

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

REMOTE VOLUNTEERING

ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS REMOTELY

Remote and home-based volunteering has been an option for many years, however, with the rise of technology, remote volunteering is becoming more common.

Opportunities can include:

- telephone befriending
- online tutoring or mentoring
- listing items for sale on Ebay
- researching information or writing articles
- social media support
- database or archive work
- trustee opportunities
- craft volunteering

and much more.

It is an effective way for organisations to engage volunteers from diverse locations. This guide introduces strategies to successfully involve remote volunteers in your organisation.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers the extent to which you are able to recruit more volunteers to join your organisation and the extent to which you involve volunteers in meaningful ways that reflect their abilities and needs.

BENEFITS OF REMOTE VOLUNTEERING

- **Wider reach:** engage individuals from various geographic locations.
- **Flexibility:** volunteers can contribute on their own schedule. This is particularly helpful for those who work or attend school/college during the day.
- **Additional volunteer pool:** engage with volunteers who wouldn't be able to attend your organisation's base regularly.
- **Accessibility:** promotes access to volunteering, reducing barriers for members of the community who may prefer or find it easier to volunteer remotely.

STEPS TO INVOLVE REMOTE VOLUNTEERS

1. Consider volunteering good practice.

- Ensure that you have policies and procedures in place to support all volunteers. If you need support to develop these, you can contact your local volunteer centre or council for voluntary service.



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- Follow volunteering good practice guidelines – ensure that you have policies and procedures in place, that are in writing, well-communicated and easily available, as you would with on-site volunteers.
- You may need to implement additional processes or systems to keep in touch with remote volunteers. Consider how this can be done.
- Consider communication methods for supporting remote volunteers. See the guide on Structured Conversations and Active Listening for further information.
- Ensure that remote volunteers know who to contact (and how) in the event that an issue arises and they need support.

2. Identify meaningful volunteer roles

- **Task-based:** clearly define tasks that can be accomplished remotely (e.g., research, writing, social media management, befriending, tutoring, craft-based tasks).
- **Project-based:** consider longer-term projects that require ongoing support (e.g., virtual events, educational programs).

3. Consider the costs

- Costs could include materials costs, resources, volunteer expenses (such as equipment for the role), transport costs if delivering materials.

4. Create a volunteer role description

- Outline the responsibilities, skills required, time commitment, and any training provided.
- Ensure descriptions are clear and engaging to attract the right volunteers. Make it clear that the role can be carried out remotely so that people know if it is the right fit for them.

5. Consider using technology to facilitate communication

- **Collaboration tools:** platforms like Slack, Microsoft teams, Facebook groups or Zoom can be helpful for communication.
- **Project management software:** tools like Trello or your CRM system can help to manage tasks and track progress.
- Remember that technology is not accessible for everyone.

6. Provide orientation and training

- As with on-site volunteers, develop an induction programme to familiarise volunteers with your organisation's mission, values, and procedures.
- Offer training resources, including videos, documents, or live sessions.



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- Think about how you can achieve this, considering both digital and non-digital methods.
- You may wish to create virtual social events or informal check-ins to help volunteers connect with each other.
- Encourage the use of social media or dedicated online groups for networking and support, but ensure that there are also opportunities for connection for volunteers without digital access.

8. Recognise and appreciate contributions

- Acknowledge and celebrate volunteer efforts through shout-outs in newsletters, social media posts, or virtual events.
- You might consider certificates for completed projects, for volunteers' week or for other special events.
- See the information sheet on volunteer recruitment and retention for ideas on supporting volunteers.

9. Collect feedback and implement

- Regularly seek feedback from remote volunteers to understand their experiences and areas for improvement.
- Use surveys or informal check-ins to gather insights and make adjustments as necessary.

Best practices

- **Set clear expectations:** ensure volunteers understand their roles and the impact of their contributions.
- **Stay organised:** keep track of volunteer schedules, tasks, and progress to maintain accountability.
- **Be inclusive:** create opportunities for volunteers of all backgrounds and abilities to contribute.

For further information on remote volunteering, you may be interested in looking at the information videos and resources developed by Jayne Cravens at www.coyotecomunications.com/vvwiki/

