



Micro- volunteering Guide for Organisations

Image courtesy of
Aylesbury
Vineyard
Storehouse

This guide is a summary of NCVO’s “Giving a little time” research document:
<https://tinyurl.com/y89wk5l4>

You might have heard about micro-volunteering – but what exactly is it?



According to NCVO, it is: “**Small bite-size volunteering with no commitment to repeat and with minimum formality involving short and specific actions that are quick to start and complete**”.

It has the following characteristics:

1. **Duration** - it involves small increments of time
2. **Access** - it is easy to get started and do
3. **Immediacy** - it is quick to start and complete, and requires minimal planning
4. **Convenience** - you decide when and where
5. **Level of formality** - no formal agreement between the organisation and the volunteer is needed
7. **Frequency** -it can be a one-off or repeated
8. **Activity** - it involves discrete actions
9. **Location** - it can be online or offline.

What sort of volunteer is it perfect for?: Anyone who wants to give volunteering a try, but is time poor, for example busy students, working and non-working parents and grandparents, people with other caring responsibilities, and anyone else who is working or has other commitments.

What examples are there?

Completed Offline:

Campaigning and communication	Fundraising	Research and data	Practical help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing a petition • Taking part in a flashmob • Giving a talk to raise awareness • Preparing a video • Sending cards • Manning a stall at a fair 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking part in a street collection • Running at a sponsored race • Taking up a charity branded credit card • Placing collection box in a local shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a questionnaire • Providing a case study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sorting out recycling • Helping with stage make-up • Taking part in a tree planting event • Painting a pop-up shop • Baking a cake for a community event • Collecting goods from people’s homes • Knitting a hat for a premature baby

Completed Online:

Campaigning and communication	Fundraising	Research and data	Practical help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signing a petition • Liking a Facebook page • Providing feedback on marketing materials • Writing a blog post • Taking part in a webinar or online discussion • Retweeting a message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crowdfunding • Online sponsorship • Signing up to Everyclick search engine • Shopping online via TheGivingMachine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing a questionnaire • Reporting an issue (e.g graffiti) • Counting birds in your garden • Providing a case study • Contributing content to Wikipedia • Crowdsourcing recommendations • Donating photos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donating computer capacity • Setting up a Facebook event • Graphic design of a logo or webpage

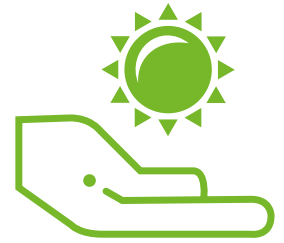
Is micro-volunteering right for your organisation?

1. Establish whether there is a strategic fit

Does your organisation...	Is micro-volunteering appropriate for your organisation?
...want to involve volunteers across a wide geographic area	Yes – micro-volunteering has the potential to involve volunteers in any area, even internationally
...have opportunities that can be delivered in shorter periods of time?	Yes – this is a defining feature of micro-volunteering
...have opportunities that can be broken down into smaller tasks?	Yes – the cumulative impact of lots of smaller tasks can be significant
...need to have volunteers working directly and on their own with vulnerable people and children?	No – although existing volunteers who have been vetted could micro-volunteer
...want to increase the range of opportunities for volunteers?	Yes – micro-volunteering can increase the volunteering offer for organisations and give people more choice when getting involved
...not have the time or money to invest in this?	No – micro-volunteering is given freely but like other forms of volunteering needs support and coordination from paid staff or other volunteers

2. Identify potential micro-volunteering tasks

Consider the following questions in relation to each opportunity to help decide which have the most potential:



- Where is the greatest need?
- Is it feasible to provide and manage that opportunity?
- What actions will have the greatest impact for your beneficiaries, the organisation and volunteers themselves?
- Is this something people want to do?/Is there demand for this type of action or task?
- What are the opportunities and challenges that each opportunity presents?
- Ensure you are clear on why you are involving volunteers – why does it add value or how does it improve things?
- What might the risks be? And could you manage or mitigate these?

3. Understand the connection with other types of volunteering

You may already offer a range of volunteering opportunities or other ways to engage with your organisation that require different levels of commitment. Clarifying the relationship between micro-volunteering and other forms of volunteering can help you to think more strategically about how micro-volunteering might enhance your volunteering offer.



Mapping your opportunities as shown overleaf may help you to think this through. You could do this according to the level of contribution or engagement, or depending on the kind of volunteering you already offer, you could categorise roles in terms of the level of training or induction required or the level of ongoing support a role may need.

Micro-volunteering could be the starting point for getting involved in other volunteering roles in the organisation so you should think about how this might work in practice. As with any volunteer, in order to support them effectively you need to think about the following points:

- What are people's motivations for volunteering? And what might they hope to gain from it?
- People's lifestyles, circumstances and individual motivations impact on how much and the way in which they want to volunteer, and this might change over time
- Micro-volunteering is not always a first step towards more long-term opportunities. Longterm retention may not always be the end goal or a possibility for volunteers or organisations, in fact it may provide opportunities for those with more substantial volunteer roles to reduce the amount of time they give as a volunteer, but still be involved and maintain the connection with your organisation
- Think about how you might keep people informed and updated of what opportunities you have available. Keep in touch where appropriate, but be cautious because not everyone will want this. It's a tricky balance to strike but putting some time into understanding people's motivations for volunteering will help you to achieve this.

How much?



How often?

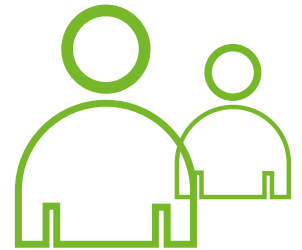


How long for?



4. Develop understanding in the organisation

Think about who needs to know about micro-volunteering in order to help make it happen. This might include people who have not been involved in volunteering before. Micro-volunteering can help to raise the profile of volunteering in your organisation and can provide an opportunity to engage and involve teams that don't usually work with volunteers.



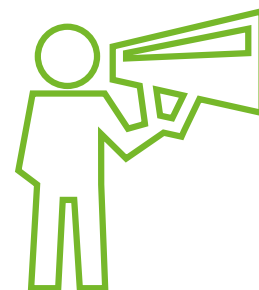
One way to explore this may be to set some time aside to focus on micro-volunteering, considering the steps and questions outlined in this document.

Working collaboratively will help to:

- Share learning and ideas as well as to promote cross-team working
- Ensure buy-in from others early on in the decision making process
- Work out how responsibility for different aspects of the management and support of micro-volunteering might be shared
- Provide an opportunity to involve your existing volunteers. They may have some helpful ideas or suggestions, and will ensure they feel involved which is key if this represents a change in the way you usually work. You should ensure that there isn't greater value placed on one type of volunteering compared to another.

5. Decide what you will call it

Research has found a low awareness of the term 'micro-volunteering' among volunteers and non-volunteers, even those who were actually engaged in micro-volunteering opportunities. With this in mind, you might want to call your opportunities 'micro-actions' or 'micro-tasks' or a term you think will engage your target audience for that tasks.



The language you choose to use internally may differ from how you advertise opportunities. Calling it 'micro-volunteering' in your organisation may just help to differentiate it from other kinds of volunteering which may be managed and delivered in another way. Using the term can be a way to demonstrate that you recognise the value of giving a little time.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge 1: Create meaningful micro-volunteering opportunities

Solutions
Adapt existing opportunities Breaking up or 'chunking' existing opportunities into more bite-sized actions. Explore this with roles that people have found too demanding in the past.
Consider remote opportunities and volunteering out of usual office hours This might help people fit volunteering into busy lifestyles. Offering opportunities to engage online may help you to do this, e.g completing an online survey.
Run events Events are a good way to engage people in a time-limited way and there could be lots of different kinds of contributions required to make them happen so lots of potential for engagement at different levels e.g a flash mob.
Be open to volunteer-generated ideas Talk to existing volunteers and to potential volunteers. Shape your opportunities around the skills and interests of your volunteers. Talking to beneficiaries might also be helpful as micro-volunteering might open up new ways to involve them.
Discuss with other colleagues and teams Ask to attend their team meetings or invite them to yours. You might also choose to run a workshop session to explore potential opportunities across the organisations.
Run a pilot Try out and test approaches. Trying things out on a small scale initially with just a few opportunities might be manageable.
Ensure you are transparent and clear Micro-volunteers should know what to expect and it shouldn't be mis-sold.

Challenge 2: Managing micro-volunteering

Solutions
Ask people whether they want to stay in touch Ensure people can find out about new opportunities and keep them updated. Use approaches to enable people to opt out of communications. This gives volunteers some control about how much contact they have with your organisation. E.g use online social networks that people can join and leave at any time.
Take a joined up approach Share responsibility for managing and supporting micro-volunteers but ensure everyone is clear about who does what and share information that will help you. Hold a meeting and invite anyone with an interest.
Adopt a more flexible approach Ensure that management training and induction don't become too onerous or disproportionate. A move towards facilitating and supporting might be better than managing.
Consider shadowing Experienced volunteers could help with supporting new micro-volunteers.
Plan ahead Core delivery might not depend on micro-volunteering but the extra support they provide may be a bonus and add value on the day, e.g for events make sure you have enough people in case a few people don't turn up.
Use online tools and technology Facebook, Google Calendar or Doodle can be used to see what slots people are available for and mobile technology can help people get information on the go.
Think about risk but be sensible It's important to keep it in perspective. You might want to do a quick risk assessment of the activity as you would with any role.

Challenge 3: Building relationships with micro-volunteers

Solutions
Give volunteers control over how much contact they have Use approaches that enable people to opt in or out of communications. You may want to encourage people to keep in touch e.g entry into a prize draw for signing up to be contacted in future.
Understand the motivations of your volunteers and what they want from their volunteering This will help you to ensure they find their volunteering more satisfying and have a more meaningful relationship with your organisation which is good for retention.
Say thank you to micro-volunteers Small gestures can make a big difference e.g thank your micro-volunteers at the end of an event, or thank them online via Facebook, Twitter or a short email.
Communicate about what impact or what difference their contribution has made Bear in mind the first point about allowing people to opt out of this.
Offer a social event for micro-volunteers or have an online community Micro-volunteers may want to connect with other volunteers, for some this might add value to their experience as a volunteer.

Measuring Impact and Evaluation

When thinking about the impact of micro-volunteering, some key questions to consider are:

- What data will you need to collect?
- How or who will collect it?
- Who will analyse it?
- Will this mean more work or cost money? If so, is it worth it?
- What information or data can you share across teams or different parts of the organisation that might help you do this?



Additional Sources of Information:

<https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-set-up-a-microvolunteering-project>

<https://knowhownonprofit.org/how-to/how-to-create-a-microvolunteering-opportunity-attractive-to-skilled-professional-volunteers>

<http://volunteermakers.org/rise-micro-volunteering-british-volunteer-revolution-claire-sully/>

www.communityimpactbucks.org.uk



0300 111 1250



@CommunityImpactBucks



@CommunityBucks



Community Impact Bucks



Registered charity no. 1070267