Working with volunteers on archaeology projects
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About this guide

The most effective volunteer projects work when the needs of the organisation are aligned with the motivations of the volunteers. This guide aims to show you how you can recruit and support volunteers to achieve this. It is written for anyone who has responsibility of managing, supervising or supporting volunteers, whether you are a member of staff, volunteer, student or academic, and regardless of whether your organisation is an academic department, commercial unit, charity, local society, community or heritage organisation.

There are many resources available to support people working with volunteers, so rather than repeating a lot of good practice, this guide will point you towards information, guidance and sources of support. Follow the links in each section for more resources on the topic.

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1 Why work with volunteers?

There’s no clear data on the number of people who volunteer in archaeology in the UK, but in 2010, the CBA estimated that over 200,000 people volunteered with community archaeology groups and local societies (http://new.archaeologyuk.org/supporting-community-archaeology-in-the-uk). That doesn’t include people who volunteer for commercial units, academic departments, museums and community projects, so the actual figure is likely to be higher.

People want to help, contribute to their local community and get involved with causes they care about. Working with volunteers allows you to harness this enthusiasm and passion. Volunteers bring new ideas, perspectives and local knowledge, and help you build links with local communities. By involving volunteers, you are enabling more people to learn about archaeology and increasing understanding of how archaeology can be relevant today. Volunteers can help you deliver more activities, reach more people and raise awareness of your work.

There is a long history of volunteering in archaeology, going back to the origins of the discipline, and the work of volunteers led to the development of archaeology practice in the UK as we know it today.

USEFUL RESOURCES

**National support bodies for volunteering:** these organisations provide information, support and advice for anyone working with volunteers:

- **England – NCVO:** [https://www.ncvo.org.uk/](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/)
- **Northern Ireland - Volunteer Now:** [http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/)
- **Scotland - Volunteer Scotland:** [https://www.volunteerscotland.net/](https://www.volunteerscotland.net/)
- **NCVO Almanac,** lots of useful data about the voluntary sector in the UK: [https://data.ncvo.org.uk/](https://data.ncvo.org.uk/)
- **Why Involve Volunteers Worksheet,** Volunteer Now - [http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/fs/doc/volunteer-management-toolkit/Why_Involve_Volunteers%26%2361477%3B.pdf](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/fs/doc/volunteer-management-toolkit/Why_Involve_Volunteers%26%2361477%3B.pdf)
- **Why involve volunteers,** KnowHow NonProfit: [https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers-and-your-organisation/why-involve-volunteers](https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers-and-your-organisation/why-involve-volunteers)
2 Creating an effective volunteer project

2.1 What can volunteers do?

Volunteers can get involved in all aspects of archaeology, excavations, administration research, archives and more. There are volunteers involved at all levels, right up to board of trustees.

When you’re thinking about how volunteers can get involved, think wider than just fieldwork. People will be interested in supporting your projects in other ways including data entry, admin, communications and marketing, logistics and providing refreshments.

Plate 1: No such thing as an average volunteer. Image credit: David Connolly
2.2 Who is a volunteer?

The NCVO defines volunteering as:

“any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives. Central to this definition is the fact that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual.

This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and social action. Everyone has the right to volunteer and volunteering can have significant benefits for individuals.”

https://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/volunteering-policy

It’s not enough to give someone the title “volunteer” and assume that the relationship between your project and that individual is clear. You must ensure that you’re not creating an employment contract with an individual.

If a person receives any payment, reward or benefit-in-kind for their work, aside from out-of-pocket expenses, they may be classed as a worker or employee. This includes any promise of a contract or paid work in the future.

Some examples of rewards that might class someone as a worker or employee:

- paying a fixed amount to cover expenses (e.g. paying £50 a day, rather than reimbursing actual out-of-pocket expenses)
- providing food and accommodation, if it’s not necessary to do the role (biscuits and cake are ok though!)
- training that’s not directly relevant to the role
- promising a paid position in return for volunteering for a period of time

Likewise, you need to ensure that your expectations don’t create an employment contract between you and the individual. Avoid using language that suggests employment, such as “contract” or “job description”, and be clear that you have expectations, not obligations. For instance, a volunteer should be able to leave their role at any time without consequences.

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on the differences between a volunteer and employees/workers: https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/pay-and-expenses

Treating volunteers as employees, Knowhow Non Profit:
https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/keeping/treating
Volunteers have few rights, they’re not protected by employment law or consumer protection law. However organisations have a moral duty to provide them with a safe, fair and rewarding experience. If someone has to pay to participate in your project then they may be covered by consumer rights legislation. There’s very little guidance available about this, so if you’re planning on charging people to take part, you should take advice about your responsibilities.

Plate 2: Charging or free, check your responsibilities. Haddington Nungate bridge excavation - open to all project. Image credit: David Connolly

2.3 Job substitution

The impact of austerity cuts and reduced funding has led to the increasing trend of using volunteers to deliver services, and there are many concerns about job substitution, replacing paid staff with volunteers. In 2010, the TUC and Volunteering England (now part of NCVO) produced a joint ten-point best practice charter on the relationship between staff and volunteers that’s still a useful reference point for considering why, when, and how you involve volunteers. As a general principle, volunteers should supplement and complement the work of paid staff, and organisations should put effective structures in place to support volunteers.

The same charter has been adopted by Scottish TUC and Volunteering Scotland: [http://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/196656/a_charter_for_strengthening_relations_between_paid_staff_and_volunteers.pdf](http://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/196656/a_charter_for_strengthening_relations_between_paid_staff_and_volunteers.pdf)

And with a few additions between the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) and Wales TUC: [https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/58806/wcva_tuc_charter_bilingual.pdf](https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/58806/wcva_tuc_charter_bilingual.pdf)

### 2.4 Volunteers from overseas

Even though someone may have the right to be in the UK, they may not be able to volunteer. The rules around people from overseas volunteering are complex, NCVO have recently updated their guidance: [https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/recruiting/volunteers-from-overseas](https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/recruiting/volunteers-from-overseas)

One restriction to be aware of is that people staying on a Standard Visitor Visa can only volunteer for up to 30 days with a registered charity, which might apply to people who plan to volunteer for several weeks on field projects.

### 2.5 Volunteers and the Law:

More guidance about volunteering and the law is available online:

**England and Wales**

NCVO have a comprehensive guide on Volunteers and the Law, however most of it is only available to NCVO members. Membership is free to organisations with an income of less than £30,000: [https://knowhownonprofit.org/tools-resources/volunteers-and-the-law](https://knowhownonprofit.org/tools-resources/volunteers-and-the-law)

Information is also available from Sport England and WCVA:


**Volunteers and the Law, WCVA:** [http://www.wcva-ids.org.uk/wcva/1081](http://www.wcva-ids.org.uk/wcva/1081)

**Northern Ireland:**

2.6 Keeping people safe

Everyone has the right to feel safe, no matter who they are, or whatever their circumstances. You are responsible for the safety of people who volunteer with your project, this includes safeguarding, health and safety and data protection. Planning for safety should happen at the beginning of your project, before you start your activities.

**Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is about protecting people from harm, abuse or neglect. Safeguarding is more than just doing criminal record checks. A good approach is to assess the risks and take action to mitigate those risks.

The law and requirements around safeguarding are different in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Make sure you take advice that is relevant to your location.
England, Wales and Northern Ireland:
NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (free training and resources, most are relevant to any group working with children) [http://thecpsu.org.uk/](http://thecpsu.org.uk/)

England and Wales:
Safeguarding and Volunteers, KnowHow NonProfit: [https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/keeping/safeguarding-volunteers](https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/keeping/safeguarding-volunteers)


Northern Ireland:

Scotland:
Disclosure Services, Volunteer Scotland: [https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/disclosure-services/](https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/disclosure-services/)

Safeguarding in Sport, Children 1st (free resources, most are relevant to any group working with children): [https://www.children1st.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-help/safeguarding-in-sport/](https://www.children1st.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-help/safeguarding-in-sport/)

Health and Safety
Health and safety law is not a barrier to volunteer activities. Take a sensible, precautionary approach and avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. Organisations with one or more employees have a duty to ensure that, as far as possible, their employees and anyone affected by their activities, including volunteers and members of the public, are protected from risks to their health and safety. However, all organisations have a moral duty to protect their volunteers.


Health and Safety, Volunteer Scotland: [https://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/242085/volunteer-health-and-safety.pdf](https://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/242085/volunteer-health-and-safety.pdf)


Data Protection

If you keep personal information about people, you are legally obliged to protect that data. In 2018, the UK data protection laws are being reformed; the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will take effect from 25 May 2018. Make sure you understand your responsibilities.

**Data Protection and GDPR**, KnowHow NonProfit: [https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/dataprotection](https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/dataprotection)


2.7 Practicalities

There are always practical considerations that you need to think about when you start planning a volunteer role. Getting this right is the key to a successful project.

**Time**

While volunteers will allow you to develop and expand your work, that won’t happen without some investment of time from yourself. How much time do you have to support volunteers? You’ll need to allow for the recruitment process, induction and training, ongoing support, and evaluation, as well as managing the actual work of the volunteers.

**Cost**

Even though you don’t pay volunteers, involving volunteers isn’t free. As well as the cost of your time, you should provide volunteers with training, out-of-pocket expenses and equipment, all of which have a financial cost.
Space and equipment

Where are the volunteers going to work and what equipment will they need? Surprisingly, this is often overlooked!

Some things you might need to think about:

- Desk space
- Tea and coffee facilities
- Somewhere to take breaks and eat lunch
- Equipment
- IT software
- The logistics of borrowing equipment and is it insured if it’s in a volunteer’s care?
- Do volunteers need their own car? Computer? Internet connection? Camera?
- Transport to site
- How flexible can you be with your time? Do volunteers need to be available during office hours on week days?

Plate 4: Think about toilets, equipment and storage, tea huts, and transport - Sheriffside Project. Image credit: David Connolly
2.8 Long-term plans

Is your project for a fixed period or ongoing? The long-term plans for your project should be clear to everyone from the outset, so that volunteers understand what will be expected of them.

If it’s an ongoing role, what opportunities can you give people to develop their role and skills as they get more experienced? The Archaeology Skills Passport is one way to recognise volunteers’ skills development.

If it is a short-term project, what will happen when it ends? Will there be an end product to show for the work, can you hold a final celebration event? Can you signpost volunteers to other volunteering opportunities, further training or study so they can continue their interest?

What happens when your support ends?

A common outcome for community archaeology projects is for a group to be sustainable when the project ends, without regular support from professional archaeologists. It’s important that you’re clear about your expectations from the start of the relationship. Fieldwork skills are only one aspect of running a successful archaeological project. There are many examples of projects which have ended with bad feelings and resentment when the funding has finished, and the group has not been able to continue independently.

As well as archaeological skills, to be sustainable, groups also need knowledge of fundraising, management, communications, health and safety and more. If you can help the group develop these skills, or recruit volunteers with relevant expertise, during the time that you’re involved, they’ll have a much better chance of continuing. You don’t need to provide all this support yourself, for instance, Volunteer Centres often provide training for local community groups.

Plate 5: Always consider long term project goals. Greenwich. Image credit: Helen Johnston
2.9 Volunteer policies and procedures

Having policies and procedures in place ensures everyone understands what is expected of them, and what happens if there are problems. A Volunteer Policy creates a framework for volunteering and makes sure that everyone, staff and volunteers, knows how volunteers should be treated.

What policies and procedures you put in place will depend on your organisation and the nature of the projects you run. There are many example policies online which you can adapt to your needs. As a minimum you should have a policy, or group of policies, which cover:

- Why you involve volunteers
- What they can expect from you
- What you expect from them
- Volunteer expenses
- Equality and diversity statement
- Safeguarding (if you will be working with children or vulnerable adults)
- Data protection
- Health and safety
- Problem solving process

Useful resources:

**NCVO Knowhow NonProfit Guide to volunteer policies:**
https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/keeping/policy

**Reach: Volunteer Policies, handbooks and agreements:**
https://reachvolunteering.org.uk/knowledge-centre/support-charities/how-manage-skilled-volunteers/volunteer-policies-handbooks-and
2.10 Why do people volunteer?

Volunteer projects work best when they take into consideration both the needs of your project and the motivations of volunteers. There are usually many reasons why people choose to volunteer in archaeology. Try to find out about people’s motivations when you are recruiting volunteers, to help you support and develop that volunteer, and keep them involved in the project. Remember that motivations may change during the project, so having a good understanding of your volunteers and creating opportunities for them to share their ideas and views is vital.

Don’t make assumptions about people, for instance that a student is only volunteering to get experience for their career, or that an accountant wants to be the Treasurer and go to committee meetings.

Top 5 reasons for volunteering in the last year (Community Life Survey 2015/16):

- Wanted to improve things/help people - 61%
- The cause was really important to me - 39%
- Had spare time to do it - 34%
- Thought it would give me chance to use my existing skills – 30%
- Wanted to meet people/make friends – 30%

Useful resources:

2.11 Volunteer role descriptions

A volunteer role description is a document that outlines what a volunteer will be doing and what will be expected of them. It’s useful when you are recruiting volunteers, and also helpful when you are supporting them. It provides a framework you can use to think about what the role will involve.

Volunteer role descriptions can be in many forms, from a couple of paragraphs to multipage documents. The style of your role description will probably reflect the nature and tone of your project, there are many different examples of role descriptions online you can use as a template.

Most role descriptions include the following information:

- Role title
- Outline of the project
- Location where the volunteer will be based
- Outline of the tasks the volunteer will be doing
- The skills and experience needed to do the role
- What the volunteer can expect from the project (such as: expenses, relevant training, equipment, opportunity to be involved with an exciting project, work in a specific subject area, supervision)
- What you expect from a volunteer (such as: follow policies and procedures, be considerate, support the aims of the project, be on time, let the project know about changes in circumstances)
- Time commitment, and time scales

Try to make your role descriptions appealing, they don’t need to use the formal language of job descriptions. Think about what will motivate people to get involved and what might cause barriers for people. For instance, if the site is hard to reach, you could cover travel expenses and have a lift sharing scheme.

Useful resources:

**Creating volunteer role descriptions**, Volunteer Scotland:  
http://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/242005/Creating%20Volunteer%20Role%20Descriptions.pdf

**Developing a Volunteer Role Description**, Voluntary Action Leicestershire:  
http://www.valonline.org.uk/how-recruit-and-welcome-volunteers/developing-role-description
2.12 Creating inclusive roles

Your project will benefit from making your volunteer roles accessible to as many people as possible. Creating a more inclusive project can be challenging, as you may need to change the culture of your organisation and do things differently. You might have to change people’s perceptions about who archaeology is for and who gets involved.

Include an equality and diversity section in your volunteer policy, and consider having a separate Equality and Diversity policy. Make sure everyone involved in the project understands their responsibilities.

Be aware of possible barriers

Every time you put a restriction on the role, you create barriers for people to take part. Some of these restrictions are unavoidable; you can’t move a remote rural site somewhere more accessible. But having a flexible, person-centred approach when you are planning your roles and recruiting volunteers will open up your opportunities to more people.

Some things to consider:

- Have an open, welcoming and friendly approach
- Treat people as individuals, and discuss with them the ways you can enable them to take part
- Reimburse volunteers’ out-of-pocket expenses
- Think about the physical access to venues and sites
- Be flexible about time commitments (can people start later or leave early if they need to?)
- Have a rolling site induction rather than expecting people to be available at a specific day and time
- Organise lift shares to help with transport
- Offer family volunteering, for parents and carers to volunteer with their children
- Think about the language you use when describing the project, on application forms and in training. Avoid jargon and use pictures alongside text.
Useful resources:

**Volunteer Equality and Diversity**, Volunteer Scotland:  
[https://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/242077/Volunteer%20Equality%20and%20Diversity.pdf](https://www.volunteerscotland.net/media/242077/Volunteer%20Equality%20and%20Diversity.pdf)

**How to develop an inclusive supported volunteering scheme**, KnowHow NonProfit:  
[https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-develop-an-inclusive-supported-volunteering-scheme](https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-develop-an-inclusive-supported-volunteering-scheme)

**How can we attract volunteers from more diverse backgrounds?** Sport England:  

**BAJR Enabled Archaeology Guide**:  
[http://www.bajr.org/BAJRGuides/41_Enabled_Archaeology/41EnabledArchaeology.pdf](http://www.bajr.org/BAJRGuides/41_Enabled_Archaeology/41EnabledArchaeology.pdf)

**Promoting Equality and Diversity in Volunteering**, WACA:  
[https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/346774/promoting_equality_and_diversity_in_volunteering_090513.doc](https://www.wcva.org.uk/media/346774/promoting_equality_and_diversity_in_volunteering_090513.doc)

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**Plate 6**: Be inclusive and open to all. Amisfield Walled Garden. Image credit: David Connolly
3 Recruiting the right people

3.1 Finding the right people

What methods you use to recruit volunteers will depend on the nature of your project, budget, who you want to recruit, how many people you need to recruit and how popular your role is likely to be – consider the following:

**Website**

The best way for people to get more information about your project before they commit.

**Social Media**

Often better for general promotion of your project rather than volunteer recruitment, so don’t rely on it alone. Share your roles on Facebook groups for people with relevant interests or local communities and use relevant hashtags on Twitter and Instagram.

**Local press**

Useful to reach people who aren’t active online, but can be difficult to get your story published (see BAJR Guide 45 Press Releases for Archaeologists: http://www.bajr.org/BAJRGuides/45_PressRelease/45_PressGuide.pdf)

**Posters/leaflets**

Can be expensive, and there’s evidence they don’t work well for volunteer recruitment. May be helpful to remind people to take action later, e.g. fill out your online application form at home.

**Universities**

Most universities have a volunteer centre to encourage students to volunteer, they will advertise roles even if there isn’t an archaeology department. If you want to recruit archaeology students, contact Archaeology Departments directly as well.

**Archaeology specific organisations**

CBA Archaeology Scotland and Current Archaeology maintain online lists of excavations which people can take part in.
Online Volunteer portals

There are several online portals that advertise volunteer roles in the UK:

- England and Wales (and some UK-wide roles) - **Do-It** widely used by organisations such as Job Centres, the gov.uk website and the NHS to signpost people to volunteering opportunities, so it’s a great way to get your roles out to a wide group of people: [https://do-it.org/](https://do-it.org/)
- Northern Ireland - **Volunteer Now**: [http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/)
- Scotland - **Volunteer Scotland**: [http://www.volunteerscotland.net/](http://www.volunteerscotland.net/)
- Wales - **Volunteering Wales**: [https://www.volunteering-wales.net/](https://www.volunteering-wales.net/)

Some volunteer centres run their own online portals for their local area, and there are some that advertise across a region, such as **Team London** in London.

Local Volunteer Centres

In most local authority areas there’s a Volunteer Centre which will help you create volunteer roles and recruit volunteers.

**Find a Volunteer Centre:**

- England: [https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre](https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre)
- Scotland: [http://www.volunteerscotland.net/find-an-opportunity/find-support-locally/](http://www.volunteerscotland.net/find-an-opportunity/find-support-locally/)
- Wales: [https://www.volunteering-wales.net/contact-us/](https://www.volunteering-wales.net/contact-us/)

3.2 Selecting the right people

Your recruitment process gives you and your potential volunteers the opportunity to find out if the role is right for them, and find out why they want to volunteer.

One of the most common reasons people give for not volunteering is that the process to get involved took too long, or even worse, they never heard back from an organisation.

Be up front about your process, so people know what to expect. Be open and fair, ensure everyone is able to take part, and you are not unfairly disadvantaging people (See Section 2.12 Creating Inclusive Roles for more resources).
Acknowledge and thank everyone who offers to help, even if you don’t have a role for them. Set up an automatic email from your inbox, so that people know their application has been received and what happens next.

Here are a few different selection methods you can use, possibly in combination:

- Application form
- Informal chat
- Interview
- Drop-in information session
- Project introduction meeting
- Phone or video chat conversation

Useful resources:


The Volunteer Recruitment Process, Know-how Non-Profit: [https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/recruiting/copy_of_process](https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/recruiting/copy_of_process)

Five tips for recruiting volunteers, Rob Jackson: [https://robjacksonconsulting.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/five-tips-for-recruiting-volunteers.html](https://robjacksonconsulting.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/five-tips-for-recruiting-volunteers.html)
4 Inductions

Getting people off to a good start in their volunteer role gives you long term benefits.

Before a volunteer starts on their first day, put together an induction plan for their role and the project. Depending on your project, you might do this as a one-to-one or with a group.

- Let them know in advance where to meet you, who they’ll be meeting, if they need to bring anything with them (lunch, refreshments, appropriate clothing), car parking and public transport options
- Have their workspace and equipment ready
- Set up IT accounts and log in details
- Introduce them to the team
- Show them round the building/site - show them the toilets, where they can make a drink, leave their belongings, nearest places to get lunch
- Explain your project, and how their role contributes towards it
- Go through the arrangements for support and supervision, and who is going to be their main contact. Could someone be a buddy or mentor?
- Go through their training programme and Skills Passport.
- Health and safety – make sure they are familiar with all information they need to know, including what to do in an emergency, fire procedures and site safety
- Other relevant policies, including problem solving procedures

Useful resources:

**Volunteer Induction Good Practice Guide**, Volunteer Edinburgh:  

**Volunteer Induction factsheet**, Tower Hamlets Volunteer Centre:  
5 Celebrating achievements

It’s vital to keep volunteers motivated and a key way to do that is to reward and recognise the work that they’re doing. Different people appreciate different things, and you should consider people’s motivations for getting involved and staying involved in your project. Here are a few ideas for things you can do:

- Provide regular communication and feedback to volunteers on how their work is supporting the project
- Acknowledge the volunteers’ contributions, mention their involvement when you’re talking about the project, online, on social media, in reports, and press releases
- Provide copious tea, coffee, biscuits and CAKE!
- Value achievement and experience – if volunteers have existing skills, or develop skills during the project, find ways they can contribute to the project
- Recognise skill development – use the Archaeology Skills Passport or sign post to relevant courses and qualifications
- Keep track of contributions and recognise milestones, consider long service awards and certificates for hours volunteered (25, 50 hours etc)
- Encourage more experienced volunteers to share their skills with newer volunteers
- Give people the opportunity to share their work – lead outreach, speak at conferences
- Invite them to conferences and events
- Remember people’s birthdays, Christmas and other religious festivals, and family events
- Celebrate Volunteer’s Week with them
- Nominate them for external awards – local authorities often have volunteering awards, as well as heritage bodies such as Council for British Archaeology, Historic England and Historic Scotland
- Encourage them to explore their research interests
- Organise trips, outings, social get togethers
- Provide references if asked
Useful resources:

5 ways to Motivate your Nonprofit’s volunteers, Kelly Smith: 
https://blogs.volunteerrmatch.org/engagingvolunteers/2015/02/10/5-ways-to-motivate-your-nonprofits-volunteers/

Reward and Recognising, Victoria’s Volunteering Portal: 

Essential Guide to Volunteer Motivation, Volunteer Centre East Sussex: 

Plate 7: Appreciating the discoveries, work and dedication of your volunteers is essential. 
Image credit: David Connolly
6 How do you know it’s working?

Ongoing evaluation and feedback is important to make sure you’re on the right track, help plan for the future, and keep your funders happy! It’s best to plan how you are going to evaluate your project from the beginning.

Your evaluation should relate to the aims and objectives of the project, this will guide what and how you measure. There’s a range of techniques and measures you can use, from the very informal to the very formal. Most projects should have a mix of quantitative and qualitative evaluation. Some funders, such as HLF, prefer you to work with an external evaluator.

Make sure you’ve considered the data protection implications of any personal data you might collect when you are doing monitoring and evaluation.

Plate 8: Learn to evaluate honest feedback and expectations from your volunteers. Image credit: David Connolly

6.1 Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

Outputs are the things you’ve achieved – e.g. number of features recorded, reports written, volunteer hours contributed

Outcomes are the changes you’ve made – e.g. number of people who feel more confident after taking part; number of people who have increased knowledge of local heritage

Impact is the long-term difference you’ve help achieve (this can be hard to measure and may be outside the lifespan of your project) – e.g. people who’ve moved into employment; reduction in vandalism of local heritage; sustainable local archaeology group
6.2 Some ideas:

Stories are an incredibly powerful way to demonstrate outcomes and impact, think about case studies and how you can present them.

Evaluation doesn’t have to be expensive or complicated, chats over a cup of tea, guided conversations, and simple surveys are all useful methods.

Google Forms and SurveyMonkey have free options for simple online surveys.

You can do simple votes using buttons in jars (like Tesco and Waitrose community fund voting in stores) or sticking sticky dots on posters. Write questions on flip chart paper and ask people to write responses below.

There are tools for more formal evaluation of volunteer projects, including the Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA), to measure the value of volunteering; and the Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit a comprehensive toolkit to assess the difference volunteering makes.

Useful resources:

**Inspiring Impact**, free guidance, tools and resources: - [https://inspiringimpact.org](https://inspiringimpact.org)

**Guidelines on Selecting and Measuring Outputs and Outcomes**, Wandsworth Grants Fund:  

**Volunteer Investment and Value Audit (VIVA):**  

**Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit:**  
7 Dealing with difficult situations

When you’re working with people it’s almost inevitable that you will have to manage a difficult situation at some point, whether it’s a problem with someone’s behaviour, their performance, or interpersonal difficulties. Few people are comfortable with having difficult conversations, but ignoring a problem, or hoping it will go away on its own, won’t solve the situation.

A Volunteer Policy and Role Descriptions help set expectations on both sides and are useful to go back to when problems arise. A Problem-Solving Policy is also useful to explain how you will manage problems in a fair, consistent and equitable way. Even if you don’t have a problem-solving policy, there should be a clear way for volunteers and others to raise concerns, and an opportunity to escalate them if they’re not happy with a decision.

Don’t discount that you might be the source of problems too! Does everyone understand your project and the expectations you have of your volunteers? Are your aims and objectives clear? Do you communicate why you’re making changes? Can volunteers share their own ideas and suggestions about the project and feel they’re listened to?

Plate 9: Find safe means for volunteers to express themselves. Image credit: Helen Johnston
7.1 How to manage a difficult conversation

At some stage, you will need to have a conversation with someone about a problem to try to resolve the situation.

Beforehand, identify the issues that need to be addressed and the acceptable outcomes. Focus on the issues or behaviours that are causing concern, not the person.

Arrange a time and place to have the conversation. This is best done as a one-to-one in a quiet space. Let the person know in advance about the conversation, so they’re not blindsided. You might want to give them the opportunity to bring someone with them for support.

During the meeting:

• Clearly explain the situation as you understand it
• Explain the effect that problem has caused
• Listen to what the person has to say
• Discuss what changes need to happen
• Try to reach a mutually agreeable outcome.
• Try to finish on a positive note
• Follow up with the outcomes of the meeting. There’s no point acting if you allow the problem to continue.

Remember! You can’t solve problems in ways that will leave everyone happy, but you can find resolutions that are acceptable to everyone involved.

Useful resources:

**Managing Challenging Volunteer Situations**, Volunteer Scotland – information about Problem Solving Policies:

**As Good As They Give Workbook - Meeting the Challenges section**, Volunteer Now:

**How to manage a difficult conversation with a volunteer**, Stepping Up Training:
https://steppinguptraining.co.uk/2015/07/how-to-manage-a-difficult-conversation-with-a-volunteer/

**BAJR Guide 44: Respect – Acting against Harassment in Archaeology**:
8 Supporting yourself

Working with volunteers is usually rewarding, but it is still work, and sometimes it’s very hard work.

Often as the person responsible for managing volunteers, you’re the only person in your organisation doing this role, and frequently you’re a volunteer yourself. You might be managed by people who don’t understand working with volunteers, and you may not even be managed at all. This all adds up to making it a very challenging role. The good news is you’re not alone, and there’s support out there for you.

At the same time, volunteers create their own demands. It’s increasingly recognised that the emotional aspects of working with volunteers are a significant. Volunteers aren’t restrained by an employment contract and this can lead to strong displays of feelings. Working with volunteers requires resilience, communication skills, partnership and emotional labour. These pressures can increase when you are living and working alongside each other on site.

Create boundaries; it’s ok to give yourself space and time out. What you do and how much you do will be personal to you. Even if your volunteers are working on the project at all times of day and night, you don’t have to. Set limits on when you check your email, put your out of office on and resist the urge to log in. Manage your social media profiles; you don’t have to accept everyone’s friend requests. Use security and privacy options so you’re only sharing what you’re comfortable sharing.

Recognise that your motivations for the project might not be the same as the volunteers, and this can lead to tension. It’ll probably be your role to manage this. Try to remind people of the purpose of the project and steer conversations back to the work you are doing.

For more on the emotional landscape of working with volunteers:

**They’re all people right?** Helen Timbrell (former Volunteering & Participation Director for the National Trust): [https://thecroweblog.our.dmu.ac.uk/2016/10/12](https://thecroweblog.our.dmu.ac.uk/2016/10/12)

More on **emotional labour in the workplace**: [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_44.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_44.htm)
8.1 Support for you:

You might not be able to find support internally from your project or organisation, but there’s support available for you and you can build a network of people doing similar work. Volunteer Centres are there to help you, and in some areas, there are regular meet ups for people working with volunteers.

The **Association for Volunteer Managers** is a network for volunteer managers and has lots of advice and information: [https://volunteermanagers.org.uk/](https://volunteermanagers.org.uk/)

The **Heritage Volunteering Group** aims to support and champion best practice across the heritage sector: [http://www.heritagevolunteeringgroup.org.uk/](http://www.heritagevolunteeringgroup.org.uk/)

**Heritage Volunteer Organisers Scotland (HVOS)** is an informal network for anyone with an interest in volunteer management in the heritage sector in Scotland: [https://hvoscotland.wordpress.com/](https://hvoscotland.wordpress.com/)

**UKVPMs** is a friendly and long-established email group for volunteer managers in all sectors: [https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/ukvpm/info](https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/ukvpm/info)

On Twitter, search for the hashtags: #VolMgmt or #LOVols

8.2 Personal Development

There are a huge range of training courses available for working with volunteers, including online and distance options and accredited courses. Usually there is a cost, but keep an eye out as sometimes organisations (particularly Volunteer Centres) have funding to offer it for free.

If you are not able to access training courses, there are some self-study options online:

Knowhow Nonprofit from NCVO has free online courses for members in the **StudyZone**: [https://knowhownonprofit.org/studyzone](https://knowhownonprofit.org/studyzone) (NCVO membership is free for organisations with an income of less that £30,000 a year).

VolunteerNow in Northern Ireland have a series of workbooks, **As Good As They Give**, you can use for self-guided study: [http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/publications/?category=13&type=0&Search.x=61&Search.y=4](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk/publications/?category=13&type=0&Search.x=61&Search.y=4)

The Heritage Volunteering Group, HVOS, NCVO and the Association of Volunteer Managers all run regular conferences, workshops and seminars on volunteering themes.
9 Other useful resources

There are lots and lots of Volunteer Management toolkits available, these two expand on much of the information in this guide, and cover areas that are relevant to archaeology:

Volunteering in the arts toolkit:  
https://www.voluntaryarts.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=35c9f36d-2c2b-4810-8ad8-88c0b6f01442

Volunteer Organisers Toolkit, Heritage Volunteer Organisers Scotland  

The Museum of London Volunteer Training Bank provides free training resources to use with volunteers, covering introduction to museums, customer care, disability awareness, collection care, working with children, and creating tours for family audiences:  
https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/resources/training-bank

About Helen Johnston:

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