

TOOL

DIALOGUE ON HOW TO MOTIVATE VOLUNTEERS

WHY

It is important to ask yourself **how to motivate volunteers** – in your organization and partnership. Leading and managing volunteers requires similar competences as leading and managing paid staff. And in addition, the manager of volunteers must motivate people to create results together without providing salaries.

DUF sees volunteering as a two-way relationship: You need to balance the **needs of the organization** with the **motivations of the volunteers**. And you **cannot** order of force volunteers to do something they don't want to do – they will just leave the organization.

In order to match the needs of the organization with the motivations of the volunteers, it is a good idea to ask why volunteers like to work with your organization – and analyze how you can best motivate volunteers in their work. It is equally important to find out what demotivates volunteers.

WHEN

Look into volunteers motivations when you are analyzing the volunteer culture in order to design a project, when you design a volunteer policy and strategy.

Motivations can change along the way. Stay updated on volunteer motivations and experiences along the way in a project to ensure you create meaningful experiences for volunteers.

HOW

Below are described two exercises that can function as entry points to start a dialogue on volunteers motivation. The exercises can be made each on their own or following each other.

Drawing: What motivates volunteers in your organization and partnership?

Pictures can help you to reflect on the question and get a starting point for discussing what motivates and demotivates the volunteers in your organization and in the projects run by the partnership.

Draw fictive, typical volunteers in the organization, who are connected to the partnership and the project. For instance you can focus on a typical volunteer at the project management level and one at the project implementation level – or different types of volunteers for a specific area. You may consider the following factors:



- What **gender** do the typical volunteers have? **Age**?
- From which **social background**? Are they part of a **family**, are they married, do they have children? Do they have **education**? Do they have **work**? What kind of education and work?
- **How long time** have the volunteers been part of the organization?
- What is their **motivation** for doing volunteer work?

Based on your drawing you can consider the following questions:

- What does your presentation of the typical volunteer say about
 - Your organization?
 - Your target group?
 - Yourselves?
- Are there differences for men and women? Boys and girls?
- What motivates volunteers to join in and stay in the organization? What demotivates them?
- What does your organization do to motivate the volunteers to stay in the organization?
- What challenges do you face in regards to motivating volunteers?
- For which tasks and areas do you find it hard to recruit / motivate volunteers?

- Are there some types of volunteers that are not very represented in your organization? What are you going to do to motivate (the right) people to volunteer?
- What tasks / areas are volunteers least motivated by? How can you make it as meaningful as possible to volunteer for these tasks?

Conversation with staff and volunteers: What motivates volunteers in your organization and partnership?

Divide volunteers and staff into smaller groups. If board members participate, we suggest they join the group of volunteers or setup their own group.

Get the groups to discuss the following questions:

Volunteers with volunteers:

- What motivates me to work voluntarily in my organization? What motivates others?
- How does my organization motivate volunteers? What do I do to motivate others?

Staff with staff:

- What do I most enjoy in regards to working with volunteers in my organization? How does it motivate me in my work?
- How do I motivate volunteers?

Get together for a plenary conversation, where you share your perspectives and ideas for the following question:

“How are volunteers best motivated in your organization?”



WHAT MOTIVATES VOLUNTEERS?

In DUFs experience volunteers are motivated by many different things – depending on who they are and their life situation. The motivations below are common, but the list is not exhaustive:

- **Meaningfulness:** I involve myself in a cause, that is larger than myself. I make a difference.
- **Responsibility and conscience:** I feel that I have a sense of duty towards my society
- **Interesting activity:** I participate in an activity that is of interest to me and has a certain quality.
- **Community:** I'm socially stimulated by participating in a community (of action)
- **Learning:** I learn a lot through my engagement – and use my competencies
- **Influence and participation:** I have a say and I feel that I am listened to in regards to the activities I do. That makes me feel ownership to the work we do.
- **Personal recognition:** I feel recognized and valued for the work I do

Can you come up with other motivational factors?