed by the selection of volunteers. In the best case scenario, if several people apply, we select those individuals who are expected to be able to help us most effectively. The goal of this is to ensure the successful work, operation, and mission of our organisation.

How can we say “no”? Sometimes it is far worse if we do not dare to send someone away during the selection process, and then later they hinder the work, damages the positive atmosphere, or even put our clients at risk. In the end, we may find ourselves simply hoping that they will stop coming on their own.



This feeling can also arise when someone arrives with a problem that we have no experience with, and we do not dare to say no right away.

Once we have already discussed at an organisational level that we are open to work with people with disabilities, we just need to find the approach that works best for our organisation.

TIP

Following recruitment, there is often an initial in-person meeting and information session where all preliminary questions can be asked, both by the hosting organisation and by the applicants. Often, questions arise that we cannot answer immediately, but we want to make the right decision. This may be the case when a young person with mild autism applies for our volunteer call.

Feel free to ask for time to think about the situation and come back to the topic later (either immediately after the information session or at a later date). We need to assess whether the applicant is genuinely able to carry out the task. In this process, information from the accompanying parent can be a great help, and we can even give them a trial task. It is important to understand clearly what kind of support the applicant would need and how independent they are. Based on this, one possible solution is to tell the accompanying parent that we are open to hosting the volunteer, but we do not have many people, so we would prefer the applicant to be accompanied during the volunteer activity. They should arrive with someone they know and trust, who can support them and provide a sense of security while carrying out the task.

This could be a solution that is acceptable to our organisation, makes parents feel safe, and gives applicants the opportunity to volunteer. Such a decision can be incorporated into the organisation's core principles in the following way: We are happy to welcome volunteers with mild autism or other difficulties as volunteers, but our organisational capacity does not allow us to devote extra time and staff to support everyone, so we can only offer this opportunity if the volunteer is accompanied by someone who knows them and can help them with the activity if necessary.

It is important to clarify that this does not mean the accompanying person carries out the volunteer work, but rather that they accompany the volunteer, help them if any difficulties arise (if they are tired, need to use the restroom, etc.), and support them according to their specific needs so that they can perform the task independently. This means that the organisation's staff do not have to be present at all times. This arrangement provides real support for the organisation, while the volunteer can still experience the task as something they are carrying out "independently".

Is it worth including in the recruitment text that we are also open to welcoming volunteers who are visually impaired or use a wheelchair?

Working with people who have fewer opportunities undeniably requires greater attention from the hosting organisation. In today's fast-paced world, where efficiency and quick task completion are often prioritized, organisations often neglect to pay more attention or make greater preparations. Good intentions or keeping up with trends are not enough. At the same time, a trend towards more inclusive behaviour and greater openness may be on the rise. This is why we often see organisations recruiting and accepting people with more specific needs.

Recruitment is when we approach people to become volunteers for our organisation, when the organisation promotes itself. In doing so, it not only advertises the volunteer opportunity, but also conveys its values through its style. Recruitment is what captures the attention of potential volunteers and helps them decide whether the activity interests them. Recruitment can be general, meaning it is addressed equally to everyone.



Targeted recruitment, on the other hand, is when we directly highlight a target group and phrase the call for volunteers in such a way that they feel it is addressed to them. Recruitment is the first important public step towards potential volunteers, so its structure, conscious planning, tone, and communication are all crucial.

TIP

General recruitment treats everyone equally and communicates a high level of openness, which can represent greater equality for some people with fewer opportunities, such as individuals with visual impairments. In some cases, a visually impaired person may not want to identify themselves as a special target group. Another characteristic of general recruitment is that (if it is open to everyone) interested individuals can be aware that anyone may join so they will be able to meet anyone among the other volunteers.

It is more practical not to highlight specific target groups directly in recruitment, but to advertise in general way. However, if we would like to reach people with disabilities because the activity may be good for them, then we should carry out separate, targeted recruitment specifically for this group.

In addition to our general recruitment, let us write a call for organisations and schools that work with visually impaired people. It is beneficial if this targeted call is written with the help of someone who is visually impaired themselves. This helps avoid being unnecessarily polite or formal, but allows us to communicate in a professionally grounded way that truly speaks to the intended audience. This way, we can reach the right people more effectively, potentially receive support from organisations that already work with them, and better monitor the number of applicants.

From this point on, preparation and integration are what forge the various applicants into a well-functioning, effective volunteer team for the host organisation.

When we state that we are open to hosting people with disabilities, meaning we actively recruit a specific target group, reflecting our organisation's position. However, from the applicants' perspective, it may convey a slightly different message. Those who are not visually impaired may be alarmed by the presence of people with disabilities and may even withdraw their application. For people with disabilities, on the other hand, this openness can provide significant encouragement. They may invite each other, and more applicants from this target group may arrive than we planned, which will enable us to carry out our volunteer activities successfully.

In connection with the issues raised in this chapter, we recommend our publication, which deals with the volunteering and experiences of people with disabilities (available in Hungarian):

[Az önkéntesség új árnyalatai - A fogyatékkal élő személyek önkéntessége](#)

One of our volunteers travels in from a distant small town and can only volunteer during the time between the morning and afternoon buses. They often miss the feedback session because they would not catch their bus otherwise. This bothers the other volunteers. What could we do?

People living in more remote settlements are often not invited to volunteer at all, because it is faster and easier to work with volunteers who can arrive at a fixed time and stay until the end of the programme.



This is indeed often the most practical solution, and it is not something to be condemned. At the same time, there are many people who live further away from our organisation, have free capacity, and are open to helping, but their transportation difficulties need to be resolved.

When volunteers work in groups, they are always reliant on close cooperation. This is a basic characteristic of group dynamics. Volunteers working in a group pay attention to each other and react sensitively if someone does not cooperate, stands out from the group, or follows different rules. Volunteer work is only complete when it includes not just the task itself, but also the preparation beforehand and the evaluation and feedback afterward as essential parts of the shared work.

TIP

Since we have already made the decision to allow volunteers who live further away to participate, so we need to accept that public transportation severely limits our cooperation. During the first meetings it is worth discussing this circumstance by asking about bus or train schedules and when the volunteer can realistically arrive. This already opens up a conversation about the situation. After that, we can take public transportation schedules into account when planning arrival times, setting up and packing away, carrying out programmes, and organising feedback sessions.

We should provide an opportunity for the volunteer to come in if they arrive earlier, so they do not have to wait outside on the street. Likewise, if their return connection has not yet departed, they should be able to wait with us, as long as this is possible within our opening hour.

If a volunteer is unable to participate for the full duration of a programme, this should always be communicated to the other volunteers. If this causes tension, it should be discussed openly, and together with the group we should work toward a solution and agree on what is acceptable for everyone involved. When a shared solution is reached within the group, acceptance follows as well, regardless of the form the agreement takes.

Feedback is important, so we should consider how to include it if we need to let the volunteer leave earlier because they have to get home.

The volunteer may provide feedback separately, which can be a useful approach on certain occasions. Over the longer term, however, this can genuinely disrupt team cooperation.

It is worth developing methods that everyone can participate in, regardless of time and location:

- feedback can be done in writing and submitted afterward,
- online, in the form of a questionnaire or form,
- online through personal discussion,
- in person at a later occasion when all volunteers return.

The key is to choose a solution that is fair but does not require too much sacrifice on the part of either our organisation or the other volunteers. For the volunteers coming from further away, this can be a great help, encouragement, and opportunity. It is best if the volunteer team collects the options together and agrees on the best solution for them.

We took in a young romani person as a volunteer. One of our clients became upset and stated that they do not want to be assisted by a romani person, and would rather stop attending our programmes.

In helping activities, we encounter a wide variety of people, and those who receive support from our organisation hold very different attitudes. It is important that the clients we support feel safe and are strengthened by the work of our organisation. For a vulnerable or elderly person, receiving help from another vulnerable or limited individual as a volunteer can be frightening, as their previous experiences may have been different. They may have less trust and may be seeking professional or strong helpers instead.




In such situations, the client may express their disapproval directly to the organisation, but it can also happen that they complain to others, which can be damaging within a volunteer programme. This situation can be prevented.

TIP

When we welcome a volunteer from a culturally minority background, such as a young romani person, it is worth raising awareness among our clients first. We should explain our organisation's plan to work with volunteers and that we would like to work with volunteers who come from different backgrounds.

First, we should explore our clients' fears. Then we process them by discussing all the fears that have arisen, their consequences, and brainstorming acceptable solutions together.

When our clients understand our goals, for example in welcoming a romani volunteer, they are better able to relate to them. It can be even more effective to give our clients small roles or tasks so they can also take part in supporting the volunteer's successful work. This helps create a safe environment in which no one is taken by surprise when a young romani person arrives to help as a volunteer. We should also reassure clients that the organisation has carefully assessed its decisions, works with volunteers responsibly, and assigns only those activities to volunteers that can be carried out safely.



This is followed by preparing the volunteer, which is also an important part of safe helping work. The basis of honest communication is to reveal to volunteers that our clients are often uncertain about people who belong to minorities. We should talk this through with them and share the concerns that may arise on the clients' side. Let's gather together what difficult situations and misunderstandings may arise and brainstorm solutions together.

Once both parties have undergone preliminary training, it is time to start working together. First, give the volunteer smaller tasks and allow time for them to get familiar with each other. Then, give the volunteer and the client an opportunity to talk together about how our romani volunteer can best help them. Hold joint meetings where they can give each other feedback, and be sure to have separate feedback sessions where the client and the volunteer can give us feedback separately. The outcomes of this feedback should then be processed and fed back into our practices, using them to further improve our volunteer engagement structure.

In our volunteer team, there are two volunteers who often do not fully understand what the task is during task assignment or execution, but they do not speak up. Instead, they simply fail to show up at the agreed time to complete the task.

Tasks can be communicated in many different ways during volunteer work. The hosting organisation knows exactly what it does, how it operates, and what it aims to achieve through its programmes. For those working within the organisation, the organisational culture and internal communication are familiar and feel natural. The hosting organisation also knows its clients well, or even if new people arrive regularly, it has experience with the characteristics of the target group.

For new volunteers, understanding a task is not always easy at first. This is especially true for volunteers with lower levels of education, who may better understand practical, simpler instructions. If this is not taken into account or consciously addressed, many uncomfortable situations can arise. More confident volunteers tend to ask questions more easily and grasp connections more quickly.

It is important to notice those for whom this is more difficult and to give them additional attention and support.

TIP

For volunteers who find it more difficult to understand tasks due to their lower level of education, the coordinator plays a key role and is best placed to provide assistance. This is easier if we have specifically targeted people with lower levels of education or learning difficulties. It is more difficult if we are unaware of this and it only becomes apparent over time as tasks are completed and situations are resolved.

In the case of those with lower levels of education, it is a very sensitive issue if we single them out, if we emphasize that we are progressing more slowly because of them, because they misunderstood a task or solved it incorrectly.

In such cases, the coordinator can use creative methods to help the volunteer without singling them out from the group or embarrassing them in front of others. Good options include:

- Let's explain the task in a little more detail, with a little more explanation for everyone.
- Write down the task, and after it has been explained, hand it out to everyone in writing. This way, those who find it more difficult to understand can read it again at their leisure and refer back to it at any time.

- The written task can be posted on a shared platform or sent to a shared group via phone, where volunteers can discuss the details among themselves in a casual chat style. (Keep in mind that the digital world is very convenient and fast, and many people, especially members of the younger generation, take its use for granted, but when working with people who have fewer opportunities, this can often be difficult for them.)
- One solution may be to hold a personal meeting with the individual concerned to discuss the task separately. In such cases, the task should be explained again if we feel that they have not yet understood the information and knowledge necessary to perform the task.

If a volunteer disappears, meaning they do not show up for the programme and do not complete their task, this cannot be ignored, because otherwise it may become a pattern. It is best to deal with this personally with the volunteer, but if the inconvenience has affected other volunteers as well, it is essential to have a joint discussion, find a joint solution, resolve the situation, and discuss how to move forward in a positive manner.

The coordinator plays a key role in supporting those who are not so skilled, reassuring them that they are still good at their tasks, they just need more or longer preparation.

While carrying out tasks, we noticed that one of our volunteers does not seem to be doing well. Another volunteer quietly informed us that this person has mental health difficulties. How should we respond to this situation, and do other volunteers need to be informed that one of their peers is experiencing mental health challenges?

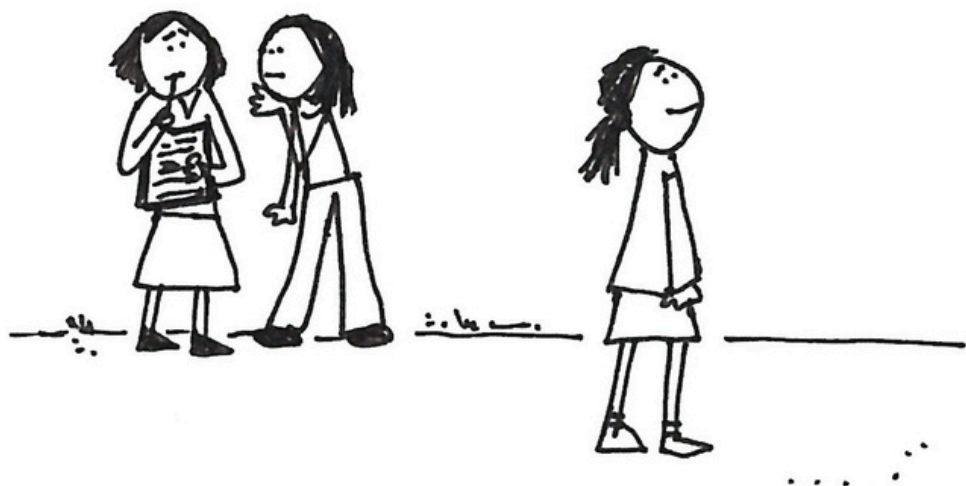
When we accept a volunteer, we cannot know in advance how the person will react in certain situations, what experiences or memories may be triggered by the tasks they perform, or by the target group they are helping. We also do not know what past experiences, difficulties, or possible illnesses a volunteer applicant may have had or may currently be dealing with.

These are highly individual and deeply personal matters that are difficult, if not impossible, to ask about, and it would often be inappropriate to do so. However, it often raises the question of whether we need to know about an illness or mental condition when we want to ask someone to volunteer to help others.

TIP

In certain cases, mental health difficulties can be an excluding factor in helping activities. Within a civil organisation's mission, ensuring the safety of the target group it serves is a primary responsibility. For this reason, there are situations that override the need for discretion, when cooperation should not continue with a volunteer who may pose a risk to others, meaning clients or fellow volunteers.

It is easy to see that if someone is mentally unstable and becomes exhausted at a camp, has an emotional breakdown, or experiences a hysterical episode, it affects everyone involved, even if no one is directly endangered. Such situations need to be dealt with and resolved immediately.




Mental health issues must therefore be discussed as grounds for exclusion. How can we prevent volunteers from noticing this in each other, or from it only coming to light later, in a bad situation?

- When presenting the tasks to volunteers, the coordinator should explain what factors may be grounds for exclusion, not only in physical terms and in terms of the tasks involved, but also in terms of mental illness and related issues.
- The coordinator should explain the risks associated with mental health problems and why they are grounds for exclusion from volunteer work.
- It should be made clear and transparent what the organisation's response is and how it will handle a situation if a problem arises that creates a dangerous situation.
- It should be made clear that in such cases, the volunteer must immediately stop the activity.
- Volunteers should be given time to make a decision, think things over, or request further information based on the points made by the organisation.

Since volunteers typically do not reveal if they have mental health issues, based on what they have heard during training and after individual consideration, the volunteer has the option to withdraw. It is also acceptable if they give another reason for leaving. Sometimes, a volunteer simply does not return after this. This is an unfortunate situation, but it is also a solution for them and a safety measure for us.

The situation is quite different if the volunteer starts their work without any prior preparation based on the above points, or if they did receive preparation but did not address their problem. In such cases, it can be helpful if a fellow volunteer, a colleague, or a client provides feedback that something is not right with the volunteer. This is not malicious, but important information that may even prevent a more serious problem. The most discreet solution is to talk to the volunteer in person. In this case, the volunteer has the opportunity to reveal their problem in a safe environment, which is the easier option because it allows the coordinator to respond honestly.

If the volunteer still does not acknowledge their problem, or is unaware of it and unable to talk about it, the organisation must decide whether it considers this situation too risky. If the answer is yes, there is no alternative but to part ways with the volunteer. In this situation, their behaviour (and let us not label it as a mental problem, let us just talk about the symptoms) is a disqualifying factor for volunteering.



However, there are situations where the mental state is not so severe or dangerous, and the organisation may decide to continue working with the volunteer. In this case, clear and open communication is also the best approach, with the organisation expressing to the volunteer that it is aware of their situation but still wishes to work with them. On this basis, it is worth talking to the volunteer from time to time about their current state in a personal situation.

When the volunteer's mental state creates a situation that is perceived and suffered by clients or other volunteers and colleagues, it is essential to resolve the tension among all those involved. There needs to be a space where the situation can reach a point of resolution, allowing everyone to express their feelings and concerns, and where a form of cooperation can be established that provides a sense of safety for all participants.

A volunteer with limited social skills already carries out their work quite independently in food donation collection at local grocery stores. The coordinator does not always accompany them. On one occasion, the necessary equipment was not prepared by the store staff at the location, but the volunteer did not dare to point this out. They stood around for a while and then went home. How can we prevent similar situations from happening in the future?

Once the coordinator has prepared and introduced the volunteers, and the usual tasks have been carried out several times, the volunteers are able to perform the familiar tasks independently at the familiar location. This is a situation of trust, where the coordinator allows the volunteers to work independently because they already trust them. This way of working saves the organisation a lot of time and energy.

TIP

Independence is not only about freedom and trust, but also about responsibility. Volunteers need to be prepared for this responsibility so that it does not feel frightening to them. Preparing volunteers is not only about assigning and explaining tasks properly, but also about modelling how to handle expected or possible difficult, uncomfortable, or problematic situations. Of course, not every negative situation can be anticipated in advance, which is why clarifying responsibility boundaries and strengthening decision-making capacity also play an important role in preparation.

When volunteers carry out their activities outside the organisation (where everything is already familiar to them) at an external locations, the coordinator cannot influence every aspect of task execution. The coordinator must also cooperate and trust that staff at external sites will prepare the necessary equipment and be aware that volunteers are arriving. In such situations, if volunteers arrive and do not find what was planned in advance, and the coordinator is not present, they must be able to make immediate decisions and take action on spot.

It is common for people with fewer opportunities to receive help from others because they are in a vulnerable position. They often do not make decisions independently. People who find it more difficult to adapt to social settings or whose social skills are more limited may often be afraid to ask questions of staff at external locations.

Preparation can help ensure that volunteers are assigned to external locations with the greatest possible safety and that they are able to successfully resolve unexpected situations there.

What is important in such cases:

- Volunteers should understand that factors beyond their control may influence their work during a given activity.
- They should understand that in such situations, if the coordinator is not present, they are representing the organisation and are responsible for handling emerging difficulties.
- They need to clearly know in which situations the coordinator should be contacted, and which situations they are able to resolve on their own.
- They should be able to assess what happens if they do not dare to make a decision, how to communicate this on site, and that they must not leave without informing the coordinator.
- They must be aware of the harm caused to the organisation if they leave the location without notice.
- It should be made clear that while the volunteer is expected to make a practical, immediate decision on site, taking responsibility for conflict management or delivering negative feedback to an external partner is the coordinator's role.

During preparation, a very practical approach is to plan situational scenarios and role-play what might happen on site. We should act out effective solutions, and it is also extremely useful to collect ready-made sample phrases that can support volunteers in real situations.

This preparation, this "rehearsal" of situations, can create a sense of security in which we can ensure that our volunteers will not be overwhelmed by an unexpected situation where they have to make a decision.

The final step is that if such a situation actually occurs, the coordinator works through the situation with the volunteers, and they discuss the lessons learned, even as a group, and work out best practices together. Be sure to take the time to do this, because praise and thanks for their actions will reassure the volunteers.

One of our volunteers does not speak the official language of our country well enough. They are very capable in carrying out the volunteer activity itself and are a reliable help to our organisation, but they are not able to properly complete the administrative tasks required for the role. Correcting and supplementing the administration places an additional burden on the organisation and could also cause problems in the event of an inspection. What could be a possible solution?

The perfect volunteer does not exist. Unfortunately. It would be extremely practical for hosting organisations if they did. For every activity where help is needed, it would be ideal to find a volunteer who can perform the task precisely and exactly according to the organisation's needs.

Fortunately, however, there are many valuable volunteer applicants, and it is possible to match the skills of volunteers very well with the tasks of the organisation. Weaknesses can be identified and corrected. This is why a lot depends on volunteer training, how we enable them to perform a given task, their motivation, and how much time we invest in helping volunteers become committed.

TIP

When a volunteer arrives with cultural differences and language difficulties, the first step is to be aware of this. With clear task assignment, the volunteer can explain which tasks they can complete easily and confidently, and which ones they do not have the necessary knowledge or skills for at all. When a volunteer is highly capable in the core activity and provides significant support to the organisation, but cannot properly handle the related written administration due to language barriers, the hosting organisation has several possible solutions available.



We should assess how essential the activity the volunteer performs is to our organisation. It may be decided that, although the volunteer carries out the core activity very well, the administrative burden is too great for the organisation. In this case, the volunteer may not be the right fit for that role. We can redirect the volunteer to a different area and assign another volunteer to the task in question.

- Volunteers are very important, and if no one else can perform the task as well for us, we may decide to have the organisation take over the administration instead of the volunteer.
- In case of language difficulties, it may also be a good solution to ask the volunteer to bring a companion who can help them with the administrative part. In this way, the activity can be fully carried out with the support of an additional helper.
- It can be reassuring for the volunteer if we explain the administrative tasks to them, train them, and provide them with templates that they can use. If the administration has been developed by the organisation, we can use a method where the volunteer does not have to write anything, but can simply mark the appropriate answers.
- Nowadays, another solution is to do the administration online, in which case the questions and answers can be interpreted for the volunteer with the help of a translator.

In many cases, full task completion requires administrative work, the proper management of which cannot be neglected. However, through the use of effective and innovative tools and the involvement of other assistants, we can make this work easier for those with language difficulties.

We are organising a celebration for our volunteers. Should we give greater recognition to our deaf and hard-of-hearing volunteers? Or should we treat them like everyone else?

People with fewer opportunities are often treated as outsiders by society, and then often overly glorified and given excessive recognition. Their achievements often require much greater effort than those who perform their daily tasks easily, quickly, and successfully. It is indeed a significant question how much we should highlight them, as this may draw even more attention to their disabilities and difficulties. This may make them feel that we did not really expect this performance from them and that we are surprised that they did their job well.

TIP



By the time the ceremony arrives, ideally we will know the volunteers well enough to know which option would mean more to them: highlighting their performance or treating them the same as everyone else.

If this is not clear because the volunteer is more reserved, or because we have worked with many volunteers at once for a short period of time, then the coordinator can play a key role in asking the volunteer about this. People with disabilities whose disability is clearly visible are often willing to talk openly about their life situation. They are also happy to tell us how we can best work with them, what motivates them, and what hurts them. We should feel free to ask them, as this is better than not daring to ask and creating an uncomfortable situation for them and our organisation.

It may also happen that a volunteer who would otherwise prefer not to publicize their work agrees to have their achievements highlighted in order to achieve the goal of encouraging other people with disabilities. In this case, it is important to ask the person concerned what message might motivate their peers, which would not be offensive to them, but could provide genuine encouragement.

Summary conclusions

Working with people who have fewer opportunities opens perspectives, creates connections, and offers a possibility that can make an organisation genuinely richer and more authentic. At the same time, it cannot be denied, and this publication also highlights, that such volunteer engagement requires more conscious organisation, greater attention, and increased investment of energy from the organisation. Conscious preparation and the possibility of making mistakes cannot be avoided. Feedback is essential, as is the continuous integration of experiences into the organisation's practices in this area.

The cases listed are examples of solutions that can be freely interpreted for our own organisation.

Some important points reappear almost consistently in the examples:

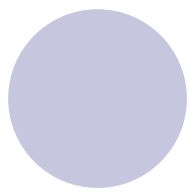
- The most important thing is to constantly seek and achieve a balance between understanding the volunteer, and the effective functioning of the organisation.
- The importance of preparation, which means the time and methods devoted to preparation, the precise assignment of tasks, and raising awareness among the people involved.
- Step-by-step approach, meaning that cooperation is tested with smaller tasks, and the workload is increased slowly, in small steps.
- Open and honest communication with all parties involved: volunteers with fewer opportunities, fellow volunteers, clients, and organisational staff.
- Immediate handling of problematic situations and, above all, finding joint solutions to create a safe volunteer environment.

There are several solutions for every situation that arises, so it is worth trying new and unusual methods and approaches. At the same time, methods and tools should be selected in a personalized way for volunteers with fewer opportunities.

In external communication, a form of agreement and discretion in which all parties feel comfortable, while at the same time serving as a message to society.



Family volunteering



Opportunities of family volunteering


Family volunteering is a form of volunteering that has long been present, but is often not consciously developed, managed, or articulated. Many volunteer activities take place with parents joining their children to help, or parents bringing their adolescent children along and involving them in the activity. In other cases, a family member accompanies a person struggling with an illness, or a wife invites her husband to share the joy of helping others.

Another aspect of family volunteering is when family members participate together in volunteer activities where the relationship itself carries the message of the activity. In these cases, the form of cooperation becomes part of what the volunteering represents.

Examples of family volunteering

Volunteering among family members (e.g., parent-child, married couple, grandparent-grandchild) can create special situations that influence the execution of volunteer activities. It is therefore important for the host organisation to consciously reflect on how it can provide opportunities for family volunteering, what value it sees in it, and how it can deal with the challenges that arise from it.

Family volunteering typically takes three forms. In the first case, family members apply to the host organisation together, based on their own motivations (they want to commit to the same values, gain shared experiences, learn together, or even spend quality time together). In this case, there is the possibility of action-oriented or longer-term volunteering, and it is also possible that family members work together in the same or different roles, activities, or locations within the organisation.




The involvement of a volunteer or a family member of a client may develop over time. A parent accompanying their child to programmes or a companion of a person with fewer opportunities often becomes a volunteer themselves if they can identify with the values of the organisation (perhaps as an expression of gratitude). In this case, the initial motivation is to provide protection (supportive volunteering), and then the family member extends their help to others as a volunteer. In other cases, a very committed volunteer who enjoys their work may motivate their own family members to get involved, even on the basis of a direct invitation.

At the same time, it is also possible for family-type volunteering to be initiated by the organisation, as the volunteer activity itself requires the participation of family members. An example of this would be when we involve married couples as volunteers in preparing engaged couples, or when a grandfather and his grandchild jointly speak to the participants at a local event about the power of intergenerational relationships.

These forms enrich volunteering, even if there are challenges in organising them. Family volunteering should not be random, but a direct form of volunteer work that, in addition to the task at hand, allows us to convey a further message and experience.

Family volunteering from the perspective of volunteer hosting

- 1** The main goal is to explore how this form of voluntary activity can be described, as well as the advantages and potential challenges of family members participating in voluntary activities together.
- 2** The second step is for managers and employees to consider at the organisational level whether the characteristics they have learned about are acceptable to the organisation. If so, under what conditions and what preliminary preparations may be required.
- 3** The third step is to identify the difficulties that may arise with this form of volunteering. It is good to be prepared in advance with case and problem-solving methods and to know what attitudes are typical in the organisation. A lot can be learned from the situations that arise, but it is an advantage to have some preliminary ideas so that decisions do not have to be made suddenly on the spot.
- 4** The fourth step is to prepare our employees for this new type of volunteer work and to clearly communicate who has what responsibilities and decision-making powers in these situations.
- 5** The fifth element here is that when we start something new, we should always be present in the activity, observe carefully what works and what does not. After the activity, we should provide feedback and reflect on it at the organisational level. It is worth looking at which elements of the planned solution proved successful, reinforcing those, and transforming those that did not work. By building opportunities for family volunteering, we bring joy to many individuals and families and provide opportunities for cooperation, which is a special added value for our organisation.



Family volunteering opens up a path that is extremely valuable in today's segmented world. Volunteering not only represents this, but also provides an experience in which participants can experience the value of helping and supporting the local community.

For organisations that aim to keep families together and strengthen them, and that enable and even encourage family members and couples to work together for the local community through their volunteer activities, it is not just a question of organising activities. When a mother and father work together, the organisation may feel responsible for considering, for example, the children who are left at home without their parents. This attitude opens up even greater horizons for family volunteering, because it involves responsibility for the whole family and consciously involves the children. This can lead to the creation of further programmes and volunteer activities. This may involve extra work, but it demonstrates a form of value-creating cooperation that is lacking in today's world.

The following tips are based on the experiences of families who have participated in volunteer activities.

The mission of the Archdiocesan Office is to strengthen families. In their activities, volunteering is not only a means of helping others, but also a form of cooperation that can have a significant impact on the everyday lives of families. The shared experiences of family members from different generations go beyond the mere completion of tasks. The Archdiocesan Office is aware that this mission requires more complex tasks, but the results they have seen encourage them in their work.



Tips for family volunteering



Why should family volunteering be considered a specific area? Cannot we treat helpers in general, just like other volunteers?

When hosting volunteers, we plan tasks that we assign to one or more helpers. If we have several helpers in the same area, meaning we are working with a group, group dynamics are bound to develop among the people. This can strengthen their work, but it can also weaken it. The coordinator works to ensure that the group functions well, that volunteer activities are successful, and that the organisation achieves its goals through the volunteers.

During recruitment, many different volunteers may apply, and it may become obvious during the introduction and administration process that some of them are family members. In such cases, the question arises as to whether we should treat them together or separately, based purely on the task at hand.

TIP

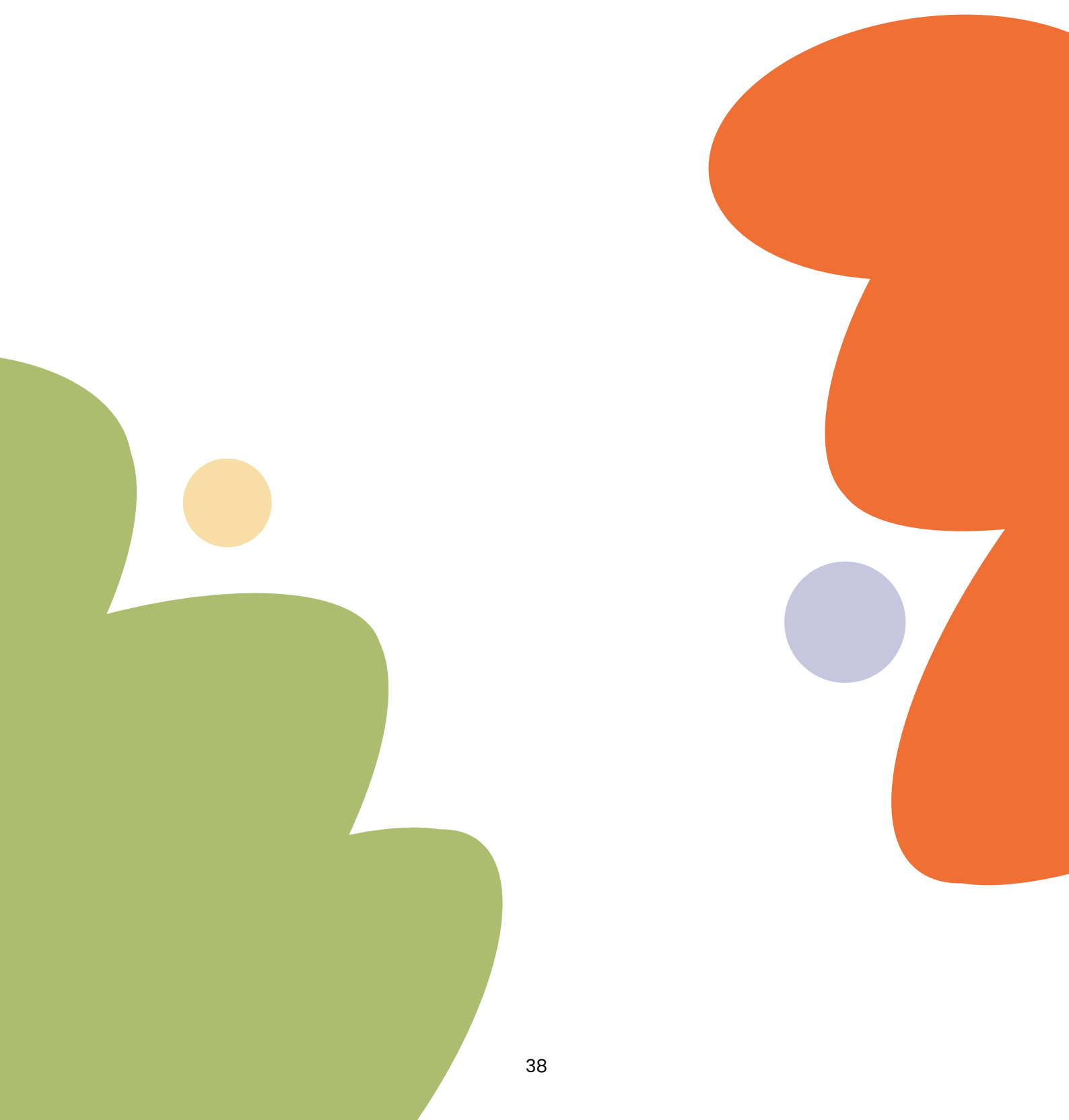
When recruiting volunteers, we have several options. We can recruit anyone who wants to help, or we can specifically encourage people to bring their spouses, children, or grandparents along. This will increase the number of volunteers.

When family members arrive, they are sure to bring their family dynamics, roles, and potential conflicts from home. This happens even if they applied separately, and even if they arrived together as family members.

- Be sure to take into account that there are family members in the team. If we pay attention to this, we will not be surprised later by the connections between them.
- If family members express (openly or implicitly) that they definitely want to volunteer together, explore the organisational possibilities for this. Talk to the volunteers about their goals in wanting to work together. This information will help with task assignment and organisation.
- Above all, however, it is important that those for whom we are volunteering, namely our clients, receive the services they need and that volunteering takes place in safe conditions for them. If this can be ensured even if family members volunteer together, then we can take their request to work together into consideration.
- If we cannot arrange for them to always be together in everything, it is worth discussing this with the volunteers. If they do not agree to separate activities, then it is up to the organisation to decide whether they can be accepted as volunteers.

Typically, volunteers understand that the safety of clients and the performance of tasks are paramount in the organisation. If we can communicate this to them in an understandable way, they become open to working separately, while still being able to be together during breaks and evaluation sessions.

Whether planned in advance or not, family members can volunteer together if client safety and the organisation's mission allow it.



A married couple applied to volunteer. They were very skilled, but only wanted to work together because they saw it as a way of strengthening their relationship.

When volunteers see an organisation's call for volunteers, they consider whether the activity is interesting to them, whether they would enjoy it, or whether it appeals to their knowledge or hobbies. This is when motivation really kicks in, encouraging a volunteer to devote their time and energy to an activity that will make them feel good, give them a sense of achievement, and provide them with learning opportunities.



Many people are not sure exactly what motivates them to volunteer. However, the more aware someone is of "why they need volunteering," the more definite their idea is. This often gives them the strength to do everything they can for their volunteer work, while others have a very strong will that they are unwilling to compromise.

TIP

In this case, the organisation has a very easy job, because the applicants were able to clearly state their motivation. This is a great help in ensuring that both parties have a clear understanding of what they expect from each other.

In family volunteering, it is often the case that married couples want to spend quality time together, and choosing an activity that also helps others is a great bonus. This is definitely something that the organisation should value.

Such openly acknowledged motivation is also very good because the organisation can relate to it.

The organisation can also be happy because maintaining motivation is key to retaining volunteers and ensuring long-term cooperation. Volunteers or volunteer pairs who enjoy themselves are happy to continue working with the organisation, become more committed, and are open to working in other areas as well. They become reliable members of the organisation, while also fulfilling their own aspirations.

An organisation acts wisely when, after taking client safety into account, it confidently allows volunteers to feel at home within the organisation as well. This is a meaningful contribution and an added value through which the organisation helps make everyday life happier. Beyond its original mission, volunteering becomes capable of fulfilling an additional, smaller, less visible, yet deeply important human mission.



During the children's camp, a conflict arose between a pair of volunteer grandparents and grandchildren. They argued several times in front of others, and the teenage grandchild went home early from camp. They refused to discuss the situation, saying it was a "family matter." What can we do?

A hosting organisation always operates within regulated frameworks and carries a specific social mission. Accordingly, there are numerous internal rules that must be followed and complied with. The organisation allows volunteers to work closely with target groups and in a work environment for which it is responsible. Volunteers arrive in this internal environment and must carry out their activities accordingly.



Volunteers work with the organisation's clients and staff, so not only does their work have an impact on the organisation, but so does their personal behaviour. Of course, when someone becomes a volunteer and has not yet worked in a civil organisation, it is the organisation's responsibility to teach them the norms of behaviour.

There are general rules that apply to clients (for example, how we work with elderly or deaf people, etc.), and there are additional internal organisational rules that are specific to the organisation and part of its culture. It is important to make volunteers understand that when they become members of our organisation, they become responsible not only for the work they do, but also for their behaviour.

TIP

If any conflict arises during the course of volunteer work, it is never an inner, personal matter, and even if it occurs between family members, it is not just a family matter. The content that causes the conflict may be family-related, or even secret to others. However, when an internal family conflict becomes visible to others, jeopardizing the performance of the task or the clients, the volunteer is responsible for their behaviour. The organisation must find a solution in this situation or after the poorly executed situation.

How can you prevent conflict resolution or management from becoming the organisation's task?

- When planning family volunteering, the organisation considers the risk factors in advance.
- When training volunteers, the organisation makes it clear what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.
- The organisation draws attention to how a conflict situation jeopardizes its mission and the clients it works for.
- The organisation clearly communicates its attitude towards threatening situations: whether there are sanctions or what solutions it applies.
- The organisation makes it clear that in a problematic situation, the coordinator is the person responsible for providing help or intervening, whose task is to resolve the situation.
- To avoid others interfering and the matter becoming more widespread, the coordinator has the authority to make decisions.
- If several members of the organisation are involved in the matter, it is important for the organisation to discuss the case together and provide feedback on the lessons learned.

A clear and straightforward preliminary statement is likely to help volunteers pay attention to themselves, recognise when friction arises between them, and resolve it in a timely manner. After all, everyone wants to do their job as well as possible.

However, disagreements can still happen. In such cases, it is the coordinator's responsibility to correct the situation. If clients or other volunteers were also involved in the situation, they should also be talked to about what happened.

It is definitely worth discussing the situation with the two volunteering family members so that they feel responsible and understand what they have caused for others or the organisation.

If the two volunteers are willing to volunteer again after this, it may be worth offering them different activities, as this may be more comfortable for them. We can also give them tasks where they work together to a certain extent, but do not have to be closely involved with each other, so that they can cooperate while keeping family dynamics at a safer distance.

The parent also expressed interest in volunteering, as their children had volunteered with us during the summer programmes. However, the parent often interfered with their children's work, gave them different tasks, and did not allow the coordinator to correct them. This led to a disagreement between the coordinator and the parent.

When working with volunteers, many situations can be prevented by planning tasks in advance, defining boundaries, and having a plan for problem solving. All of this should be done before the volunteer arrives at the organisation.



However, the situation at hand often brings about some kind of difference, change, something we had not thought of before, because it is impossible to be prepared for everything. Every volunteer is different. In this diverse situation, some kind of unity must be created. This is only possible if the organisation establishes its own framework, rules, principles, and attitude, which can point in the same direction based on the organisational culture and values.

TIP

The source of the tension that arose was that the parent was unable to step out of their parental role when they volunteered to follow their children. The parent did not come to help their children because they might have difficulty managing on their own, but to understand and experience what their children were gaining from volunteering. So, we are not seeing supportive family volunteering, but rather the parent also taking on a volunteer role. And when the parent steps back into the role of parent in relation to their children, this causes conflict for the coordinator, who treats everyone as volunteers and organizes activities based on volunteer management.

What can be done to ensure that this change does not cause problems?

- Volunteers should be aware that the coordinator assigns, checks, and assesses the tasks in all cases. This also means that the coordinator is responsible for the volunteers and for ensuring that the task is performed properly.
- If the coordinator does not consider the task to be wrong and does not comment on it, then no one else can review it, change it, or give different instructions. This helps to minimize problems arising from miscommunication and incorrect instructions. The roles, responsibilities, and limits of authority should therefore be clearly visible to all volunteers.
- It should also be clearly stated that if someone notices a mistake during volunteer work, they should not start giving instructions to their fellow volunteer (even if they are younger, less experienced, or even their child), but should report their observation to the coordinator and let the coordinator investigate and resolve the issue.
- It is worth clarifying what the organisation's problem-solving rules are in the event of a conflict arising on site.

When parents do not cooperate with the coordinator and do not allow their children to act independently, one solution may be for the coordinator to assign one of the parties to another task on the spot. In other words, family members must be separated, thereby disrupting the family role structure. If family members are not working side by side, the coordinator will become the person in charge for everyone, and they will not fall so easily into the patterns of control that exist at home.

The case should be followed by a discussion that focuses on the future, with the acceptance that, whether they work together or separately in the future, it is always the coordinator who decides, monitors, and provides feedback, and they must accept this in the interests of cooperation.

Family relationships are always emotional, and they should never be analyzed or judged. The case and its solution should always be approached from the perspective of the task, the organisation, and ultimately the achievement of the organisational goal.

A young diabetic came as a volunteer, accompanied by either his mother or father to make him feel safe, and the accompanying parent proved to be a useful help as well during the programme. However, the parent often took the task out of the child's hands for the sake of excessive safety and solved it himself.

The organisation also has its own motivation for wanting to work with volunteers. One of the most common organisational motivations is when the organisation needs people who can act as its "extended arm" in its activities. The more people it has, the more tasks the organisation can successfully perform, and therefore the more clients it can support. This is a driving force in which, to put it simply, it does not matter who performs the task, as long as it is done well. However, volunteer-hosting organisations very often go beyond practicality and cannot help but pay attention to the people involved, clients, and volunteers. As a result, they often find themselves in personal, emotionally charged situations. The most important thing is to be aware of this, to consciously accept it, and to reflect on it.

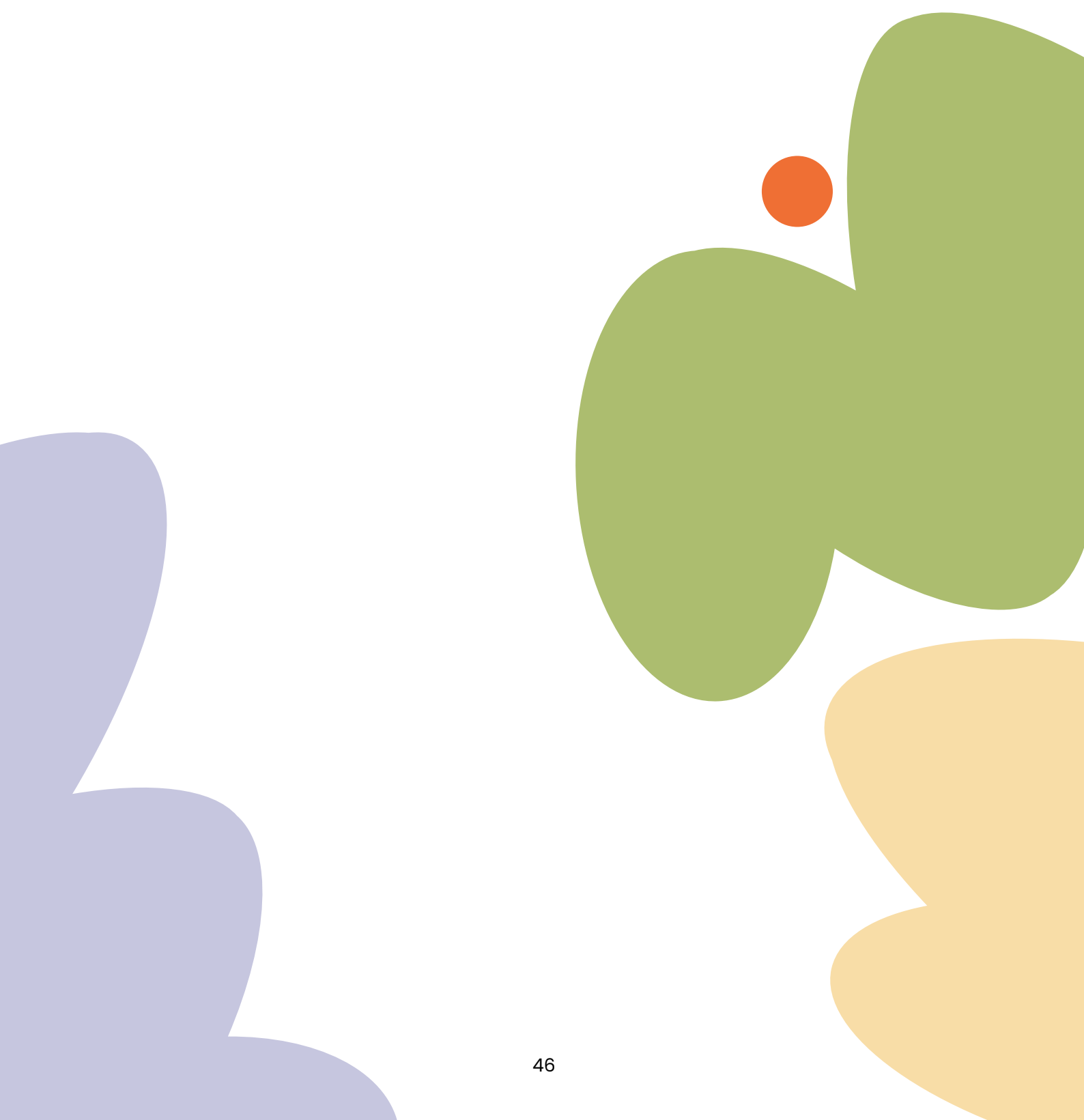
TIP

The organisation was open to accepting a person with a long-term illness and allowed an accompanying person to provide a safe environment for them. In this case, it is not only important to feel reassured that there will be an aide to help, but also to find out why an aide is needed. It is important to ask what their duties are, what a half-day of more intensive volunteer work entails for a diabetic, for example, and to explore what risks there may be, when the volunteer is unable to perform their duties.

Once this has been discussed, it becomes clear how the volunteer and their companion will work together. With this understanding, the organisation is then able to plan responses if necessary. During the preliminary assessment, it may become clear that the companion will occasionally need to assist the volunteer in their activities because it will be necessary (for example, if the volunteer is working too slowly). In these cases, it is also necessary to consider what this entails and whether the companion will need additional training or tools.

Another option is for the accompanying person to be present in the background as a support, but passively. They have no other task than to observe the volunteer. A good solution for this is to give the accompanying person a task that keeps them present with their child, but does not require them to focus on the child all the time. This way, they are occupied and feel useful, and are less likely to interfere with their child's task. This solution can be planned and discussed in advance. It also works if, during the activity, the coordinator senses that the accompanying person needs to be placed a little further away from the child, and a smaller task is just right for this.

The helpfulness, acceptance, and humanity of organisations are very important, but let us not forget that if this places too great of a burden on the organisation, then we have the freedom to decide that we cannot give this task to the child. Or we may not assign the entire task to the volunteer, but break it down into smaller units, ones in which we perceive less risk, but where we can still maintain our humane, helpful attitude.



We recruited a very active and useful couple to volunteer for our organisation, with the man doing physical work and the woman performing administrative tasks. The only problem was that if one of them had something to do at home, the other would not come alone. In such cases, all work would come to a standstill for a while.

Volunteers who apply to us see the call for volunteers, our organisation's activities, and everything that shows what we do. When they feel like volunteering, they keep their own goals in mind and are motivated by their own desires. This is fine, as this is where cooperation begins. However, for real cooperation to develop, it is not enough for everything to be comfortable and favourable for the volunteer; it is also important that the joint work be functional for the host organisation. This goal can be achieved if the organisation helps to integrate its volunteers, especially if it wants to retain them in the long term. It helps volunteers to see more than just one task in the organisation.

TIP

When one volunteer is absent and the other volunteer does not show up for work either, it is not simply one absence, but a double loss for the organisation. Two planned activities are cancelled at once, which is much more difficult to make up for than if only one person dropped out of the task. In such cases, it is natural that the organisation is not happy and suddenly does not know how to resolve the situation. If there is a deadline, the problem is even greater.

The difficulty often comes from the fact that volunteers do not know or understand the organisation's tasks, mission, and their own role in the organisation. They do not always see how important their tasks are, and so they do not see what problems they cause if they do not do them.

The primary solution to this problem is for the organisation to take the time not only to assign the task, but also to show its entire impact on the organisation and, ultimately, on its clients.

The next preventive step is for the organisation to make it clear that even the loss of one volunteer causes a major problem, but the loss of two people at the same time creates an almost unsolvable situation.

We need to talk about this in advance, so that volunteers feel more responsible and are less likely to take absences lightly. There is often a misconception, not only among volunteers but also among the organisation's staff, that if a volunteer does not show up, there is nothing that can be done, since they are working for free and cannot be held accountable. There is some truth to this, but if we allow this view to become part of our organisational culture, it will become the norm. A good way to avoid this is through advance preparation, where volunteers understand how important they are to the organisation, even if they are not paid employees and do not receive a salary (and they do not receive a salary not because they are worth less, but because they have a different role in the organisation).

The work of volunteers is just as important as that of any other employee, even if they may perform smaller tasks, have less responsibility, and receive more assistance from coordinators. What they do is 100% important and fills a gap in the organisation.

If the couple has failed to show up for volunteer work (even multiple times), then problem solving comes into play.

- Let's talk about the situation together and show them how difficult it was for the organisation when both of them were absent.
- Involve volunteers in problem solving. Let them suggest a good solution that is acceptable to them. This is a very effective approach, as volunteers will make suggestions that fit in with their lives, so they are likely to be able to follow through on them.
- Finally, encourage them by telling them that we really need them and the cooperation we have developed is very reassuring for us.

Solving problems together, in a way that both parties feel is beneficial, and providing positive feedback always works and greatly helps to retain volunteers in the long term.

Recently, several volunteer couples have mentioned that they find it difficult to balance volunteering with taking care of their children and family responsibilities at home. As a host organisation, how should we respond to this concern?

One of the fundamental questions to ask before accepting volunteers is, "Why does the organisation want to work with volunteers?" There can be many different answers to this question, depending on the type of organisation and its mission.

However, there are organisations that see working with volunteers as part of their mission and want to build a community with them. In this case, their mission is not only to serve their clients but also to build a community of volunteers.



This is a very noble and admirable task, but it is also very important that the organisation carries it out with conscious volunteer management and prepares for it accordingly. Then it will be easy to make decisions on issues arising from personal or family situations.

TIP

First, let us return to the previous question: if our helpers are volunteers and we focus on the task at hand, then there are several possible answers.

- The main focus is on completing the task, so volunteers help the organisation, and we have no insight into what they leave behind at home, nor is it our concern.
- It is more complex if we understand that they want to volunteer with us, but it is often difficult for them to put their home and family life on hold and leave it behind, but still feel secure about it. We can be understanding about this and tell them how important their work is to the organisation, but they have to deal with their home affairs themselves.
- It is even more complex if we ask them what their difficulties are, and if the couple is very important to us, we try to adapt the tasks as much as possible. For example, the task might start with them not having to come in early or leave late, or one parent arriving earlier and the other leaving earlier, but they are together for most of the task.

In the second case, our approach is different, as we consider our volunteers themselves to be part of our target group and part of our mission, so their problems and circumstances that affect their volunteering are important to us.

In this case, we can choose to take the issue of childcare fully into account and provide an opportunity for the whole family to come together. While the parents volunteer in peace, we help keep the children occupied. Of course, this does not solve the problem of housework and cooking, so even with the best of intentions, we may not be able to provide a solution for everything.

Over time, this could provide opportunities and security for more married couples to volunteer, so that we will soon be able to launch a small community of children and children's programmes within our organisation, for which we can welcome additional volunteers.

In one programme, tension and arguments arose among our married couple volunteers because one of them was given a leadership role in the volunteer activity, in contrast to the role they had at home in their family. What can be done in such a situation, and how can it be prevented?

Volunteers who come from family relationships often bring home dynamics with them, and this cannot be avoided when working with them.



When working with volunteers who do not know each other, a variety of group dynamics can develop depending on people's personalities. Group dynamics are part of the organisation, and the coordinator has a say in them. The coordinator is the person who monitors how healthy these connections and dynamics are and when they threaten volunteer activity.

However, it is important to note that the coordinator is only responsible for managing personal feelings and cooperation as long as it is related to the execution of the volunteer activity.

TIP

Working with married couples and families always carries the risk that they will bring more emotion into the situation than is necessary to complete the task at hand.

The primary approach on the organisation's part is that under no circumstances will it engage in mental counselling, take sides with either party, or pass judgment on the situation that has arisen.

The coordinator's task is to examine the matter from an organisational perspective, attempting to understand and determine the source of the conflict, but without evaluating or judging it.

Among married couples who volunteer, it is common for the role of leader at home to be the default role during volunteer activities as well.

- The organisation usually assigns tasks based on the volunteers' talents, interests, and preferences. Typically, it is not aware of the power dynamics at home.
- When preparing volunteers and assigning tasks, it is worth discussing the scope of the task and what decision-making and management skills are expected of the volunteer.
- In the case of volunteers working in the same field, especially if they are married couples and want to work together, the preparation can focus on cooperation and the limits of their competence.

If it appears that the leadership role in the organisation is the opposite of the role at home, then it is necessary to talk about it.

- One solution could be for the organisation to adapt its activities to the home role in order to retain volunteers, allowing the dynamics of home life to be reflected in the organisation. This is an easy and effective solution.
- Another solution, although it requires much more energy on the part of the organisation, is to discuss with the couple that they should not work according to home dynamics in the current task, but allow the other party to fulfill their role. In this situation, the organisation can also provide support. Here, the organisation takes into account who should actually lead others based on the task and does not identify with the dynamics of home life.
- If the above two solutions are not suitable, it is also possible to reassign one or both volunteers to a different area of responsibility.

Many organisations have communication policies, behavioural guidelines and ethical codes. It is important to explain these during training. It is worth not only communicating the policies, but also discussing them and analyzing awkward situations with volunteers, so that it becomes clear what is acceptable within the organisation and what is not.

If a problematic situation has arisen between the members of the couple and this is also apparent to the coordinator, then it can be discussed. It is the coordinator's responsibility to discuss the difficulty that has arisen with the volunteers in an appropriate, discreet but firm manner.

We cannot change the power dynamics and communication patterns that have developed in a marriage, nor is it our job to do so. It is the coordinator's responsibility to deal with issues relating to volunteer management within the organisation, even if they stem from problems brought home from home. Clarifying the role of the coordinator, defining their boundaries, preparing them, and making them aware of their confidentiality obligations are very important organisational tasks. The coordinator can bring a great deal of energy to the organisation through the volunteers. Retaining the coordinator is crucial, so it is worth training the coordinator in their role, helping them to perform their duties, and encouraging them in their work.

A resolved problem between spouses can bring a lot of additional cooperation to the organisation and set a good example for further family volunteering.

Two of our volunteers, who come from the same family, have become so close during their volunteer work that they form a separate group and are unable to integrate into the team. They do not accept being assigned to separate tasks; they want to do everything together or not at all. This attitude is damaging the team spirit.

When accepting volunteers, it is very common for an organisation to work with many volunteers at the same time. An organisation may have a large group of volunteers, but it is also common for volunteers to perform a variety of activities within an organisation, either individually or in small groups. When there are several volunteers, group dynamics inevitably develop, which the organisation must address in its volunteer management.

Clique formation disrupts the mood of other volunteers, especially when the problem is not resolved but quietly destroys the group from within.



TIP

The group of volunteers feels strong and good because they form a unity. Everyone knows that there can be many different types of people in the group, but sooner or later group norms and roles develop, and the group feels ready for action because it functions well.

Any violation of group rules causes negative feelings and resistance. If these negative feelings are not addressed, the group will unfortunately be unable to work together effectively and volunteer as efficiently as it could, because it will be preoccupied with its internal problems.

- It is the coordinator's job to know the group well enough and maintain a close relationship with them so that they can recognise when cliques are forming and this is disturbing the other members of the group.
- The coordinator needs to take the time to deal with this situation, not just with volunteer tasks.
- The best solution is for the group itself to discuss the situation, as everyone is involved. They should be given the opportunity to explain why it is bad for them when some people form cliques and do not open up to the group.

- It is possible for the group itself, under the guidance of the coordinator, to discuss what the situation means to them, why it is not good for them, and then find a solution together. It is very important that the volunteers causing the problem are also part of the group and that the discussion does not take place without them.
- Another good solution is for the organisation to invite an outside expert who has experience in group case processing.
- The opinion of the whole group is very powerful feedback for the volunteers concerned, who may not have been aware of how destructive their behaviour is to the community. Most often, the volunteers themselves propose a solution that the other volunteers can accept.
- The decision can be made in writing, in the form of a drawing, or verbally, or it can even be referred to humorously. The important thing is that the volunteers concerned accept it, interpret it for themselves, and understand why their previous behaviour was problematic.

In many cases, close bonding is only necessary for safety reasons. The volunteers involved may be unsure of themselves or their tasks, or they may feel comfortable with the other person's usual style and therefore do not want to leave the inner circle. If we help them to integrate, get to know others, or create opportunities for them to perform smaller tasks with others, they will find it easier to blend into the community. They should receive encouraging feedback on their individual work from the coordinator and other members of the community.

A mother and her son have been volunteering with us for a long time, and we consider them to be pillars of our organisation. However, time has passed, and the little boy has grown into a young man. Despite this, the mother continues to treat her son like a small child when it comes to volunteering. The young man, however, does not want to come because he feels embarrassed in front of others.

Retaining volunteers for the long term is always a very important goal for organisations. A volunteer who has been working for an organisation for many years already knows its mission, clients, operating methods, and values. There is almost no need to explain to them what to do and how to do it. This is a safe and very effective relationship for everyone. Over time, a volunteer's living conditions, family status, job, etc. may change, meaning that many things may evolve, making it worthwhile for the volunteer to change or make adjustments within the organisation.

TIP

The volunteer coordinator is the person who knows the volunteers and the relationships between them best. Their job is to assess whether something has changed and whether the volunteers are no longer able to work as well as they used to. This could be due to exhaustion, burnout, or simply the fact that people are getting older and their children are growing up.



An organisation is fortunate if it has had permanent volunteers for so long that the coordinator can see the volunteers from such a perspective.

In the case of the grown-up boy and his mother, both were still in the roles that the boy had started out in as a "little boy," so the work processes, forms of cooperation, and communication had become firmly established.

The simplest and most effective solution is to separate the parent-child pair in their activities. We keep both well-trained volunteers, but assign the pair members to different areas of activity and different jobs.

- The two family members are assigned to completely different jobs and visit the organisation at different times. The bond and shared experience remain through the same organisation and volunteering.
- The family members remain in the same job, but perform different activities, with one of them receiving a new task, which changes their position and title.
- The boy, who has grown up in the meantime, can perform a completely independent, serious volunteer activity, for which he receives recognition from both his parents and the other volunteers. This makes it clear that he is no longer the little boy who was initially guided by his mother.

Changing activities is, of course, primarily a task for our organisation, as we need to assess whether the new area is suitable for the volunteer, whether training is required, and whether time needs to be set aside for induction.

After planning, it is essential to discuss the change with the two volunteers so that they understand that our organisation has made a well-considered decision and that this is not a workaround, but actually means help.

Encourage volunteers in their new roles, especially if the change has really worked out and brought the desired results for everyone.

Among our most reliable and responsible volunteers, one couple stands out: they volunteered with their children at our summer camps and during children's programmes throughout the year. Now, however, a new family member is arriving, so everything is changing, and the mother and perhaps the children will not be coming for a while. This came as a surprise to us, as we had already made big plans with them.

Letting go is always very difficult and requires attention. A well-trained volunteer or an entire family provided enormous stability in programme organisation. Several programmes made to fit them ran smoothly, and our organisation did not even consider anyone else when it came to completing tasks.

After this, neither the organisation nor the volunteer is necessarily able to say goodbye to each other in an appropriate and respectful manner. This is especially true if the parties feel that they have been let down. This is a common feeling, even if we do not consider it justified.



TIP

When it comes to voluntary tasks, it is very reassuring when they become routine and are planned for "indefinite periods," but at the same time, unexpected events cause the greatest shock when it comes to such tasks.

- When the time is right, volunteers should be allowed to step down from their duties. They should be given the opportunity to say that they are done (for now) with this activity. The organisation should always be prepared for this.
- Often, the organisation panics in such a situation and may emotionally project its fear and anger onto the volunteer.
- It is important that the organisation does not emotionally pressure the volunteer to stay for at least another month, etc. Since it is sometimes difficult to find volunteers, this kind of negotiation can easily start.
- The organisation should assess its options and take over the volunteer's work.
- If possible, ask the volunteer to be involved in training and mentoring the new volunteer. All of this should, of course, be done within an agreed and agreed time frame.

- There should definitely be a closing ceremony, a form of farewell. This can be more formal, involving more people, but it can also be more intimate and personal.
- Let's not forget to emphasize how much success we have achieved with the help of volunteers from the organisation's point of view. We can even show this with numbers: volunteer hours, programmes completed, number of participants involved in the programme, etc.
- Let's give the volunteer a chance to share their feelings, most memorable experiences, and most touching moments.
- Try to maintain a good relationship with volunteers in the future, for example by sending them reports, Christmas cards, or birthday greetings.

Letting go and expressing gratitude is not easy, especially when an important and central person leaves, or when it is possible that other members of the family will also leave due to the changed circumstances. Let us not allow our negative feelings and despair to cause us to react with anger, and let us not allow the volunteer to "disappear" without a word.

Volunteers create value; they come to us of their own free will to help, and letting them go and thanking them are very important parts of working with them, which requires time and attention. By showing the hours worked, tasks completed, and successes achieved, we not only thank the volunteers for their help, but also promote a culture of volunteering in our community.

We have had an effective team of volunteers for many years. However, two of our volunteers have now become a married couple, which has brought new family dynamics to the group. We are happy for them, but working with them is different now.

In volunteer management, we talk about dynamic elements when we work with people themselves. Indeed, every person is different, bringing unexpected situations, different solutions, and new colours to the organisation. When we think that a volunteer has found their place and that there is no more work to do with them, we are mistaken, because change can happen at any time. Change is exciting and beautiful, but it requires constant attention, redesign, and transformation from the organisation.



Every organisation has its own organisational life, in which tasks, solutions, and principles can be least rigidly defined, especially when working with people and volunteers. We should always be open to redesign, feedback, renewing solutions and tasks, and shaking up a volunteer team.

TIP

The new situation brings joy to the new couple, so it is not difficult to talk to them about their future, plans, and joys, even from the perspective of volunteering. The new life situation creates new plans, in which it is conceivable that the volunteers no longer want to continue their old activities, but since they met in the group, they do not feel it is appropriate to say goodbye after getting married. A conversation may easily liberate them, and they may dare to say that other things have become important to them now.

Volunteers can leave the organisation entirely if their life circumstances have changed. Let's say goodbye to them and thank them for their work so far.

They are happy to remain in the organisation, but they take on less responsibility and may not always be able to attend joint volunteer activities. Let's divide them up based on their new level of commitment.

One volunteer stays, the other decides to leave. In this case, too, a farewell is in order.

The conversation should first and foremost allow them to rethink their decision to volunteer; this can be said aloud and accepted. This situation also has a positive effect on the volunteer team, as the members understand the young couple's life situation, feelings, and motivation, and can more easily accept their decision, allowing the community to continue to develop more easily.

There are organisations that keep in touch with their volunteers after they leave, in alumni groups, once or twice a year. This is a very good approach, but it is also important not to overdo communication and not to expect former volunteers to always provide feedback. At the same time, the alumni group gives former volunteers the opportunity to follow the organisation from a distance and return at any time, or recommend the organisation to others.

Let us never forget: volunteering is a kind of donation; volunteers have offered their time, knowledge, and enthusiasm to our organisation. For this, we can be grateful to them, wherever life may take them.

Summary conclusions

Preparing for volunteering, assigning specific tasks, and communicating expected behaviour in advance also pays off in family volunteering, as it can prevent many difficulties and clarify relationships in advance.

A balance must be struck between family expectations and ideas and the needs of the organisation if we want volunteers to stay involved in the long term. Family relationships bring a lot of beauty and added value to the life of organisations, which is why this form of volunteering is becoming increasingly popular. However, in addition to the advantages, there are also elements that deserve closer attention in practice.

Family volunteering triggers and reveals many more emotional and relational dynamics, so volunteer coordinators must always be alert to whether intervention is needed to ensure that this form of volunteering remains organisation-centred, task-oriented, and effective.

It is worth noting that changes in family circumstances generally have an impact on family volunteering, and these must be respected, taken into account, and addressed.

Volunteering in itself creates a connection between the volunteer and the host organisation, and between the volunteer and the clients. This connection is further nuanced and intertwined with even more emotion when family members are volunteers. Older volunteers can easily pass on their experience to younger people and show them things that might not otherwise be possible. Married couples, children, the elderly, young people, and distant relatives can work together while actively helping others and feeling useful and active in society.

Closing remarks

Accepting volunteers with fewer opportunities and organising family volunteering can be a highlight in the life of an organisation. This requires careful consideration, preparation, and thoughtful organisation. The experiences can be very diverse, as every organisation is different. They work toward different goals, with different people, and with different organisational cultures. What they have in common is the way they operate, the rules for working with people, group dynamics, accountability, and honest work.

Numerous programmes have already proven that volunteering can open up enormous opportunities for volunteers, who represent significant added value in the life of the host organisation and are a primary resource in fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals.

Volunteering is different and special in that it allows individuals to fulfill themselves while helping others. Host organisations can provide opportunities for this, which can mean gaining experience for young people, active leisure time for middle-aged people, and vitality for older people. Volunteering as a family strengthens bonds, while volunteering gives those with fewer opportunities a sense of appreciation.

We gathered our experiences by interviewing volunteer host organisations and through our own volunteer programmes and volunteer activities.

We have highlighted a few concluding thoughts based on the feedback received.

Reflections on volunteering by people with fewer opportunities:

They grow stronger within the team and gradually open up.

We are able to create a more unified society, where no one remains invisible.



This is a special feature of our organisation!

Until now, I did not realize that they could be challenged, not just protected.



This is a special feature of our organisation!

At first I was afraid, but then it turned out that it works. Yes, a bit differently, but it works.



It is a learning experience about the target group and about working together with them.

For our organisation, this means motivated and stable volunteers; no one has dropped out yet because they see that they are truly needed here and that they can help.



We have highlighted a few concluding thoughts based on the feedback received.

Reflections on family volunteering:

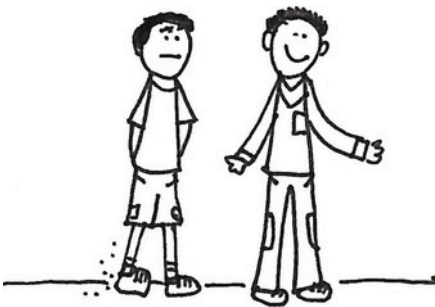
Generational diversity sparked creativity in our organisation.



Suddenly, there were more of us!



It was touching to see the siblings working together.



Many different age groups appeared, which was exciting.



A grandmother suddenly became young again! She found a way to connect with her grandchild while volunteering.

The best part is watching teenagers grow into it. Recently, one of them told the leader that when they age out, they would like to take over the club.



Those involved in family volunteering are less at risk of burnout, because they can also serve as a source of strength for one another.

Project Overview

The Talentum Foundation for the Support of Volunteering (Szeged) and the Archdiocesan Office for Family Ministry of Alba Iulia (Târgu Mureş) implemented the project entitled "Paving the way towards the practical implementation of inclusive, flexible volunteering involving families" between 2024 and 2026 with the support of the Erasmus+ programme.

The aim of the cooperation is to ensure that people with fewer opportunities and families are able to engage in volunteering, and that host organisations are prepared to welcome these groups of volunteers. For this reason, the project provided learning opportunities for coordinators of host organisations and for volunteers, where they could share their own experiences, insights, and ideas related to volunteer activities.

Based on the experiences gained during the project, this guide and collection of tips was developed to provide ideas, solution alternatives, and methods for the inclusive involvement of volunteers with fewer opportunities and those participating as family members.



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