

TOOL

GOOD ADVICE ON ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF VOLUNTEERS – AND HANDOVER

WHY

A recurring challenge in many youth organizations is to **attract** new volunteers, **retain** experienced volunteers and ensure **handover of experience** among experienced and new volunteers. It is important that you consider what motivates people to volunteer for your organization and cause, how you can best support and manage your volunteers to retain them and how you make sure the experiences of volunteers stay within the organization.

WHEN

It is an ongoing effort to recruit and retain volunteers – and to ensure sufficient handover.

HOW

When managing volunteers, it is important to talk about the following themes. We have come up with some ideas below each question, but it's important that you consider what will work for you.

How do you get a good start with a new volunteer?

Young people are often more eager to volunteer, where they feel connected to the cause, contribute meaningfully and feel part of a social community. It is important that a volunteer feels welcome and appreciated for the work they do. Some ideas:

- Have an introductory meeting where you welcome the volunteer, introduce your organization and hear about the volunteers own motivations and ideas for a meaningful volunteer experience
- Clarify expectations between the organization and volunteers. Be clear about how much time the role requires and how much the volunteer can commit to, how autonomous and creative the volunteer can work and organize regular check ins with each other
- Make a written role description, which details tasks, skills and role requirements
- Ensure volunteers know where they can get support
- Have casual conversations with new volunteers while they are working so that they feel appreciated and welcome in the organization
- Invite new volunteers for social events so they get to know other people in the organization

How do you support your volunteers?

Supporting volunteers is important to retain them. Some ideas:

- Check in with volunteers regularly to support them if necessary – and to share important information about your organization.
- Meet up with volunteers and manage the tasks and work burdens together with the volunteers. Remember to balance their volunteer commitment with other commitments in life.
- Develop a peer support model, where volunteers support each other. This can also help retain experienced people in volunteer roles in your organization.

How do you motivate and retain new and experienced volunteers?

It is key to understand why people are motivated to volunteer and what keeps them motivated and happy. For some volunteers it is important to be constantly challenged and they may want to change roles and develop new skills. Some ideas:

- Find out the motivations of the volunteers and see if there are any specific skills the volunteer would like to develop
- Check in along the way to see if the volunteers are happy with their tasks and responsibilities – or if they would like to change their volunteer role and responsibilities.
- Provide support and encouragement for volunteers who are taking up new roles

How do you ensure handover among volunteers?

Young volunteers move on, but if you have an open and regular communication with your volunteers you can get a sense of when volunteers are about to move on. Some ideas to ensure handover:

- Encourage peer support and peer cooperation – so that volunteers learn from each other and support each other in solving tasks
- Do you have another volunteer ready to take over? Maybe the person moving on can suggest another youth who would be interested? Maybe the person moving on can mentor the new volunteer?

- Get feedback from the person experiences as a volunteer, what they have learnt and what they suggest for improvements. You can for instance do this through an informal conversation with the volunteer, a formal exit interview or a small survey.
- Invite the person, who moves on to stay connected with the organization through social media – so that they receive news and are aware of new volunteering opportunities.

Some questions to consider in different phases of a volunteer cycle

Phase	The organization	The volunteer
Recruitment / Welcome and introduction	What are you passionate about? What are you good at doing? What values do we share?	How do I get started? How can I become part of the community? How do you do things here?
Retention and management/Task solving	How is it going? This is your contribution and value to the organization... What are you dreaming of?	What do I like the most? What do I gain from my engagement? What would I like to be part of developing?
Goodbye/Closure	What do you bring with you from your work here? What is your best advice to the organization? Can we say "see you later"?	What can I use in my life forward? What can I contribute to in the future?
