ProVOL – Professionalising Volunteer Onboarding through Digital Learning

A Practical Guide to Designing Volunteer Onboarding and E-learning Programmes



Author:
BildungsLAB Hands & Minds Learning Center

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Foreword

Volunteers play a vital role in strengthening communities, supporting social inclusion and helping organisations create positive change. Whether contributing to local initiatives, supporting vulnerable groups or protecting the environment, volunteers bring knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm that enable organisations to extend their impact far beyond what would otherwise be possible.

At the same time, attracting and retaining motivated volunteers requires more than goodwill. New volunteers need to feel welcomed, informed and supported from the very beginning. A structured onboarding process helps organisations communicate their mission, values and expectations while creating a positive first experience that encourages long-term engagement.

This guide has been developed to support organisations in designing professional volunteer onboarding programmes that are practical, engaging and adaptable to different organisational contexts. It brings together good practices, practical recommendations and examples developed through international collaboration to help organisations strengthen their volunteer management practices and transform their onboarding into an effective digital learning experience.

We hope this guide inspires organisations across Europe to create welcoming, inclusive and sustainable volunteering environments where volunteers can confidently contribute, learn and grow.

Project Partners & Their Roles

The Volunteer Centre Ústí nad Labem is a **Czech organisation** and is leading this project. Supporting and coordinating volunteers, bringing hands-on experience in volunteer recruitment and onboarding.

BildungsLAB is an **Austrian non-profit organisation** focused on innovative, inclusive and hands-on learning, contributing its expertise in education, digital learning and a broad digital skillset.

Gemeinsam leben & lernen in Europa e. V. is a **German non-profit organisation** with extensive experience in volunteer management and community engagement, contributing practical expertise in volunteer onboarding and hands-on practice.

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About this Guide

This publication has been developed as part of the ProVOL – Professionalising Volunteer Onboarding through Digital Learning project, co-funded by the European Union through the Erasmus+ Programme.
The project brings together three partner organisations with extensive experience in volunteer management, adult learning and digital education:

- Dobrovolnické centrum, z.s. (Czech Republic) – Project Coordinator
- BildungsLAB – Hands & Minds Learning Center (Austria)
- Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen in Europa e.V. (Germany)

Together, the partners share a common objective: to strengthen volunteer engagement by supporting organisations in developing structured, accessible and sustainable onboarding programmes that can also be delivered through digital learning.
This guide has been developed through collaboration between the project partners, drawing on their practical experience, research, exchange of good practices and pilot implementation activities. Rather than presenting a single model, it offers a flexible framework that organisations can adapt to reflect their own mission, organisational culture and volunteering context.
The content has been designed to support organisations in building their own volunteer onboarding programme step by step. Throughout the guide, readers will find practical recommendations, partner examples, reflection questions, templates and supporting resources that can be adapted to organisations of different sizes and sectors.
The final module provides additional guidance on transforming onboarding content into an engaging e-learning course using readily available digital tools and learning platforms.

Erasmus+ Acknowledgement

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Volunteer Foundations

A Practical Guide to Designing Volunteer Onboarding and E-learning Programmes

Volunteers are at the heart of many non-governmental organisations. They contribute their time, knowledge and enthusiasm to support communities, strengthen social cohesion and help organisations achieve their mission. While volunteers often receive a warm welcome, many organisations face the challenge of providing a structured and consistent onboarding experience that prepares volunteers for their role while reflecting the organisation's values and ways of working.

This guide has been developed to support organisations in creating a professional volunteer onboarding programme that is both engaging and sustainable. It provides practical guidance on what new volunteers need to know before they begin their volunteering journey and demonstrates how this content can later be transformed into an engaging e-learning course. Rather than offering a single onboarding model, this guide presents a flexible framework that organisations of different sizes, sectors and volunteering contexts can adapt to their own needs. Throughout the publication, examples and good practices from the project partner organisations in Germany and the Czech Republic illustrate how different approaches can be implemented while encouraging organisations to develop an onboarding programme that reflects their own identity and organisational culture.

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide has been developed for organisations that work with volunteers and would like to strengthen or further develop their onboarding practices.

It is particularly relevant for:

- volunteer coordinators;
- NGO managers and directors;
- volunteer programme managers;
- project coordinators;
- human resources or volunteer support staff;
- organisations introducing volunteer management for the first time;
- organisations wishing to digitalise or modernise their onboarding process.

Whether your organisation already has an established onboarding programme or is developing one for the first time, this guide offers practical ideas, tools and recommendations that can be adapted to your own volunteering environment.

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What Can You Expect?

The guide follows the natural journey of a volunteer, beginning with the organisation itself before gradually exploring volunteer roles, communication, collaboration, organisational policies and long-term volunteer engagement.

Each module combines practical guidance with opportunities for reflection, encouraging organisations to review their current practices while developing new ideas for improvement.

Throughout the guide you will find:

- practical recommendations based on volunteer management good practice;
- examples from partner organisations;
- reflection questions to support organisational development;
- downloadable templates and worksheets;
- suggested resources that can be adapted to your own organisation;
- key takeaways summarising the most important points of each section.

The final module takes a practical step beyond traditional onboarding by demonstrating how the content developed throughout the guide can be transformed into an engaging e-learning programme for volunteers.

How to Use This Guide

This publication is intended to be both a learning resource and a practical working document.

Organisations may choose to work through the modules consecutively or focus on those most relevant to their current stage of development. However, following the complete sequence is recommended, as each module builds upon the previous one and gradually develops the content required for a comprehensive volunteer onboarding programme.

As you progress through each section, you will be invited to reflect on your current practice by considering questions such as:

- What do we already do well?
- What information do our volunteers need most?
- Which areas could be improved?
- How can we better reflect our organisational values?
- What resources or materials could strengthen our onboarding programme?

These reflections will help you develop the content needed for your own onboarding programme before transforming it into an e-learning course in Module 8.

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Learning Journey

The guide is organised into eight interconnected modules that follow the volunteer journey from first contact to long-term engagement and digital implementation.

Module	Focus
Module 1	Welcome to Your Organisation
Module 2	Becoming Part of Our Team
Module 3	The Role of Volunteers in Your Organisation
Module 4	Tasks and Services
Module 5	Working Together
Module 6	Creating a Safe and Responsible Volunteering Environment
Module 7	Supporting and Developing Volunteers
Module 8	Transforming Your Volunteer Onboarding into an E-learning Course

By the end of the guide, organisations will have developed a structured onboarding framework that can be adapted to their own needs and used as the foundation for a sustainable digital onboarding programme.

To be considered before you begin

An effective onboarding programme is much more than an introduction. It is the beginning of a volunteer's relationship with your organisation.
When volunteers understand your mission, feel welcomed by your team, know what is expected of them and recognise the value of their contribution, they are more likely to become confident, engaged and committed members of your organisation.

This guide invites you to view onboarding not as a checklist of information, but as an opportunity to create meaningful first experiences that inspire volunteers to become active partners in achieving your organisation's mission.

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ProVol Learn

Professional Volunteer Onboarding E-Learning Framework - Curricula

OVERVIEW

Course Purpose

This course supports NGOs in providing a consistent, engaging and professional onboarding experience for volunteers. The course is primarily designed for volunteers. A dedicated final module equips NGO staff with the basic skills to create and maintain future onboarding e-learning.

Note

Although every organisation measures success differently, volunteers are often inspired by the same question:
"How does my contribution make a difference?"
Answering this question early in the onboarding process helps volunteers connect emotionally with the organisation and reinforces the importance of their role within the wider community.

Module 1 – Welcome to Our Organisation

- Welcome message
- How to define your story
- How to differentiate your Missions, visions & values
- What is your input for that?
- How are volunteers integrated into your organisation
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

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Module 2 – Becoming Part of Our Team

- What is the structure of your Organisation
- Think of how to introduce the team
- Describe which communication channels are in place
- Think of who is in charge of what
- Describe your office culture
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

Module 3 – The Role of Volunteer in your organisation

- Which Roles and responsibilities are available in your organisation
- What can your Volunteer expect from you
- What do you expect from your volunteers (Availability & commitment)
- What are the volunteer Rights & responsibilities
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

Module 4 – Tasks & Services

- Which Projects and services does your organization offer
- What are Daily/reoccuring tasks
- Which beneficiaries are relevant for volunteers
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

Module 5 – Working Together

- How does the Communication in your organization look like (reporting & documentation)
- What Teamwork do you expect from your volunteers
- How is your policy of giving & receiving feedback
- What is the policy regarding Conflict resolution
- How do you approach Inclusion, diversity & equality
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

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Module 6 – Legal & Ethical Responsibilities

- How do you ensure Health & safety
- How do you handle sensitive Data, confidentiality and Code of conduct
- How are you ensuring safeguarding the volunteers as well as external participants
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

Module 7 – Creating Positive Impact

- What expectations do you have regarding this?
- Community impact
- Personal development
- Sustainability
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

Module 8 – Creating Your Own Volunteer Onboarding E-Learning (NGO Staff)

- Lesson 1: What's the benefit of using e-learning?
- Reflection: Which existing onboarding activities could be moved to a digital format?
- Lesson 2: Define your Volunteers: Age, availability, expertise, etc.
- Lesson 3: Plan your onboarding course (learning outcomes, module map, storyboard)
- Lesson 4: Create engaging learning (video, images, scenarios, quizzes, microlearning)
- Lesson 5: Publish, test and improve
- Final Assignment: Design and publish one onboarding module for your organisation.
- Best practices: from partners
- Knowledge check: take your notes for important insights

Recommended Learning Pattern (used in every volunteer module)

- Learn – short explanation (200–300 words)
- See – short video, image or infographic
- Reflect – one personal reflection question
- Apply – small practical task
- Check – 3–5 quiz questions
- Continue – next lesson

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MODULE 1

Presenting Your Organisation to New Volunteers

Module Introduction

The onboarding journey begins long before a volunteer carries out their first task. The first impression an organisation creates plays an important role in helping volunteers feel welcomed, informed and connected to its purpose.

A well-designed introduction helps volunteers understand not only what an organisation does, but also why it exists, what it stands for and how volunteers contribute to achieving its mission. It creates a sense of belonging, builds trust and lays the foundation for a positive volunteering experience.

Many organisations already introduce these topics through welcome meetings, printed materials or informal conversations. While these approaches are valuable, they often depend on the availability of staff and may differ from one volunteer to another. A structured onboarding programme ensures that every volunteer receives consistent information and begins their journey with the same understanding of the organisation.

This module supports organisations in developing the first part of their volunteer onboarding programme. It focuses on presenting the organisation's identity, communicating its purpose and introducing the values that shape everyday work. Throughout the module, examples from the partner organisations provide inspiration and demonstrate different ways of presenting this information to new volunteers. Organisations are encouraged to adapt these ideas to reflect their own culture, mission and volunteering environment.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- identify the key information every volunteer should receive before starting their activities;
- present their organisation in a clear, engaging and consistent way;
- distinguish between the organisation's story, mission, vision and values;
- explain the role volunteers play within the organisation;
- identify opportunities to strengthen the volunteer welcome experience.

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1.1. Welcome Message

The welcome message is often the first direct contact volunteers have with an organisation during the onboarding process. It sets the tone for everything that follows and offers an opportunity to create a positive first impression.

An effective welcome message should do more than simply greet new volunteers. It should make them feel appreciated, introduce the organisation in a warm and authentic way and reassure them that they are becoming part of a supportive community.

Rather than presenting large amounts of information, the welcome message should focus on creating connections. It should answer simple questions such as:

- Who are we?
- Why are we happy you have joined us?
- What can you expect during your onboarding?
- How will your contribution make a difference?

Many organisations choose to deliver this message through a short welcome video from the director, volunteer coordinator or an experienced volunteer. Others combine a written welcome with photographs, testimonials or a brief overview of the organisation's activities.

Regardless of the format, authenticity is more important than perfection. Volunteers are more likely to engage with genuine messages that reflect the organisation's culture than with highly formal introductions.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

Partner example: Introduction of how new volunteers are welcomed and who delivers the welcome message.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example: Introduction of the volunteer welcome process and first contact with new volunteers.

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Consider for Your Organisation

Take a moment to reflect on your current welcome process. Use the provided pdf in the beginning of the Introduction

- Who currently welcomes new volunteers?
- Is every volunteer welcomed in the same way?
- Does your welcome message communicate appreciation as well as practical information?
- Would a new volunteer immediately understand that they are becoming part of a larger community?
- Could parts of the welcome be improved to create a stronger sense of belonging?

Supporting Resources

Suggested resource

Template: Creating an Effective Volunteer Welcome Message

The template may include:

- Key messages to communicate
- Suggested structure
- Example welcome video script
- Checklist before publishing

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ welcomes every volunteer in a consistent way;

✓ explains what volunteers can expect from the onboarding process;

✓ creates a positive and motivating first impression;

✓ helps volunteers feel appreciated from their very first interaction.

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1.2. How to Define Your Organisation's Story

Every organisation has a story worth telling.

Whether your organisation has existed for fifty years or was founded only recently, volunteers benefit from understanding how and why it came into being. Your story provides context, creates emotional connection and helps volunteers see that they are becoming part of something larger than a single project or activity.

An organisation's story is not intended to be a detailed history lesson. Instead, it should explain the purpose behind its creation and highlight the values and people that have shaped its development. When volunteers understand the challenges an organisation set out to address and the progress it has made over time, they are more likely to identify with its mission and feel motivated to contribute.

A compelling organisational story answers simple but important questions:

- Why was the organisation established?
- Which need or challenge inspired its creation?
- Who were the people behind the initiative?
- How has the organisation developed over time?
- What achievements or milestones have shaped its journey?
- What role do volunteers play in this continuing story?

Organisations often have far more information than volunteers need during onboarding. Rather than presenting a detailed timeline or annual report, focus on the key moments that illustrate your purpose and development. Aim to create a narrative that is authentic, inspiring and easy to remember.

Remember that every new volunteer becomes part of the next chapter of your organisation's story. Helping them understand that connection creates a stronger sense of belonging from the very beginning.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing your organisation's story, consider:

- keeping the story concise and easy to follow;
- highlighting people rather than only dates or facts;
- explaining the social or community need that led to the organisation's creation;
- illustrating how the organisation has grown and evolved;
- showing how volunteers have contributed to important milestones;
- ending with the organisation's current vision and future ambitions.

Where appropriate, photographs, historical images, volunteer testimonials or significant milestones can help bring the story to life.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

Partner example: Brief overview of the organisation's history, why it was founded and how volunteers have contributed to its development.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example: Overview of the organisation's development and the role volunteers play within the local community.

Consider for Your Organisation

Take a moment to reflect on your current introduction to the organisation.

Ask yourself:

- If a volunteer joined today, would they understand why the organisation exists?
- Does your current introduction explain the organisation's purpose rather than simply listing facts?
- Which moments in your organisation's history best illustrate your values?
- How are volunteers represented within your story?
- Does your story inspire people to become part of the organisation?

If several staff members introduce the organisation, consider whether everyone communicates a consistent message.

Supporting Resources

Suggested worksheet

Developing Your Organisation's Story

The worksheet may guide organisations through questions such as:

1. What inspired the creation of the organisation?
2. Which challenge or opportunity does the organisation address?
3. Which milestones best demonstrate your development?
4. How have volunteers contributed to your journey?
5. What would you like every new volunteer to remember after hearing your story?

The completed worksheet can later serve as the basis for website content, welcome presentations or onboarding materials.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing to the next section, consider whether your organisation's story:

✓ explains why the organisation was founded;
✓ connects volunteers to the organisation's purpose;
✓ highlights meaningful milestones rather than excessive detail;
✓ reflects the organisation's identity and culture;
✓ demonstrates the contribution volunteers make to its ongoing success.

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1.3. How to Differentiate Your Mission, Vision & Values

Many organisations use the terms mission, vision and values interchangeably. While they are closely connected, each serves a different purpose and together they create the foundation of an organisation's identity.

Introducing these elements during volunteer onboarding helps volunteers understand not only what the organisation does, but also why it exists, where it wants to go and which principles guide everyday decisions. This shared understanding helps volunteers identify with the organisation and make decisions that are aligned with its purpose.

Rather than presenting lengthy policy statements, organisations should explain these concepts in a clear and practical way. Volunteers should be able to understand them quickly and recognise how they influence daily work.

Mission – Why do we exist?

The mission explains the organisation's purpose. It describes the reason the organisation was established and the positive change it aims to create.

A strong mission answers questions such as:

- What challenge are we addressing?
- Who do we support?
- Why does our work matter?

For volunteers, the mission provides meaning. It helps them understand how their contribution supports the wider goals of the organisation.

Vision – Where are we heading?

The vision describes the future the organisation wants to help create.

It is aspirational and forward-looking, providing direction for long-term development and inspiring volunteers, staff and partners to work towards a common goal.

An effective vision should encourage volunteers to feel that they are contributing to something larger than the individual tasks they perform.

Values – How do we work together?

Values describe the principles that guide behaviour within the organisation.

They influence how people communicate, collaborate, make decisions and build relationships with volunteers, beneficiaries and partners.

Unlike the mission and vision, values should be visible in everyday practice. Volunteers should experience them through the organisation's culture, leadership and interactions with others.

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Examples of commonly used organisational values include:

- Respect
- Inclusion
- Responsibility
- Collaboration
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Empathy
- Trust
- Sustainability

Each organisation should identify the values that best reflect its own identity rather than adopting generic statements.

Transforming Values into Volunteer Learning

Introducing organisational values is only the first step. Volunteers also need opportunities to understand what these values look like in practice.
Rather than presenting values as a list, organisations are encouraged to connect them to real situations, behaviours and experiences.
For example:

Value: Respect

Instead of simply stating that respect is important, explain how respectful behaviour is demonstrated within the organisation.
Examples may include:

- listening actively to colleagues and beneficiaries;
- appreciating different opinions;
- communicating politely and constructively;
- respecting cultural differences;
- arriving on time and honouring commitments.

This approach helps volunteers understand how organisational values influence everyday actions rather than remaining abstract concepts.
The same principle can be applied to every organisational value. Whenever possible, use examples from your own organisation to illustrate how these values are lived by staff and volunteers. This creates a stronger connection between organisational philosophy and daily practice. The value transformation approach presented earlier can be adapted to help organisations translate their own values into meaningful volunteer learning experiences.

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Good Practice Recommendations

Consider introducing your mission, vision and values through:

- a short welcome message from leadership;
- real stories demonstrating organisational values in action;
- volunteer testimonials describing meaningful experiences;
- examples of successful projects;
- photographs that reflect the organisation's culture;
- practical situations that show how values influence decisions.

Avoid presenting mission and values as lengthy policy documents. Volunteers are more likely to remember stories and examples than formal definitions.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

Partner example illustrating how the organisation communicates its mission, vision and organisational values during volunteer onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example showing how values are embedded within volunteer induction and organisational culture.

Consider for Your Organisation

Take a moment to reflect on your current onboarding materials.

Ask yourselves:

- Is the difference between your mission, vision and values clearly explained?
- Could a new volunteer describe your organisation's purpose after completing the onboarding?
- Which organisational values are most visible in everyday practice?
- Are there values that are written down but rarely demonstrated?
- How could volunteers experience these values from their very first day?

Remember that values are strengthened through consistent behaviour rather than words alone.

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Supporting Resources

Suggested resource

Worksheet: Defining Your Mission, Vision and Values

The worksheet may support organisations in answering:

- What is our mission?
- What long-term impact do we want to create?
- Which values define how we work together?
- How can volunteers recognise these values in practice?
- Which examples best demonstrate each value?

This worksheet can later be used when developing onboarding materials, volunteer handbooks and organisational presentations.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation has:

✓ clearly distinguished between its mission, vision and values;

✓ explained why each of these elements matters to volunteers;

✓ connected organisational values to everyday behaviours;

✓ used practical examples rather than abstract statements;

✓ created a consistent message that reflects the organisation's identity.

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1.4. What Is Your Impact?

Every volunteer wants to know that their contribution matters.
While organisations often communicate what they do, they sometimes spend less time explaining the difference their work makes. Yet understanding an organisation's impact is one of the strongest sources of volunteer motivation. When volunteers can clearly see how their time, skills and commitment contribute to positive outcomes, they are more likely to feel engaged, connected and motivated to continue volunteering.
Impact does not always have to be measured in numbers. Although statistics such as the number of volunteers, beneficiaries or activities are useful, stories and examples often create a much stronger emotional connection. A volunteer who understands how their contribution changes someone's life, strengthens a community or supports a meaningful cause develops a stronger sense of purpose.
During onboarding, organisations should therefore introduce both their measurable achievements and the wider difference they create.

This section is an opportunity to answer an important question:

"Why does our work matter?"

Helping volunteers understand this from the beginning enables them to see their own role within the organisation's broader mission.
Examples of organisational impact may include:

- supporting vulnerable individuals or communities;
- increasing social inclusion and participation;
- promoting education and lifelong learning;
- protecting the environment;
- strengthening community engagement;
- creating opportunities for young people;
- supporting cultural understanding and diversity;
- improving quality of life through local initiatives.

Every organisation will define impact differently. The important message for volunteers is that even small contributions become meaningful when they are part of a shared purpose.

Good Practice Recommendations

When presenting organisational impact, consider including:

- a short description of the social or community challenge your organisation addresses;
- examples of positive outcomes achieved through your activities;
- volunteer stories that demonstrate personal and community impact;

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- testimonials from beneficiaries or partner organisations;
- photographs that illustrate real activities and achievements;
- simple statistics that help volunteers understand the scale of your work.

Aim to balance facts with human stories. Numbers provide evidence, while stories help volunteers connect emotionally with the organisation's purpose.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

Partner example describing the organisation's impact within its local community and how volunteers contribute to achieving this impact.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example demonstrating community impact and volunteer contributions through local initiatives.

Consider for Your Organisation

Reflect on how your organisation currently communicates its impact.

Ask yourselves:

- Would a new volunteer understand why your work is important?
- Do you explain the difference your organisation makes in the community?
- How do volunteers contribute to achieving this impact?
- Do you regularly share success stories and positive outcomes with volunteers?
- Which achievements would make new volunteers feel proud to become part of your organisation?

Remember that volunteers are motivated not only by completing tasks but by understanding the positive difference those tasks create.

Supporting Resources

Suggested Resource

Worksheet: Communicating Your Organisation's Impact

The worksheet may include prompts such as:

- What positive change does our organisation create?
- Who benefits from our work?
- Which achievements best illustrate our impact?
- Which volunteer stories demonstrate our values in action?
- How do we currently communicate our impact to new volunteers?

The completed worksheet can later support onboarding presentations, volunteer handbooks, funding applications and communication materials.

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Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ clearly communicates the positive impact of its work;
✓ helps volunteers understand why their contribution matters;
✓ combines facts with meaningful stories and examples;
✓ regularly celebrates achievements and recognises volunteer contributions;
✓ inspires volunteers to become active contributors to the organisation's mission.

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1.5. Integrating Volunteers into Your Organisation

Volunteers become committed when they feel that they belong.
A successful onboarding programme is not limited to providing information. It also helps volunteers become part of the organisation's culture, understand their place within the team and build meaningful relationships with staff, other volunteers and beneficiaries. Feeling welcomed, respected and included from the very beginning has a significant influence on volunteer satisfaction, confidence and long-term engagement. Organisations that invest in creating positive first experiences often benefit from higher volunteer retention, stronger commitment and better collaboration.
Integration should therefore be considered an ongoing process rather than a single event. While the first day is important, volunteers continue learning about the organisation through daily interactions, shared experiences and regular communication.

An effective onboarding programme helps answer questions that every new volunteer is likely to have, such as:

- Where do I fit within the organisation?
- Who can I turn to when I have questions?
- How will I be supported during my first weeks?
- What is expected from me?
- How can I become an active member of the team?

Providing clear answers to these questions helps reduce uncertainty and enables volunteers to focus on contributing with confidence.

Good Practice Recommendations

Organisations may consider including the following elements within their onboarding process:

Introduce the Team

New volunteers should know who they will be working with. Brief introductions to staff members, volunteer coordinators and experienced volunteers help establish familiarity and make it easier to ask for support.
Whenever possible, include:

- names and roles;
- photographs;
- areas of responsibility;
- preferred contact methods.

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Explain the Support Structure

Volunteers should understand who is responsible for different aspects of the organisation.
For example:

- Who coordinates volunteers?
- Who provides daily guidance?
- Who should be contacted in case of an emergency?
- Who can answer administrative questions?

Providing this information early helps volunteers feel supported and reduces uncertainty.

Encourage Connections

Many volunteers continue volunteering because they develop positive relationships within the organisation.
Consider opportunities that encourage volunteers to meet one another, share experiences and build connections, for example:

- welcome meetings;
- informal introductions;
- buddy systems;
- mentoring;
- team activities;
- regular volunteer gatherings.

Clarify Expectations

Volunteers appreciate knowing what they can expect from the organisation as well as what the organisation expects from them.
Introducing these expectations early helps establish mutual trust and creates a shared understanding of responsibilities.

Recognise Every Volunteer

Simple gestures of appreciation contribute significantly to volunteers feeling valued.
Recognition does not always require formal awards. Often, a personal welcome, regular feedback or acknowledgement of individual contributions creates a lasting positive impression.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how volunteers are welcomed, introduced to the team and supported during their first weeks within the organisation.
Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

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Partner example demonstrating how new volunteers become part of the organisation through mentoring, communication and ongoing support.

Consider for Your Organisation

Take some time to reflect on how volunteers currently become part of your organisation. Ask yourselves:

- How do new volunteers experience their first day?
- Does every volunteer receive the same introduction?
- Is it clear who provides support during the onboarding period?
- Do volunteers have opportunities to build relationships with staff and other volunteers?
- How do you help volunteers feel welcomed rather than simply informed?
- Are there opportunities to recognise volunteers from the beginning of their journey?

Remember that integration is not completed after the first day. Consider how your organisation continues supporting volunteers throughout their first weeks and months.

Supporting Resources

Suggested Checklist

Creating a Positive Volunteer Welcome

The checklist may include questions such as:

- Have volunteers received a personal welcome?
- Have they been introduced to the team?
- Do they know who to contact for support?
- Have expectations been discussed?
- Have they received the essential information before starting their activities?
- Do they know where to find additional information when needed?

This checklist can support organisations in creating a consistent onboarding experience for every volunteer.

Key Takeaways

Before moving to Module 2, consider whether your organisation:

✓ helps volunteers feel welcomed from the very beginning;
✓ provides clear guidance and support throughout the onboarding period;
✓ encourages volunteers to become active members of the team;
✓ communicates expectations openly and consistently;
✓ recognises volunteers as valuable contributors to the organisation's mission.

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Module 1 Summary

Module 1 has focused on establishing the foundations of an effective volunteer onboarding programme.

Before introducing volunteers to organisational structures, policies and daily activities, organisations should ensure that volunteers understand who the organisation is, why it exists and how they can contribute to its mission.

An effective first module helps volunteers develop a sense of purpose, belonging and confidence. It introduces the organisation's story, mission, vision and values, communicates its impact and creates meaningful connections between volunteers and the organisation from the very beginning.

Although every organisation has its own identity and culture, the principles presented throughout this module can be adapted to organisations of different sizes, sectors and volunteering contexts. The examples provided by the project partners demonstrate different approaches while encouraging organisations to develop an onboarding programme that reflects their own unique identity.

Module 1 Reflection

Before continuing to Module 2, ask yourselves:

- Which parts of our current welcome and introduction already work well?
- Which areas would benefit from further development?
- If a volunteer joined tomorrow, would they leave their first day with a clear understanding of who we are, why we exist and how they contribute to our mission?
- Which examples from the partner organisations could inspire improvements to our own onboarding programme?

By taking time to reflect on these questions, organisations can begin shaping an onboarding experience that is informative, welcoming and aligned with their values—laying a strong foundation for the remaining modules of the framework.

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MODULE 2

Becoming Part of Our Team

Module Introduction

After introducing your organisation's purpose, mission and values, the next step is helping volunteers understand how the organisation operates in practice.

A positive volunteering experience depends not only on motivation but also on clear communication, well-defined responsibilities and supportive relationships. Volunteers who know who they work with, where to find information and who to contact when they need support are more likely to feel confident and become active contributors from the beginning.

For many organisations, this knowledge is shared informally through conversations or "learning by doing." While this approach often works for experienced volunteers, it can leave new volunteers feeling uncertain or overwhelmed. A structured onboarding programme helps ensure that every volunteer receives the same essential information and understands how the organisation functions.

This module focuses on the people behind the organisation. It encourages organisations to present their internal structure, introduce key contacts, explain communication channels and describe the organisational culture volunteers will become part of.

By the end of this module, organisations will have identified the information volunteers need to navigate the organisation with confidence and feel connected to the wider team.

Note

Many NGOs tend to overload onboarding with internal structures, committee names and organisational details. Throughout this module, we'll repeatedly encourage organisations to ask:

"Does a new volunteer really need this information on day one?"

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- present their organisational structure in a way that is easy for volunteers to understand;
- identify the key people volunteers should know during onboarding;
- explain communication channels and responsibilities clearly;
- introduce their organisational culture and ways of working;
- review whether volunteers receive sufficient support during their first weeks.

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2.1. Understanding Your Organisation's Structure

Every organisation has its own structure. Some operate with only a few staff members and volunteers, while others involve multiple departments, project teams and specialised roles. Regardless of size, volunteers benefit from understanding how the organisation is organised and how different people contribute to achieving shared goals.

The objective is not to provide volunteers with a detailed organisational chart. Instead, they should gain a simple understanding of how the organisation works and where their own role fits within it.

Introducing the organisational structure early helps volunteers:

- understand how decisions are made;
- recognise who is responsible for different areas;
- identify where they can find support;
- appreciate how different roles work together;
- understand how their own contribution supports the wider organisation.

When presenting the structure, avoid unnecessary complexity. Focus on the people and roles volunteers are most likely to interact with during their first weeks.

Examples may include:

- Board or governing body
- Executive Director or Management
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Project Coordinators
- Team Leaders
- Administrative Support
- Volunteers
- External partners (where relevant)

Visual diagrams or simple organisational charts often help volunteers understand these relationships more quickly than written descriptions.

Remember that volunteers do not need to know everything immediately. The aim is to reduce uncertainty rather than overload them with information.

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Good Practice Recommendations

When presenting your organisational structure, consider:

- using a simple organisational chart rather than a complex hierarchy;
- introducing people by their role and responsibilities rather than only by job title;
- explaining who volunteers will interact with most frequently;
- clarifying reporting lines where appropriate;
- keeping organisational information up to date.

Where possible, include photographs and short personal introductions to make the organisation feel more approachable.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example showing how organisational structures and responsibilities are introduced during volunteer onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating how volunteers are introduced to key staff members and organisational roles.

Consider for Your Organisation

Take a moment to review how volunteers currently learn about your organisation.
Ask yourselves:

- Would a new volunteer understand how the organisation is structured?
- Do volunteers know who they should contact in different situations?
- Is your organisational structure presented in a simple and accessible way?
- Could some information be simplified or presented visually?
- Which roles are most important for volunteers to understand during onboarding?

Remember that onboarding should build confidence rather than create confusion.

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Supporting Resources

Suggested Template

Organisational Structure Overview

The template may include:

- organisational chart;
- key departments or project areas;
- names and responsibilities of key contacts;
- reporting relationships;
- contact details where appropriate.

This overview can be used as part of the volunteer handbook, onboarding presentation or digital onboarding programme.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ presents its organisational structure clearly and simply;
✓ introduces the people volunteers are most likely to work with;
✓ explains responsibilities in an understandable way;
✓ helps volunteers identify where to seek support;
✓ avoids overwhelming volunteers with unnecessary organisational detail.

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2.2. Introducing Your Team

One of the most important aspects of volunteer onboarding is helping volunteers become familiar with the people they will be working with. Knowing who is part of the organisation creates confidence, encourages communication and helps volunteers feel connected from the very beginning.

Introducing the team is more than providing a list of names. It helps volunteers understand the different roles within the organisation and who they can turn to for guidance, support or information.

Depending on the size of your organisation, volunteers may interact with board members, project coordinators, volunteer coordinators, administrative staff, trainers or experienced volunteers. Introducing these people during onboarding helps reduce uncertainty and encourages volunteers to ask questions when needed.

Organisations should consider which team members every volunteer should know before starting their activities. The aim is not to introduce every employee or volunteer but to familiarise newcomers with the key people who support their volunteering journey.

A simple introduction for each team member might include:

- name;
- role within the organisation;
- main responsibilities;
- how they support volunteers;
- preferred method of contact.

Where appropriate, organisations may also include a short personal introduction or a fun fact to make the organisation feel more approachable and welcoming.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing your team, consider:

- focusing on the people volunteers will interact with most frequently;
- using photographs to help volunteers recognise team members;
- describing responsibilities in plain language rather than using internal job titles;
- explaining who should be contacted for different types of questions;
- ensuring that introductions remain current and are updated regularly.

Some organisations also introduce experienced volunteers who can act as informal mentors during the first weeks.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how key staff members and volunteer coordinators are introduced during onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating how volunteers are introduced to both staff members and experienced volunteers.

Consider for Your Organisation

Reflect on your current onboarding practice.
Ask yourselves:

- Which people should every new volunteer know?
- Would volunteers recognise these people if they met them on their first day?
- Is it clear who supports volunteers throughout their journey?
- Are responsibilities easy to understand?
- Could personal introductions make your organisation feel more welcoming?

Supporting Resources

Suggested Template
Meet Our Team
The template could include:

- Photograph
- Name
- Position
- Responsibilities
- Contact information
- "How I support volunteers"

This template can be used consistently across onboarding materials, websites and volunteer handbooks.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ introduces the key people volunteers need to know;
✓ clearly explains who is responsible for what;
✓ provides volunteers with clear contact information;
✓ presents the team in a friendly and approachable way.

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2.3. Communication Channels

Clear communication is one of the foundations of successful volunteer engagement. Volunteers should understand not only what information they will receive but also how communication takes place within the organisation.
Misunderstandings often occur because communication expectations have never been explained. Volunteers may be unsure where to find important information, whom to contact or which communication channels should be used in different situations.
An effective onboarding programme introduces volunteers to the organisation's communication culture from the beginning. This helps create transparency, reduces uncertainty and ensures that everyone receives important information consistently.

Organisations should explain:

- which communication channels are used;
- what each channel is used for;
- who manages the different channels;
- expected response times where appropriate;
- when communication should be formal or informal.

Communication channels may include:

- email;
- messaging platforms (e.g. WhatsApp, Signal, Microsoft Teams);
- project management tools;
- newsletters;
- volunteer portals;
- face-to-face meetings;
- online meetings.

Not every communication channel is suitable for every purpose. Organisations should therefore explain where volunteers should report absences, ask operational questions, receive updates or access important documents.
Clear communication expectations create reliability and contribute to a positive volunteer experience.

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Good Practice Recommendations

Consider providing volunteers with a simple communication guide that explains:

- where announcements are published;
- how volunteers report availability or absences;
- who should be contacted in emergencies;
- where documents and resources are stored;
- expected communication etiquette.

Keep communication procedures as simple as possible, particularly for volunteers who may only contribute occasionally.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example showing the communication tools used to coordinate volunteers and keep them informed.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating communication channels, volunteer updates and coordination practices.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Would a new volunteer know how to contact your organisation?
- Are communication channels clearly explained?
- Are responsibilities for communication clearly assigned?
- Could communication be simplified?
- Are volunteers informed about expected response times and communication etiquette?

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Supporting Resources

Volunteer Communication Guide

The guide may include:

- communication channels;
- purpose of each channel;
- contact persons;
- emergency contacts;
- communication etiquette;
- frequently asked questions.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ uses communication channels consistently;
✓ explains where volunteers can find information;
✓ ensures volunteers know who to contact;
✓ provides clear communication expectations;
✓ supports open, respectful and transparent communication.

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2.4. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

One of the most common causes of uncertainty for new volunteers is not knowing who is responsible for different tasks or decisions within the organisation.

During onboarding, organisations often assume that volunteers will gradually learn who to approach for different questions. While this may happen over time, providing clear guidance from the beginning helps volunteers feel more confident and reduces misunderstandings.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities is not only about introducing job titles. It helps volunteers understand how the organisation functions, who provides support and how decisions are made. When responsibilities are clearly explained, volunteers know where to find information, whom to contact and how different people contribute to achieving the organisation's mission.

An effective onboarding programme should therefore introduce the key roles that volunteers are most likely to interact with and explain their responsibilities in simple and practical terms.

Examples may include:

- Volunteer Coordinator – coordinates volunteer recruitment, onboarding and ongoing support.
- Project Coordinator – organises specific projects or activities and provides operational guidance.
- Team Leader – supervises volunteers during activities and ensures tasks are completed safely.
- Administrative Contact – supports volunteers with documentation, schedules or practical questions.
- Safeguarding or Well-being Contact – provides guidance if volunteers have concerns regarding safety, wellbeing or inappropriate behaviour.

Organisations should avoid introducing unnecessary organisational complexity. The aim is to help volunteers know who can help them, rather than explaining every internal reporting relationship.

Good Practice Recommendations

When presenting organisational responsibilities, consider:

- introducing responsibilities before job titles;
- explaining how each role supports volunteers;
- providing practical examples of when volunteers should contact different people;
- using clear and accessible language;
- reviewing this information regularly to ensure it remains up to date.

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Simple visual diagrams or "Who can help me?" guides are often easier for volunteers to understand than organisational charts.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example showing how volunteer responsibilities and staff roles are explained during onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating how volunteers know who to contact for operational, administrative and personal support.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Would a new volunteer know who to contact in different situations?
- Are responsibilities explained in a way that is easy to understand?
- Could volunteers distinguish between operational, administrative and personal support?
- Are there responsibilities that overlap and could create confusion?
- How often are volunteers reminded about key contacts after the onboarding?

Remember that volunteers should never feel uncertain about where to ask for help.

Supporting Resources

Who Can Help Me?
Develop a simple contact guide that includes:

- Name
- Role
- Area of responsibility
- Typical questions they can answer
- Contact details
- Availability (where appropriate)

This resource can be included in volunteer handbooks, welcome packs or digital resource libraries.

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Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ clearly explains who is responsible for different areas;
✓ introduces responsibilities in a volunteer-friendly way;
✓ provides clear contact points for support;
✓ helps volunteers know where to go with questions;
✓ regularly reviews and updates organisational responsibilities.

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2.5. Introducing Your Organisational Culture

Every organisation has its own culture.

Some organisations have a very informal atmosphere where volunteers and staff work closely together. Others operate in more structured environments with clearly defined procedures and responsibilities. Neither approach is right or wrong. What matters is that volunteers understand the culture they are becoming part of.

Organisational culture is often described as "the way we do things here." It influences how people communicate, collaborate, solve problems and support one another. While policies and procedures explain what should happen, organisational culture shapes how people work together every day.

Helping volunteers understand this culture during onboarding makes it easier for them to integrate into the team, communicate appropriately and feel comfortable within the organisation.

Examples of organisational culture may include:

- open and transparent communication;
- teamwork and collaboration;
- mutual respect;
- flexibility and adaptability;
- appreciation and recognition;
- continuous learning;
- shared responsibility;
- inclusion and equal opportunities.

The most effective way to communicate organisational culture is through examples rather than definitions. Volunteers learn more from observing everyday behaviours than from reading value statements.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing organisational culture, consider:

- describing the behaviours that are encouraged within your organisation;
- sharing stories that demonstrate organisational values in practice;
- explaining how staff and volunteers work together;
- encouraging experienced volunteers to share their experiences;
- reinforcing the culture consistently throughout the volunteer journey.

Culture should be experienced throughout the onboarding process rather than explained only once.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how organisational culture is introduced and reinforced through volunteer engagement.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating how volunteers experience the organisation's culture from their first day onwards.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- If a new volunteer spent one day with your organisation, how would they describe your culture?
- Which behaviours best represent your organisation?
- Are these behaviours consistently demonstrated by staff and experienced volunteers?
- How do you help new volunteers feel included?
- What traditions, routines or practices make your organisation unique?

Remember that volunteers often remember how they were treated more than what they were told.

Supporting Resources

Organisational Culture Reflection Worksheet
The worksheet may include prompts such as:

- Three words that describe our organisational culture.
- Behaviours we encourage.
- Behaviours we want to avoid.
- How we welcome new volunteers.
- How we recognise volunteer contributions.
- How we demonstrate our values every day.

This exercise can also support internal discussions among staff and experienced volunteers to ensure a shared understanding of organisational culture.

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Key Takeaways

Before moving to Module 3, consider whether your organisation:

✓ communicates its organisational culture clearly;
✓ helps volunteers understand expected behaviours;
✓ demonstrates values through everyday actions;
✓ creates an inclusive and welcoming environment;
✓ encourages volunteers to become active members of the organisational community.

Module 2 Summary

Module 2 focused on helping organisations introduce the people, structures and working culture that shape everyday volunteering.

An effective onboarding programme should do more than explain organisational structures. It should help volunteers understand who supports them, how communication takes place, where responsibilities lie and what it feels like to be part of the organisation.

By creating clarity around these topics, organisations reduce uncertainty, strengthen relationships and provide volunteers with the confidence they need to become engaged members of the team.

Before moving to the next module, organisations are encouraged to review whether their onboarding provides volunteers with all the information they need to navigate the organisation independently and confidently from their very first days.

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MODULE 3

The Role of Volunteers in Your Organisation

Module Introduction

Volunteers join organisations with different backgrounds, experiences and expectations. Some may have volunteered for many years, while others are taking their first steps into community engagement. Regardless of their previous experience, every volunteer benefits from understanding what their role involves and what they can expect from the organisation.

Clearly defining volunteer roles is one of the most important elements of a successful onboarding programme. It creates transparency, builds confidence and helps prevent misunderstandings. When volunteers understand their responsibilities and the support available to them, they are more likely to feel motivated, capable and committed.

This module supports organisations in defining volunteer roles, communicating expectations and establishing a positive partnership between volunteers and the organisation. It also encourages organisations to consider volunteering as a two-way relationship, where both volunteers and organisations contribute to creating a rewarding and meaningful experience.

By the end of this module, organisations will have identified the key information volunteers need to understand their role and feel prepared for their volunteering activities.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- clearly describe volunteer roles within their organisation;
- define realistic expectations for volunteers;
- communicate what volunteers can expect in return;
- explain volunteer rights and responsibilities;
- review whether role descriptions support a positive onboarding experience.

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3.1. Defining Volunteer Roles

Every volunteer role should have a clear purpose.

Whether volunteers support administrative work, organise events, mentor young people, assist older adults or participate in environmental activities, they should understand why their role exists and how it contributes to the organisation's mission.

Role descriptions help volunteers begin their activities with confidence. They reduce uncertainty, clarify expectations and make it easier for volunteers to identify where they can make a meaningful contribution.

A good role description focuses on the purpose of the role rather than simply listing tasks.

For example, instead of writing:

"Help prepare community events."

consider explaining:

"Support the planning and delivery of community events that create opportunities for people to connect, learn and participate."

This helps volunteers understand the wider purpose behind their contribution.

A volunteer role description may include:

- the purpose of the role;
- key responsibilities;
- expected skills or interests;
- estimated time commitment;
- who provides supervision;
- any required training;
- opportunities for learning and development.

Not every volunteer role needs the same level of detail. However, every volunteer should understand what is expected before beginning their activities.

Good Practice Recommendations

When developing volunteer roles, consider:

- using clear and inclusive language;
- describing responsibilities realistically;
- avoiding unnecessary jargon;
- focusing on meaningful contribution rather than only operational tasks;
- reviewing role descriptions regularly to ensure they remain relevant.

Volunteers should never feel uncertain about the purpose of their role.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

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Partner example illustrating how volunteer roles are presented and explained during onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example demonstrating how volunteers are matched to suitable activities and responsibilities.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Are volunteer roles clearly described?
- Would a new volunteer understand the purpose of each role?
- Are expectations realistic and achievable?
- Could role descriptions better explain the positive impact volunteers create?
- Do volunteers know who supports them in each role?

Supporting Resources

Suggested Template

Volunteer Role Profile

The template may include:

- Role title
- Purpose
- Key responsibilities
- Required skills or interests
- Time commitment
- Supervisor
- Training provided
- Opportunities for learning

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ has clearly defined volunteer roles;
✓ explains why each role is important;
✓ communicates responsibilities in plain language;
✓ provides volunteers with sufficient information before they begin.

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3.2. What Can Volunteers Expect from Your Organisation?

Volunteer onboarding is built on mutual commitment.

While organisations often explain what they expect from volunteers, it is equally important to communicate what volunteers can expect in return. This helps establish trust and demonstrates that volunteering is a partnership rather than a one-sided relationship.

Every organisation is different, but volunteers generally expect to feel welcomed, supported and respected throughout their volunteering experience. Clearly communicating this during onboarding helps create realistic expectations and contributes to volunteer satisfaction and retention.

Organisations should consider explaining:

- how volunteers will be welcomed;
- what induction or training will be provided;
- who will support volunteers during their activities;
- how feedback will be given;
- how volunteers can ask questions or raise concerns;
- how achievements and contributions will be recognised.

When volunteers know they will receive guidance and support, they are more likely to feel confident and engaged.

It is equally important to be transparent. If certain opportunities, training or resources are not currently available, communicate this honestly. Clear communication helps build trust from the beginning.

Good Practice Recommendations

Organisations may consider developing a simple Volunteer Promise that outlines their commitment to every volunteer.

This might include commitments such as:

- treating volunteers with respect and fairness;
- providing appropriate guidance and supervision;
- creating an inclusive environment;
- ensuring volunteers have access to the information they need;
- recognising volunteer contributions;
- listening to volunteer feedback and continuously improving the volunteer experience.

Such a statement reinforces the organisation's commitment to creating a positive volunteering environment and can become an important part of the onboarding programme.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example describing how volunteers are supported throughout their volunteering journey.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating how volunteer expectations and organisational commitments are communicated during onboarding.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- If you were joining your organisation as a volunteer, what would you expect?
- Are these expectations clearly communicated?
- Do volunteers know what support is available?
- How do you demonstrate appreciation throughout the volunteer journey?
- Does your onboarding communicate partnership rather than obligation?

Supporting Resources

Suggested Resource

Our Commitment to Volunteers
Develop a short statement outlining what every volunteer can expect from your organisation.
This statement can become part of your onboarding materials and help create a consistent volunteer experience.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ communicates its commitment to volunteers;
✓ explains the support volunteers will receive;
✓ creates realistic expectations;
✓ promotes volunteering as a partnership based on mutual respect.

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3.3. What Do You Expect from Your Volunteers?

Every successful volunteering experience is built on mutual trust, shared expectations and open communication. While organisations have a responsibility to support volunteers, volunteers also play an important role in contributing to a positive and reliable volunteering environment.

Clearly communicating expectations during onboarding helps volunteers understand how they can contribute successfully and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings later. Expectations should never be presented as a long list of rules or obligations. Instead, they should help volunteers understand the behaviours and attitudes that contribute to a positive experience for everyone involved.

It is important to recognise that volunteers contribute their time freely. They often balance volunteering alongside work, education, family responsibilities and other commitments. Organisations should therefore communicate expectations realistically and create opportunities for open dialogue whenever circumstances change.

Typical expectations may include:

- demonstrating reliability and commitment to agreed activities;
- communicating openly when availability changes;
- treating beneficiaries, staff and fellow volunteers with respect;
- following organisational policies and procedures;
- participating in mandatory training where required;
- protecting confidential information;
- contributing positively to the organisation's culture.

Rather than focusing on compliance, organisations are encouraged to explain why these expectations matter. Volunteers are more likely to commit to expectations when they understand how their actions affect colleagues, beneficiaries and the wider organisation.

Good Practice Recommendations

When communicating expectations, consider:

- discussing expectations during the onboarding process rather than only providing written policies;
- using clear and positive language;
- explaining the purpose behind organisational procedures;
- encouraging volunteers to ask questions if expectations are unclear;
- reviewing expectations regularly during the volunteer journey.

Remember that expectations should support volunteers, not discourage them.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example showing how volunteer expectations are introduced and discussed during onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating how expectations are communicated through volunteer agreements and ongoing support.

Consider for Your Organisation

Take some time to reflect on your current practice.
Ask yourselves:

- Are expectations communicated clearly before volunteers begin?
- Do volunteers understand why these expectations are important?
- Could any expectations be explained more positively?
- Are volunteers encouraged to discuss concerns or limitations openly?
- Do your expectations reflect the values of your organisation?

Remember that expectations should build trust rather than create unnecessary barriers.

Supporting Resources

Suggested Resource

Volunteer Expectations Checklist
Consider developing a short checklist covering:

- Commitment and reliability
- Communication
- Respectful behaviour
- Confidentiality
- Participation in training
- Health and safety
- Organisational values

This checklist can be reviewed together with volunteers during the onboarding process to ensure a shared understanding.

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Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ communicates expectations clearly and positively;
✓ explains why expectations are important;
✓ creates opportunities for dialogue;
✓ balances organisational needs with volunteers' individual circumstances;
✓ encourages a relationship built on mutual trust and respect.

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3.4. Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteering is based on partnership. Organisations and volunteers each have rights and responsibilities that contribute to creating a safe, respectful and rewarding volunteering experience.

Introducing these rights and responsibilities during onboarding helps establish transparency and promotes a shared understanding of how volunteers and organisations work together. Rather than presenting legal terminology or lengthy policy documents, organisations should communicate these topics in a practical and accessible way. Volunteers should understand not only what their rights and responsibilities are, but also why they exist and how they contribute to a positive volunteering environment.

Volunteer rights may include:

- receiving appropriate information before starting;
- being treated fairly, respectfully and without discrimination;
- working in a safe environment;
- receiving appropriate supervision and support;
- accessing relevant training and resources;
- having their contribution recognised and appreciated;
- being able to raise concerns without fear of negative consequences.

Volunteer responsibilities may include:

- carrying out agreed tasks responsibly;
- respecting organisational policies;
- protecting confidential information;
- communicating honestly and promptly;
- treating everyone with dignity and respect;
- contributing to a safe and inclusive environment.

Presenting these rights and responsibilities together reinforces the idea that volunteering is built on shared responsibility and mutual respect.

Good Practice Recommendations

Organisations may consider developing a simple Volunteer Charter that summarises the rights and responsibilities of both volunteers and the organisation.

A Volunteer Charter should be:

- easy to understand;
- written in plain language;
- accessible to all volunteers;

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- introduced during onboarding;
- reviewed regularly.

Rather than being seen as a contract, the charter should represent a shared commitment to working together respectfully and responsibly.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example demonstrating how volunteer rights and responsibilities are communicated during onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example showing how volunteers acknowledge and understand their shared commitments.

Consider for Your Organisation

Reflect on your current onboarding process.

Ask yourselves:

- Are volunteer rights clearly communicated?
- Do volunteers understand their responsibilities before starting?
- Are these rights and responsibilities easy to understand?
- Do they reflect your organisational values?
- How do you ensure volunteers know where to seek advice if they are unsure?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Charter Template
The template may include:

- Our commitment to volunteers
- Volunteer rights
- Volunteer responsibilities
- Shared organisational values
- Contact information for support
- Acknowledgement of understanding

This resource can be adapted to reflect the organisation's own policies and volunteering environment.

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Key Takeaways

Before moving to Module 4, consider whether your organisation:

✓ clearly explains volunteer rights and responsibilities;
✓ communicates these in a positive and accessible way;
✓ promotes mutual respect and shared responsibility;
✓ supports volunteers in understanding their role within the organisation;
✓ provides resources that volunteers can refer to throughout their volunteering journey.

Module 3 Summary

This module focused on helping organisations define what volunteering looks like within their own context.

By clearly describing volunteer roles, communicating mutual expectations and introducing rights and responsibilities, organisations create a transparent foundation for successful volunteer engagement.

A well-designed onboarding programme helps volunteers understand not only what they will do, but also how they will be supported, what is expected of them and how they contribute to the wider mission of the organisation.

Before continuing to Module 4, organisations are encouraged to review whether their onboarding materials provide volunteers with the confidence, clarity and support they need to begin their volunteering journey successfully.

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MODULE 4
Tasks & Services

Module Introduction

Volunteers are most confident when they clearly understand what they will be doing and why their contribution matters.

After introducing the organisation, its people and the role of volunteers, the next step in the onboarding process is explaining the practical side of volunteering. This includes introducing the organisation's projects and services, describing volunteer tasks and helping volunteers understand the people or communities they will support.

For many volunteers, this is the point where the organisation's mission becomes tangible. Rather than talking about organisational goals in general terms, volunteers begin to see how their individual contribution supports real people, projects and communities.

A well-designed onboarding programme prepares volunteers by introducing their future activities before they begin. It should help them understand not only what they will do, but also why these activities are important and how they contribute to the organisation's overall impact.

This module supports organisations in presenting their projects, services and volunteer activities in a structured and engaging way while encouraging volunteers to approach their role with confidence and purpose.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- present projects and services in a volunteer-friendly way;
- describe volunteer tasks clearly and realistically;
- introduce volunteers to the beneficiaries they may support;
- help volunteers understand how daily activities contribute to organisational goals;
- identify opportunities to improve practical onboarding content.

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4.1. Presenting Your Projects and Services

Every organisation delivers its mission through projects, programmes or services. Introducing these activities during onboarding helps volunteers understand where they fit within the organisation and how their contribution creates value.
Rather than presenting a complete list of all organisational activities, focus on the projects and services that are relevant to volunteers. New volunteers do not need to know every detail immediately. Instead, they should gain an overview that helps them understand the organisation's work and identify the areas in which they will become involved.

Consider introducing:

- the organisation's main areas of work;
- ongoing projects and programmes;
- regular services provided to beneficiaries;
- seasonal or special activities;
- opportunities for volunteers to participate in different initiatives.

Whenever possible, explain projects from the perspective of the people or communities they support. This helps volunteers connect with the purpose behind the activities rather than viewing them simply as operational tasks.
Using photographs, short project summaries or testimonials from volunteers and beneficiaries can make this section more engaging and easier to understand.

Good Practice Recommendations

When presenting projects and services, consider:

- grouping similar activities together;
- explaining the purpose of each project rather than focusing only on logistics;
- highlighting the role volunteers play within each activity;
- using real examples from recent projects;
- avoiding lengthy project descriptions during onboarding.

The aim is to inspire volunteers while providing enough practical information to prepare them for their role.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example demonstrating how projects and services are introduced to new volunteers.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating how volunteers learn about the organisation's different activities and community services.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Which projects should every volunteer know about?
- Which information is essential before volunteers begin?
- Do volunteers understand how different projects contribute to your mission?
- Are project descriptions easy to understand for someone with no previous knowledge of your organisation?
- Could examples or success stories make this section more engaging?

Supporting Resources

Our Projects at a Glance
Develop a simple overview including:

- Project name
- Purpose
- Target group
- Volunteer involvement
- Main activities

This resource can help volunteers quickly understand the range of activities offered by your organisation.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ introduces projects in a clear and engaging way;
✓ explains why each project matters;
✓ highlights volunteer contributions;
✓ provides volunteers with a realistic overview of organisational activities.

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4.2. Defining Volunteer Tasks

One of the most important questions new volunteers ask is:
"What will I actually be doing?"
Providing a clear answer helps volunteers begin their activities with confidence and reduces uncertainty during their first days.
Volunteer tasks should be described realistically. Avoid creating unrealistic expectations by presenting volunteering only through exceptional or inspiring examples. Instead, explain the variety of activities volunteers may undertake and emphasise that every task contributes to the organisation's mission.

Task descriptions should focus on:

- what volunteers will do;
- when activities take place;
- who they work with;
- who provides support;
- any preparation or training required;
- the purpose behind the activity.

Where organisations offer different volunteering opportunities, consider grouping tasks into categories such as:

- supporting programmes and events;
- administrative support;
- mentoring or coaching;
- environmental activities;
- community engagement;
- communication and outreach;
- fundraising;
- practical or logistical support.

Clear descriptions help volunteers choose roles that match their interests, availability and skills.

Good Practice Recommendations

When describing volunteer tasks, consider:

- using practical examples rather than generic descriptions;
- explaining how tasks contribute to organisational goals;
- distinguishing between mandatory and optional activities;
- encouraging volunteers to discuss their interests with coordinators;
- reviewing task descriptions regularly to ensure they remain accurate.

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Remember that volunteers are motivated by understanding the purpose behind their contribution, not simply by completing tasks.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how volunteer activities are presented during onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example showing how volunteers are introduced to different roles and practical activities.

Consider for Your Organisation

Reflect on your current onboarding materials.
Ask yourselves:

- Would volunteers clearly understand what they will be doing?
- Are task descriptions realistic?
- Do volunteers understand why these tasks are important?
- Could examples from experienced volunteers improve understanding?
- Are volunteers able to identify roles that match their interests and skills?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Task Profile
The template may include:

- Activity
- Purpose
- Typical responsibilities
- Time commitment
- Required preparation
- Support available
- Skills developed

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ clearly explains volunteer activities;
✓ presents realistic expectations;
✓ highlights the purpose behind each task;
✓ helps volunteers understand how their contribution supports the organisation's mission.

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4.3. Introducing Your Beneficiaries

At the heart of every volunteering activity are the people, communities or causes an organisation exists to support. Whether volunteers work directly with individuals or contribute behind the scenes, understanding who benefits from the organisation's work helps create purpose and strengthens motivation.
Introducing beneficiaries during onboarding enables volunteers to better understand the context of their role and the impact of their contribution. It also helps organisations prepare volunteers for the different situations they may encounter and promotes respectful, person-centred interactions.

Beneficiaries vary greatly depending on the organisation's mission. They may include:

- children and young people;
- older adults;
- people with disabilities;
- migrants and refugees;
- families;
- unemployed individuals;
- community groups;
- environmental initiatives;
- cultural organisations;
- animal welfare organisations;
- local communities;
- educational institutions.

Some volunteers work directly with beneficiaries, while others contribute through administration, logistics, fundraising or communication. Regardless of their role, understanding who ultimately benefits from the organisation's work helps volunteers see the broader significance of their contribution.
Organisations should also help volunteers understand that every beneficiary has unique experiences, needs and expectations. Onboarding should therefore encourage respectful communication, empathy and an appreciation of diversity.
Whenever possible, introduce beneficiaries through real stories rather than statistics alone. Short case studies, testimonials or examples can help volunteers better understand the communities they will support while protecting privacy and confidentiality.

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Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing beneficiaries, consider:

- explaining who your organisation supports and why;
- using respectful and inclusive language;
- focusing on people's strengths rather than defining them by their challenges;
- helping volunteers understand the diversity of beneficiaries;
- explaining any specific communication approaches or safeguarding considerations relevant to your organisation;
- sharing real examples that illustrate positive outcomes while protecting personal data.

This section should help volunteers build understanding and empathy before beginning their activities.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how beneficiaries and community groups are introduced during volunteer onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating how volunteers are prepared to work with different beneficiary groups.

Consider for Your Organisation

Take some time to reflect on how you currently introduce the people or communities your organisation supports.
Ask yourselves:

- Do volunteers clearly understand who benefits from your work?
- Are beneficiaries introduced in a respectful and inclusive way?
- Does your onboarding prepare volunteers for working with different groups of people?
- Are there specific communication approaches or sensitivities volunteers should be aware of?
- Could real stories or testimonials help volunteers better understand the impact of your work?

Remember that understanding beneficiaries helps volunteers move beyond completing tasks and encourages them to see the people and communities at the centre of your organisation's mission.

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Supporting Resources

Understanding Our Beneficiaries

This resource may include:

- the different beneficiary groups supported by the organisation;
- key characteristics or needs (where appropriate);
- communication tips;
- examples of positive interactions;
- guidance on respectful behaviour;
- links to relevant organisational policies, such as safeguarding or inclusion.

This resource can support volunteers before they begin working with beneficiaries and can also serve as a reference throughout their volunteering journey.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ clearly introduces the people or communities it supports;
✓ helps volunteers understand the purpose behind their work;
✓ prepares volunteers to interact respectfully and confidently with beneficiaries;
✓ promotes empathy, inclusion and person-centred approaches;
✓ provides practical guidance where volunteers work directly with beneficiaries.

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4.4 Daily and Recurring Activities

After volunteers understand the organisation's projects, their role and the people they support, they need to know what day-to-day volunteering looks like.
Daily and recurring activities help volunteers establish routines, understand expectations and become productive more quickly. They also reduce uncertainty during the first weeks, when volunteers are often adapting to new environments and responsibilities.

Although daily activities vary between organisations, volunteers generally benefit from knowing:

- how a typical volunteering day begins and ends;
- where to report upon arrival;
- how activities are organised;
- what preparation may be required;
- how tasks are allocated;
- how breaks, meetings and debriefings are organised;
- how unexpected situations are managed.

Rather than presenting every possible activity, focus on those that volunteers are most likely to experience during their first weeks. This helps prevent information overload while ensuring volunteers feel prepared for their role.
Where different volunteer roles exist, organisations may wish to develop separate activity guides for each role while maintaining a common onboarding programme for all volunteers.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing daily activities, consider:

- describing a typical volunteering day;
- explaining recurring routines and responsibilities;
- providing examples of common situations;
- highlighting practical tips from experienced volunteers;
- encouraging volunteers to ask questions whenever they are unsure.

Helping volunteers understand daily routines creates confidence and contributes to a positive volunteering experience from the very beginning.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating a typical volunteering day and recurring volunteer activities.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example showing how volunteers are introduced to daily routines and operational procedures.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Would a volunteer know what to expect on their first day?
- Are daily routines clearly explained?
- Which activities should be introduced before volunteering begins?
- Are there recurring tasks that could be described more clearly?
- Could experienced volunteers contribute practical tips that would help newcomers feel more confident?

Supporting Resources

A Typical Volunteer Day
Consider developing a simple guide that outlines:

- arrival procedures;
- daily schedule;
- recurring activities;
- practical tips;
- end-of-day responsibilities;
- who to contact for support.

This guide can provide reassurance to new volunteers and help create consistency across the organisation.

Key Takeaways

Before moving to Module 5, consider whether your organisation:
✓ prepares volunteers for their daily activities;
✓ explains routines clearly and practically;
✓ reduces uncertainty during the first days of volunteering;
✓ provides role-specific guidance where needed;
✓ supports volunteers in becoming confident and independent contributors.

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MODULE 5
Working Together

Module Introduction

Volunteering is rarely an individual activity. Whether volunteers support projects independently or work closely with staff, beneficiaries or other volunteers, successful volunteering depends on positive relationships and effective collaboration.

Organisations that invest in building a culture of open communication, teamwork and mutual respect create an environment where volunteers feel confident to contribute, ask questions and learn from others. These qualities do not develop automatically. They should be introduced during onboarding and reinforced throughout the volunteer journey.

This module supports organisations in defining how volunteers communicate, collaborate and contribute within the team. It encourages organisations to reflect on their own working culture and identify the behaviours that help create a respectful, supportive and inclusive volunteering environment.

By the end of this module, organisations will have developed the key content needed to introduce volunteers to their communication practices, teamwork culture and approach to feedback, conflict resolution and inclusion.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- explain how communication takes place within the organisation;
- introduce expectations regarding teamwork and collaboration;
- describe how volunteers receive and provide feedback;
- communicate their approach to conflict resolution;
- demonstrate how inclusion, diversity and equality are reflected in everyday practice.

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5.1. Communication and Information Sharing

Clear communication is one of the most important foundations of successful volunteer engagement. It enables volunteers to feel informed, supported and connected while reducing misunderstandings and unnecessary uncertainty.
During onboarding, organisations should explain not only which communication channels are used, but also how communication is expected to take place within the organisation. Volunteers should understand where to find information, when to communicate updates and how to report questions or concerns.
Communication also reflects organisational culture. Some organisations communicate very informally, while others follow more structured procedures. Whatever the approach, it should be introduced consistently so that volunteers know what to expect.

Topics organisations may wish to introduce include:

- regular communication channels;
- reporting procedures;
- scheduling and attendance updates;
- sharing important information;
- documentation requirements;
- communication etiquette;
- confidentiality during communication.

Encourage volunteers to ask questions whenever information is unclear. Creating an environment where questions are welcomed contributes to stronger collaboration and helps volunteers become confident more quickly.

Good Practice Recommendations

When presenting communication practices, consider:

- keeping communication procedures simple;
- explaining where volunteers find important information;
- introducing preferred communication channels;
- clarifying response expectations;
- encouraging respectful and constructive communication.

Where possible, provide examples of good communication rather than only describing procedures.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating communication practices between volunteers and staff.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating how volunteers receive updates and communicate within the organisation.

Consider for Your Organisation

Reflect on your communication practices.

Ask yourselves:

- Would a new volunteer know where to find important information?
- Are communication channels used consistently?
- Is communication simple and easy to follow?
- Do volunteers know how to report questions or changes?
- Does your communication style reflect the values of your organisation?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Communication Guide

Include:

- communication channels;
- reporting procedures;
- important contacts;
- communication etiquette;
- emergency communication procedures.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ communicates consistently;
✓ provides volunteers with the information they need;
✓ encourages open communication;
✓ creates an environment where volunteers feel comfortable asking questions.

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5.2. Building a Culture of Teamwork

Volunteers are an important part of the wider organisation. Regardless of whether they volunteer occasionally or on a regular basis, they should feel that they are working alongside others towards a common purpose.

Teamwork is not simply about dividing tasks. It involves cooperation, mutual support, respect for different perspectives and a shared commitment to achieving the organisation's goals.

Introducing expectations regarding teamwork during onboarding helps volunteers understand how collaboration takes place and what behaviours contribute to a positive team environment.

Examples include:

- supporting colleagues when needed;
- sharing information openly;
- respecting different opinions;
- contributing ideas;
- appreciating diverse experiences;
- taking responsibility for agreed tasks.

Strong teamwork creates stronger volunteer experiences.

Good Practice Recommendations

Organisations may wish to:

- explain how volunteers work alongside staff;
- encourage experienced volunteers to mentor newcomers;
- celebrate team achievements;
- create opportunities for volunteers to connect;
- reinforce collaboration throughout the volunteering journey.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

Partner example showing how teamwork is encouraged among volunteers.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example illustrating collaborative volunteer practices.

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Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- How do volunteers become part of the team?
- What behaviours define successful teamwork in your organisation?
- How do you encourage cooperation between volunteers and staff?
- How are volunteers recognised as valuable members of the organisation?
- What traditions or practices strengthen team spirit?

Supporting Resources

Teamwork Reflection Guide

Include prompts such as:

- What does good teamwork look like in our organisation?
- How can volunteers contribute positively to the team?
- How do we support one another during busy periods?
- How do we celebrate success together?

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ explains teamwork expectations clearly;
✓ encourages collaboration and mutual support;
✓ creates opportunities for volunteers to build relationships;
✓ promotes a culture of respect and shared responsibility.

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5.3. Creating a Feedback Culture

Feedback is one of the most valuable tools for supporting volunteers throughout their volunteering journey. It helps volunteers understand what they are doing well, identify opportunities for development and feel recognised for their contribution.
A positive feedback culture is based on open communication, mutual respect and continuous learning. It should not be limited to addressing problems but should also celebrate achievements, recognise effort and encourage volunteers to share their own experiences and ideas.
During onboarding, organisations should explain how feedback is provided, when volunteers can expect it and how they are encouraged to contribute their own observations and suggestions.
Volunteers should understand that feedback is a normal and constructive part of volunteering. When introduced positively from the beginning, it helps build confidence, strengthens relationships and contributes to continuous improvement for both volunteers and the organisation.

Organisations may wish to explain:

- how regular feedback conversations take place;
- who provides feedback;
- how volunteers can ask for feedback;
- how volunteers can share ideas or suggestions;
- how feedback contributes to improving programmes and volunteer experiences.

Creating opportunities for two-way feedback demonstrates that volunteers are valued partners whose experiences and perspectives help shape the organisation.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing feedback, consider:

- encouraging regular informal conversations;
- recognising achievements as well as discussing improvements;
- creating safe opportunities for volunteers to share their opinions;
- listening actively to volunteer experiences;
- following up on suggestions where possible.

Volunteers are more likely to remain engaged when they feel their contribution and opinions are appreciated.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how volunteer feedback is encouraged and used to improve programmes.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating regular communication and volunteer feedback practices.

Consider for Your Organisation

Reflect on your current approach to feedback.
Ask yourselves:

- How often do volunteers receive feedback?
- Do volunteers know how they can provide feedback?
- Are successes recognised as often as improvements are discussed?
- How do you encourage volunteers to share ideas?
- Do volunteers feel that their opinions influence organisational development?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Feedback Conversation Guide
The guide may include:

- Preparing for the conversation
- Celebrating achievements
- Discussing challenges
- Agreeing on future goals
- Inviting volunteer feedback
- Recording follow-up actions

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ provides regular and constructive feedback;
✓ encourages volunteers to share their perspectives;
✓ recognises volunteer achievements;
✓ uses feedback to strengthen volunteer engagement.

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5.4. Managing Challenges and Resolving Conflict

Whenever people work together, misunderstandings and disagreements may occasionally arise. Volunteers come from different backgrounds, bring different experiences and may approach situations in different ways. This diversity is one of the strengths of volunteering, but it also highlights the importance of having clear and respectful approaches to resolving challenges.

Introducing conflict resolution during onboarding does not mean expecting problems to occur. Instead, it reassures volunteers that the organisation provides guidance and support whenever difficulties arise.

Organisations should explain:

- who volunteers can approach if concerns arise;
- how concerns are handled confidentially;
- the importance of respectful communication;
- the steps taken to resolve misunderstandings;
- when formal procedures may be necessary.

Volunteers should understand that asking for support is encouraged and that concerns will be addressed fairly, respectfully and without judgement.

A transparent approach to conflict resolution helps build trust and contributes to a safe volunteering environment.

Good Practice Recommendations

Consider:

- encouraging early conversations before small issues become larger problems;
- promoting respectful dialogue;
- ensuring volunteers know who provides support;
- explaining complaint or grievance procedures where appropriate;
- treating concerns consistently and confidentially.

Conflict resolution should always aim to strengthen relationships and improve collaboration.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

Partner example describing how volunteer concerns are addressed and supported.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example illustrating the organisation's approach to resolving misunderstandings and supporting volunteers

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Would volunteers know who to contact if they experienced a challenge?
- Are support procedures easy to understand?
- Do volunteers feel safe raising concerns?
- Are conflicts managed consistently and respectfully?
- How does your organisation encourage open dialogue?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Support Pathway

Develop a simple guide showing:

- common challenges;
- who to contact;
- support available;
- escalation procedures (if required);
- external support services where appropriate.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:

✓ provides clear support pathways;

✓ encourages respectful communication;

✓ manages concerns fairly;

✓ promotes a safe volunteering environment.

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5.5. Inclusion, Diversity and Equality

Volunteering brings together people with different experiences, cultures, perspectives, abilities and backgrounds. This diversity strengthens organisations by encouraging new ideas, broadening perspectives and creating richer learning experiences.
An inclusive onboarding programme helps ensure that every volunteer feels welcomed, respected and able to contribute regardless of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, educational background or life experience.
Inclusion is not achieved through policies alone. It is reflected in everyday interactions, communication, decision-making and the opportunities organisations create for people to participate meaningfully.
During onboarding, organisations should communicate their commitment to creating an environment where everyone feels valued and treated fairly. Volunteers should also understand how they contribute to maintaining an inclusive and respectful culture.

Examples may include:

- using inclusive language;
- respecting different perspectives;
- making reasonable adjustments where needed;
- encouraging equal participation;
- addressing discriminatory behaviour promptly;
- creating accessible volunteering opportunities.

Introducing these principles early helps establish expectations and reinforces the organisation's values from the beginning.

Good Practice Recommendations

Organisations may consider:

- reviewing onboarding materials for accessibility;
- ensuring information is easy to understand;
- providing alternative formats where appropriate;
- encouraging inclusive communication;
- celebrating diversity within volunteer teams;
- regularly reviewing organisational practices to remove barriers to participation.

An inclusive organisation benefits not only volunteers but also the communities it serves.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating inclusive volunteer practices and accessible onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating approaches to diversity, inclusion and equal participation.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Does every volunteer feel welcome?
- Could any barriers prevent people from participating?
- Are your onboarding materials accessible to different audiences?
- How do you promote inclusion in everyday practice?
- What could you improve to create a more welcoming volunteering environment?

Remember that inclusion is an ongoing process rather than a single activity.

Supporting Resources

Inclusive Onboarding Checklist

The checklist may include:

- Accessible information
- Inclusive language
- Diverse images and examples
- Clear support pathways
- Reasonable adjustments
- Equal participation opportunities
- Volunteer feedback

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Key Takeaways

Before moving to Module 6, consider whether your organisation:

✓ creates an inclusive onboarding experience;
✓ promotes diversity and equal opportunities;
✓ provides accessible information;
✓ encourages respectful behaviour;
✓ regularly reviews its onboarding practices to remove barriers to participation.

Module 5 Summary

Effective volunteer programmes are built on strong relationships. While clear structures and well-defined roles are important, successful collaboration depends on open communication, mutual respect and a supportive organisational culture.

By introducing communication practices, teamwork, feedback, conflict resolution and inclusion during onboarding, organisations help volunteers feel confident, valued and connected from the beginning. These elements also contribute to stronger volunteer retention, more positive experiences and a healthier organisational culture.

Before continuing to Module 6, organisations are encouraged to review whether their onboarding not only prepares volunteers for their tasks but also equips them to become active and respected members of the wider organisational community.

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MODULE 6

Creating a Safe, Responsible Volunteering Environment

Module Introduction

Volunteers should begin their activities with confidence, knowing that they are entering an environment that is safe, respectful and well organised.

Creating a positive volunteering experience goes beyond providing meaningful tasks and supportive relationships. Organisations also have a responsibility to ensure that volunteers understand the policies, procedures and standards that help protect everyone involved.

Many organisations already have important documents covering topics such as safeguarding, health and safety, data protection or codes of conduct. However, these documents are often written for administrative or legal purposes and may be overwhelming for new volunteers.

An effective onboarding programme translates these policies into practical guidance that helps volunteers understand how they apply to everyday situations. Volunteers should know not only what the rules are but also why they are important and how they contribute to creating a safe and respectful environment.

This module supports organisations in identifying the essential policies volunteers should know before they begin their activities and encourages them to communicate this information in a clear, accessible and practical way.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- identify the key organisational policies that should be introduced during onboarding;
- communicate health, safety and safeguarding information in a practical way;
- introduce data protection and confidentiality principles;
- explain expected standards of professional and ethical behaviour;
- review whether volunteers receive sufficient guidance before beginning their activities.

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6.1. Introducing Organisational Policies

Every organisation has policies and procedures that help create a safe, respectful and well-managed environment. While volunteers are not expected to memorise every document, they should understand the policies that are relevant to their role and know where to find additional information when needed.
Rather than presenting volunteers with a large collection of documents on their first day, organisations are encouraged to identify the essential policies that support volunteers in carrying out their activities safely and confidently.

Examples may include:

- Volunteer Handbook
- Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding or Child Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy
- Social Media Guidelines
- Emergency Procedures

The onboarding process should explain the purpose of each policy in plain language and highlight how it supports volunteers in their day-to-day activities.
Policies should be introduced as practical resources rather than administrative requirements.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing organisational policies, consider:

- explaining the purpose behind each policy;
- highlighting the policies most relevant to volunteers;
- avoiding unnecessary legal terminology;
- directing volunteers to the full documents when additional information is required;
- reviewing policies regularly to ensure they remain up to date.

Remember that understanding is more important than simply confirming that a document has been read.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating which organisational policies are introduced during volunteer onboarding and how they are presented to volunteers.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating how key organisational policies are communicated before volunteers begin their activities.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Which policies are essential for every volunteer?
- Are these policies presented in language that volunteers can easily understand?
- Could some documents be simplified or summarised during onboarding?
- Do volunteers know where they can access the full policies when needed?
- Are your policies regularly reviewed and updated?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Policy Overview
Develop a simple guide that includes:

- Policy name
- Purpose
- Why it matters for volunteers
- Where to find the full document
- Contact person for questions

This overview provides volunteers with an accessible introduction while encouraging them to consult the complete policy documents whenever necessary.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ introduces the policies most relevant to volunteers;
✓ explains the purpose behind each policy;
✓ presents policies in an accessible and practical way;
✓ provides volunteers with clear guidance on where to find additional information.

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6.2. Health, Safety and Well-being

A safe volunteering environment is a shared responsibility between the organisation and its volunteers.

During onboarding, organisations should provide volunteers with the information they need to carry out their activities safely while also explaining how the organisation supports their health, safety and well-being.

The level of information required will depend on the organisation's activities and the environments in which volunteers work. A volunteer supporting community events may require different guidance than someone working with children, older adults or in outdoor environments.

Regardless of the setting, volunteers should understand:

- how to work safely;
- who to contact in an emergency;
- how to report accidents or incidents;
- any specific risks associated with their activities;
- how the organisation promotes physical and psychological well-being.

Organisations should also encourage volunteers to communicate openly if they have concerns about their safety, workload or well-being. Creating a culture where volunteers feel comfortable asking for support contributes to a healthier and more sustainable volunteering experience.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing health and safety, consider:

- focusing on the risks most relevant to volunteers;
- using practical examples instead of lengthy procedures;
- introducing emergency contacts and reporting procedures;
- explaining how volunteers can raise health or well-being concerns;
- encouraging volunteers to prioritise their own safety as well as the safety of others.

Health and safety information should prepare volunteers without creating unnecessary anxiety.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how volunteers are introduced to health, safety and well-being procedures.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating how volunteers receive practical safety information before beginning their activities.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Do volunteers receive the information they need to work safely?
- Is health and safety explained in a practical way?
- Do volunteers know how to report an accident or concern?
- Are emergency contacts easily accessible?
- How does your organisation support volunteer well-being throughout the volunteering journey?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Health and Safety Checklist

The checklist may include:

- Emergency contacts
- Incident reporting procedures
- Location-specific guidance
- Risk awareness
- Well-being support
- Emergency evacuation procedures (where applicable)

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ prepares volunteers to work safely;
✓ explains emergency procedures clearly;
✓ provides accessible health and safety information;
✓ promotes volunteer well-being alongside physical safety.

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6.3. Safeguarding and Protection

Creating a safe volunteering environment means protecting not only volunteers but also the people and communities your organisation serves.

Depending on the organisation's activities, volunteers may work with children, young people, older adults, people with disabilities or other individuals who may require additional protection and support. Even where volunteers have limited direct contact with beneficiaries, they should understand the organisation's safeguarding principles and know how to respond appropriately if concerns arise.

Safeguarding is about creating environments where everyone feels safe, respected and protected from harm. It is also about promoting responsible behaviour and ensuring that volunteers understand their role in maintaining these standards.

During onboarding, organisations should introduce safeguarding in a practical and accessible way. Rather than focusing solely on procedures, volunteers should understand why safeguarding is important and how it contributes to creating a safe and respectful environment for everyone.

Topics may include:

- the organisation's safeguarding commitment;
- expected standards of behaviour;
- appropriate professional boundaries;
- recognising and responding to concerns;
- reporting procedures;
- confidentiality and information sharing;
- the role of the safeguarding contact person.

The level of detail should reflect the organisation's activities and the level of contact volunteers have with beneficiaries.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing safeguarding, consider:

- using practical examples rather than policy language;
- explaining who volunteers can approach with concerns;
- introducing safeguarding as everyone's responsibility;
- ensuring volunteers understand reporting procedures;
- reviewing safeguarding guidance regularly.

Organisations should reassure volunteers that raising concerns is encouraged and that all reports will be handled appropriately and confidentially.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example describing how safeguarding principles are introduced during volunteer onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating safeguarding responsibilities and volunteer guidance.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Do volunteers understand your safeguarding responsibilities?
- Is safeguarding explained in language that is easy to understand?
- Would volunteers know how to respond if they were concerned about someone's welfare?
- Is it clear who the safeguarding contact person is?
- Are safeguarding procedures regularly reviewed and communicated?

Supporting Resources

Safeguarding Quick Guide

The guide may include:

- What safeguarding means within your organisation
- Expected behaviours
- Signs that may require attention
- Reporting procedures
- Key contacts
- Links to the full safeguarding policy

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ introduces safeguarding in a practical and accessible way;
✓ explains how volunteers can report concerns;
✓ provides clear safeguarding contacts;
✓ creates a culture where safety and protection are everyone's responsibility.

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6.4. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Volunteers are often entrusted with information about the organisation, its beneficiaries, staff members or other volunteers. Protecting this information is essential for maintaining trust, respecting individual privacy and complying with legal requirements.
Confidentiality and data protection should therefore form an important part of every volunteer onboarding programme. Volunteers do not need detailed legal training, but they should understand the principles that guide the responsible handling of information.

Organisations should explain:

- what confidential information is;
- when information may be shared;
- how personal information should be stored and protected;
- appropriate use of photographs and social media;
- responsibilities regarding digital communication;
- organisational procedures for handling personal data.

Examples that relate to volunteers' everyday activities are often more effective than introducing legal terminology. Helping volunteers understand practical situations encourages responsible behaviour and reduces the risk of accidental data breaches.

Good Practice Recommendations

When introducing confidentiality and data protection, consider:

- using simple, practical examples;
- explaining the difference between public and confidential information;
- introducing organisational procedures for obtaining consent;
- providing guidance on the responsible use of social media and photographs;
- ensuring volunteers know whom to contact if they are unsure.

Data protection should be presented as part of respecting the people your organisation supports, rather than simply complying with legislation.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating how confidentiality and data protection are introduced during volunteer onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating practical guidance on handling personal information.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Do volunteers understand what information is confidential?
- Is guidance on photographs, social media and digital communication clear?
- Are consent procedures explained during onboarding?
- Do volunteers know where to find additional guidance if needed?
- Could practical examples improve understanding?

Supporting Resources

Confidentiality and Data Protection Guide

The guide may include:

- Confidentiality principles
- Handling personal information
- Photography and consent
- Social media guidance
- Frequently asked questions
- Links to organisational policies

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ introduces confidentiality clearly;
✓ explains practical data protection responsibilities;
✓ provides volunteers with accessible guidance;
✓ encourages responsible handling of personal information.

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6.5. Code of Conduct and Ethical Behaviour

Every organisation has expectations regarding how volunteers represent the organisation and interact with others. These expectations are often described in a Code of Conduct or similar guidance.

Rather than viewing a Code of Conduct as a list of rules, organisations should present it as a shared commitment to creating a respectful, professional and welcoming volunteering environment.

During onboarding, volunteers should understand the behaviours that support positive relationships with beneficiaries, colleagues, partner organisations and the wider community.

Topics may include:

- respectful communication;
- acting with integrity;
- maintaining professional boundaries;
- avoiding discrimination and harassment;
- representing the organisation appropriately;
- responsible use of organisational resources;
- reporting inappropriate behaviour.

Where possible, organisations should connect the Code of Conduct to their organisational values introduced in Module 1. This helps volunteers recognise that ethical behaviour is an expression of the organisation's culture rather than simply compliance with organisational rules.

Good Practice Recommendations

When presenting your Code of Conduct, consider:

- explaining the purpose behind expected behaviours;
- using real-life examples to illustrate ethical decision-making;
- encouraging discussion rather than simply asking volunteers to acknowledge the document;
- reinforcing expectations throughout the volunteer journey;
- reviewing the Code of Conduct regularly.

Ethical behaviour is strengthened through everyday practice and positive leadership.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example demonstrating how expected behaviours are introduced during volunteer onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating how organisational values are reflected in volunteer behaviour.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Does it reflect your organisational values?
- Is it written in a language volunteers can easily understand?
- Are expectations explained through practical examples?
- How do you reinforce these expectations after onboarding?
- Does the Code encourage positive behaviour rather than simply preventing negative behaviour?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Code of Conduct

The document may include:

- Organisational values
- Expected behaviours
- Professional boundaries
- Respectful communication
- Inclusion and equality
- Reporting concerns
- Volunteer acknowledgement

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Key Takeaways

Before moving to Module 7, consider whether your organisation:

✓ introduces ethical behaviour positively;
✓ links expected behaviours to organisational values;
✓ provides volunteers with practical guidance;
✓ reinforces respectful and professional conduct throughout the volunteering journey.

Module 6 Summary

Creating a safe volunteering environment requires more than policies and procedures. It requires volunteers to understand the principles that guide responsible behaviour and the role they play in protecting themselves, the organisation and the people they support.
By introducing organisational policies, health and safety, safeguarding, confidentiality and ethical behaviour in a practical and accessible way, organisations help volunteers begin their activities with confidence while promoting a culture of trust, responsibility and respect.
Before continuing to Module 7, organisations are encouraged to review whether their onboarding materials help volunteers understand not only what the rules are, but also why they matter and how they apply in everyday volunteering situations.

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MODULE 7

Supporting and Developing Volunteers

Module Introduction

An effective onboarding programme does not end once volunteers begin their activities. Instead, it marks the beginning of an ongoing relationship between the organisation and its volunteers.

Volunteers continue learning throughout their journey. They develop new skills, gain confidence, build relationships and often take on new responsibilities over time.

Organisations that provide ongoing support, recognise volunteer contributions and create opportunities for learning are more likely to retain engaged and motivated volunteers.

This module encourages organisations to think beyond the initial onboarding period. It focuses on creating an environment where volunteers feel supported, appreciated and encouraged to continue developing throughout their volunteering experience.

Rather than viewing volunteer management as a series of administrative tasks, organisations are encouraged to see it as a continuous process of communication, learning and partnership.

By the end of this module, organisations will have identified practical ways to support volunteers throughout their journey while strengthening long-term engagement and organisational sustainability.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- identify how volunteers can be supported beyond their initial onboarding;
- introduce opportunities for learning and personal development;
- recognise and celebrate volunteer contributions;
- encourage continuous communication and feedback;
- review how volunteers leave the organisation and remain connected afterwards.

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7.1. Supporting Volunteers Beyond Onboarding

Although onboarding provides volunteers with the knowledge they need to get started, new questions often arise once they begin their activities. Continued support helps volunteers build confidence, solve challenges and feel that they remain valued members of the organisation.

Support can take many forms and should reflect the size and nature of the organisation. Some volunteers may require regular guidance during their first weeks, while others benefit from occasional check-ins or opportunities to discuss their experiences.

Organisations are encouraged to explain how volunteers will continue to receive support after completing the onboarding process.

Examples include:

- regular meetings with volunteer coordinators;
- mentoring or buddy systems;
- opportunities to ask questions;
- volunteer meetings and networking events;
- ongoing communication and updates;
- access to learning resources;
- individual support where needed.

The aim is to reassure volunteers that support does not end after induction but continues throughout their volunteering journey.

Good Practice Recommendations

When planning ongoing support, consider:

- scheduling regular check-ins during the first months;
- creating opportunities for volunteers to share experiences;
- encouraging experienced volunteers to support newcomers;
- maintaining regular communication even during quieter periods;
- adapting support according to volunteer needs.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example describing how volunteers continue to receive guidance and support after onboarding.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating mentoring, volunteer meetings or follow-up support.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- How do volunteers receive support after their first day?
- Are regular check-ins part of your volunteer programme?
- Who is responsible for ongoing volunteer support?
- How do volunteers know where to seek advice?
- Are there opportunities for volunteers to connect with one another?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Support Plan

The template may include:

- first-week check-in;
- first-month review;
- regular communication schedule;
- mentoring arrangements;
- key contact persons;
- additional support opportunities.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ provides ongoing support beyond onboarding;
✓ maintains regular communication with volunteers;
✓ encourages volunteers to ask for help when needed;
✓ creates opportunities for volunteers to remain connected.

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7.2. Learning and Personal Development

Volunteering offers more than an opportunity to contribute to a meaningful cause. It also provides valuable opportunities for personal growth, skill development and lifelong learning. Many volunteers develop communication skills, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving abilities and greater confidence through their volunteering experience. Recognising these learning opportunities benefits both volunteers and organisations.
Introducing learning opportunities during onboarding encourages volunteers to view volunteering as a journey of continuous development rather than simply completing tasks.

Organisations may provide opportunities such as:

- introductory training sessions;
- workshops;
- mentoring;
- peer learning;
- online learning resources;
- project-specific training;
- leadership opportunities for experienced volunteers.

Encouraging volunteers to reflect on what they are learning throughout their journey helps strengthen motivation and demonstrates the wider value of volunteering.

Good Practice Recommendations

Consider:

- introducing learning opportunities early;
- recognising skills gained through volunteering;
- encouraging volunteers to explore new responsibilities;
- supporting individual learning goals;
- celebrating personal development as well as organisational achievements.

Learning should be viewed as an ongoing process rather than a one-time activity.

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Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example illustrating volunteer learning opportunities.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example demonstrating how volunteers develop new knowledge and skills.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Which learning opportunities do you currently offer?
- Could volunteers take on new responsibilities over time?
- How do you encourage continuous learning?
- How do volunteers recognise the skills they have developed?
- Could learning achievements be acknowledged more visibly?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Learning Plan
The template may include:

- learning goals;
- training opportunities;
- new skills developed;
- future development interests;
- reflection notes.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ encourages continuous learning;
✓ recognises volunteer development;
✓ provides opportunities for new experiences;
✓ supports volunteers in developing new skills.

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7.3. Recognising Volunteer Contributions

Recognition is one of the most meaningful ways an organisation can demonstrate appreciation for its volunteers. Feeling valued strengthens motivation, encourages long-term engagement and reinforces the positive relationship between volunteers and the organisation.

Recognition does not always require formal awards or large celebrations. Often, simple and genuine expressions of appreciation have the greatest impact.

Examples include:

- saying thank you regularly;
- acknowledging achievements during meetings;
- celebrating volunteer milestones;
- providing certificates or references;
- sharing volunteer stories;
- recognising contributions through newsletters or social media;
- inviting volunteers to organisational events.

Recognition should reflect the organisation's culture and be meaningful to volunteers.

Good Practice Recommendations

When recognising volunteers, consider:

- celebrating both individual and team achievements;
- recognising effort as well as results;
- ensuring appreciation is inclusive and consistent;
- asking volunteers how they prefer to be recognised;
- creating regular opportunities to celebrate success.

Recognition should become part of the organisational culture rather than an occasional event.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)

Partner example demonstrating volunteer recognition practices.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)

Partner example illustrating how volunteer achievements are celebrated.

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Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- How do volunteers know their contribution is appreciated?
- Is recognition part of everyday organisational culture?
- Are achievements celebrated regularly?
- Could volunteers be recognised in more meaningful ways?
- Do volunteers feel valued regardless of the size of their contribution?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Recognition Ideas
Develop a list of recognition activities suitable for your organisation, ranging from informal appreciation to annual recognition events.

Key Takeaways

Before continuing, consider whether your organisation:
✓ regularly recognises volunteer contributions;
✓ celebrates achievements;
✓ promotes a culture of appreciation;
✓ encourages long-term volunteer engagement.

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7.4. Reviewing and Improving Your Volunteer Programme

Volunteer programmes should continue evolving as organisations grow and volunteer needs change. Regular review helps organisations identify what works well, where improvements are needed and how the volunteer experience can be strengthened over time.
Volunteers provide valuable insights because they experience the onboarding process firsthand. Inviting feedback and reviewing volunteer experiences regularly supports continuous improvement and demonstrates that volunteer perspectives are valued.

Organisations may review:

- onboarding materials;
- volunteer satisfaction;
- communication processes;
- learning opportunities;
- volunteer retention;
- recognition activities;
- overall volunteer experience.

Continuous improvement helps organisations remain responsive and ensures that onboarding continues to meet the needs of future volunteers.

Good Practice Recommendations

Consider:

- collecting volunteer feedback regularly;
- reviewing onboarding annually;
- involving volunteers in improvements;
- updating resources as the organisation evolves;
- sharing improvements with volunteers.

Partner Showcase

Gemeinsam Leben und Lernen (Germany)
Partner example describing how volunteer feedback contributes to programme improvement.

Dobrovolnické centrum (Czech Republic)
Partner example illustrating continuous review of volunteer practices.

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Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- How do you evaluate your volunteer programme?
- When was your onboarding last reviewed?
- What feedback have volunteers provided?
- Which improvements could be implemented?
- How do you measure the success of your onboarding programme?

Supporting Resources

Volunteer Programme Review Checklist

Include:

- onboarding review;
- volunteer feedback;
- learning opportunities;
- communication;
- recognition;
- retention;
- improvement actions.

Key Takeaways

Before moving to the final module, consider whether your organisation:

✓ supports volunteers throughout their journey;
✓ encourages learning and development;
✓ recognises volunteer contributions;
✓ regularly reviews and improves its volunteer programme.

Module 7 Summary

Volunteer onboarding is only the beginning of a successful volunteering experience. Organisations that continue supporting, developing and recognising volunteers create stronger relationships, improve volunteer satisfaction and increase long-term engagement. By investing in ongoing learning, meaningful recognition and continuous improvement, organisations strengthen not only the volunteer experience but also their own capacity to achieve their mission.

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MODULE 8

Transforming Your Volunteer Onboarding into an E-learning Course

Module Introduction

Throughout this handbook, you have developed the essential building blocks of an effective volunteer onboarding programme. You have reflected on your organisation's identity, values, volunteer roles, communication practices, policies and long-term volunteer support.
The next step is transforming this content into an engaging e-learning experience.
E-learning is more than transferring existing documents into an online platform. Effective digital learning presents information in manageable sections, encourages interaction and supports volunteers in learning at their own pace. It also provides organisations with a consistent onboarding process that can be updated, reused and accessed at any time.
This module introduces practical guidance for converting your onboarding materials into an engaging e-learning course. Rather than focusing on a specific learning platform, it presents principles that can be applied to most Learning Management Systems (LMS) and digital learning environments.
By the end of this module, organisations will have a clear roadmap for developing their own volunteer onboarding e-learning programme.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this module, organisations will be able to:

- organise onboarding content into logical learning modules;
- identify appropriate learning activities for different types of content;
- develop engaging digital learning experiences;
- combine text, visuals and interactive elements effectively;
- create meaningful reflection activities and knowledge checks;
- prepare their onboarding programme for long-term use and continuous improvement.

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8.1. Preparing Your Content – Building Your E-learning Course

Before opening an e-learning platform, review all of the content you have developed throughout Modules 1–7.

Rather than asking:
"What should we upload?"

ask:
"What does a volunteer need to know first?"

Successful e-learning follows the learner's journey.
Each learning module should build naturally upon the previous one.

For example:

Module 1
Who are we?
↓
Module 2
Who will I work with?
↓
Module 3
What is my role?
↓
Module 4
What will I do?
↓
Module 5
How do we work together?
↓
Module 6
How do we work safely?
↓
Module 7
How will I continue learning?
Organise your existing content before designing individual lessons.

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Good Practice Recommendations

Before developing your e-learning course, review whether your content:

✓ is organised logically;
✓ avoids duplication;
✓ uses consistent language;
✓ reflects your organisation's values;
✓ is written for volunteers rather than internal staff.

Consider for Your Organisation

Ask yourselves:

- Which information must every volunteer complete?
- Which content is optional?
- Could some topics be grouped together?
- Is the learning journey logical?
- Would a new volunteer understand the sequence?

Choosing the Right Digital Tools

The message should be:

You do not need expensive software to create a professional volunteer onboarding course. Many affordable or free tools are available specifically for NGOs and small organisations. Just ask them for a NGO discount!

Choosing the Right Digital Platform

Building Your E-learning Course

One of the first decisions when creating an e-learning course is selecting the platform that best fits your organisation's needs.

There is no single "best" platform. The right choice depends on your budget, technical confidence, the number of volunteers, multilingual requirements and the learning experience you wish to create.

Many providers offer discounted pricing for non-profit organisations or free plans suitable for smaller organisations. Before making a decision, compare the available features and consider both your current and future needs.

The following examples illustrate commonly used platforms that can support volunteer onboarding.

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Thinkific

Best suited for:

Small and medium-sized organisations looking for a professional Learning Management System without requiring technical expertise.

Strengths

- Easy course builder
- Certificates
- Quizzes
- Video hosting
- Learner progress tracking
- Mobile friendly
- Community features
- Non-profit discounts available

Considerations

- Some advanced features require paid plans.
- Check current NGO pricing and eligibility before subscribing.

Suitable for:

Organisations wanting a complete volunteer onboarding platform.

Genially

Best suited for:

Creating interactive and visually engaging learning experiences.

Strengths

- Interactive presentations
- Clickable images
- Escape rooms
- Interactive scenarios
- Infographics
- Gamification
- Excellent visual design

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Considerations

- Complements an LMS rather than replacing one.
- Best used for interactive learning objects.

Suitable for:

Making onboarding more engaging and interactive.

TalentLMS

Best suited for:

Organisations looking for an intuitive LMS with minimal setup.

Strengths

- Easy to use
- Learning paths
- Certificates
- Assessments
- Mobile app
- Progress tracking
- Non-profit pricing available

Considerations

- Some features are available only in higher-tier plans.

Suitable for:

Growing NGOs with regular volunteer onboarding.

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LearnWorlds

Best suited for:

Organisations wanting a highly interactive learning experience.

Strengths

- Interactive videos
- Digital certificates
- Assessments
- Communities
- SCORM support
- Excellent learner experience

Considerations

- More advanced than many organisations require.
- Higher learning curve.

Suitable for:

Organisations planning to expand digital learning beyond volunteer onboarding.

Choosing the Right Solution

When comparing platforms, consider the following questions:

- Does the platform match the size of our organisation?
- Is it affordable for our available budget?
- Does it support our preferred languages?
- Can volunteers access it from mobile devices?
- Does it provide quizzes and certificates?
- Is learner progress visible to administrators?
- Is technical support available?
- Can the platform grow with our organisation?

Remember that the platform itself does not create a good learning experience. Well-structured content, meaningful interaction and a learner-centred design remain the most important ingredients of an effective onboarding programme.

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Practical Suggestions:

Elearning examples:

Source Links:

1. Designing Your Learning Journey

- learning paths
- module structure
- lesson flow
- estimated duration
- mandatory vs optional content

2. Creating Engaging Learning Content

Instead of simply uploading PDFs, show organisations how to combine:

- welcome videos;
- short text sections;
- downloadable resources;
- real volunteer stories;
- infographics;
- photographs;
- scenarios;
- animations (where available).

3. Choosing the Right Learning Activities

Help organisations decide when to use:

- reflection questions;
- scenarios;
- matching exercises;
- knowledge checks;
- downloadable worksheets;
- discussion prompts;
- short assignments.

4. Assessing Learning

Cover:

- formative vs summative assessments;
- module quizzes;
- completion criteria;

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- certificates of completion;
- self-assessment.

5. Designing for Accessibility

This should become one of the strongest sections because many NGOs overlook it.

Topics:

- plain language;
- readable layouts;
- captions for videos;
- alternative text for images;
- mobile-friendly design;
- inclusive examples;
- multilingual considerations.

6. Maintaining Your Course

Help organisations develop a maintenance plan.

Questions such as:

- Who updates content?
- How often?
- What happens when policies change?
- How is volunteer feedback incorporated?
- How are new resources added?

Action Plan recommendation

Your Implementation Roadmap

Step 1 – Review Modules 1–7.

Step 2 – Finalise your onboarding content.

Step 3 – Collect supporting resources.

Step 4 – Record welcome videos.

Step 5 – Build your e-learning course.

Step 6 – Pilot the course with a small group of volunteers.

Step 7 – Collect feedback and improve.

Step 8 – Launch your volunteer onboarding programme.

Key Takeaways

✓ A well-structured course is easier to complete,

✓ easier to update and

✓ more engaging for volunteers.

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