

NORTH OF TYNE VOLUNTEERING AREA OF EXCELLENCE

RECOGNISING THE CONTRIBUTION OF VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer recognition is a critical part of volunteer involvement. Volunteers give their time willingly and without expectation of a reward. But if you recognise your volunteers appropriately, you will demonstrate how much your organisation values their contribution. You should always consider volunteer recognition during the planning stage of volunteer involvement, rather than as an afterthought. Recognition can be both individual and done in groups and does not need to be costly.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE HEALTH CHECK FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

The Health Check for Volunteer-Involving Organisations considers the extent to which an organisation acknowledges and recognises the contribution of volunteers and provides reimbursement of expenses.

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Volunteer recognition can take a variety of forms, including:

- Providing recognition during National Volunteer Week (1st week in June) or International Volunteer Day (December 5th)
- Providing certificates
- Recognition in newsletters or on social media
- Volunteer appreciation badges
- Events such as morning teas and lunches
- Organising an activity outside the workplace paid for by the organisation
- Providing references (written or verbal)

It is often useful to ask volunteers how they would like to be recognised. If a volunteer says they do not want recognition that does not mean that you should not acknowledge their contribution at all. Instead, consider simple, low-key approaches that won't make the volunteer feel uncomfortable.

Remember, recognition does not need to cost money. Finding opportunities to recognise volunteer impact and provide them with feedback on how their involvement makes a difference is a great start.

GIFTS

Gifts may be used to recognise the efforts of volunteers but need to be approached with caution. Any gifts provided to volunteers should be of a token nature.

It is recommended that your organisation develops a policy on gifts, which identifies a monetary threshold, a decision-making process, and a disclosure process. It can be common for beneficiaries of a service to provide gifts as tokens of their appreciation, especially if they have developed a close relationship with volunteers. Sometimes this can create an awkward situation for volunteers who may feel rude rejecting a gift. If you provide volunteers with a clear policy on gifts, they will feel better able to explain in the event that someone tries to gift them something that breaches your policy as an acceptable gift.



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REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Volunteers should not be out-of-pocket as a result of their volunteering. An important consideration when deciding how to involve volunteers in your organisation is whether your organisation has sufficient resources, both human and financial, to effectively support volunteers to deliver programs and services.

Reimbursements are generally provided for out-of-pocket expenses. It is recommended that any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers are pre-approved by the organisation. You should clearly communicate the basis for reimbursement of expenses to your volunteers. Consider how your organisation can reduce or remove financial barriers to volunteering and be open about any additional costs that may be associated with volunteering.

If, from time to time, volunteers may be required to buy items for your organisation in connection with their volunteering role, try, where possible, to provide petty cash for these small purchases.

