

## BOARD RESOURCES

# Best Practices for Managing and Engaging Skilled Volunteers



### A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Find out how you can build capacity for your organization through skills-based volunteering.



# FSI

FOUNDATION FOR SHARED IMPACT

# Why Engage Skilled Volunteers?

Social impact organizations are on a mission to tackle society's biggest challenges. However, they may not have the resources or capacity to do so on their own. While all volunteers contribute skills to an organization, certain individuals bring with them specialized expertise, professional experience, and credentials that may not be available or financially accessible within the organization.



Volunteers can not only assist with technical tasks but can also build capacity for the organization by imparting helpful knowledge to the existing staff. Additionally, many skilled volunteers will seek active engagement in the decision-making process by joining an organization's advisory or executive board. Beyond the professional benefits, some skilled volunteers may be inspired to seek further contribution efforts like becoming a donor or ambassador for the organization.

## How to Efficiently Recruit and Select Skilled Volunteers

### Step 1: Assessing Internal Capabilities



Before seeking volunteers, it is important to have a clear understanding of the projects and related tasks your organization wants to work on. Then assess what resources are already available within the organization and which resources require outsourcing. Additionally, it is helpful to focus on previous experiences where a particular skill set would have significantly benefited your organization. At the end of this exercise, you will have identified the skills and expertise you need in a skilled volunteer.

## Step 2: Recruiting Skilled Volunteers

The next step is to craft a detailed project needs description that clearly describes the goals and objectives of the project and the specific skills required from the volunteers. The description should also include how the volunteers' contributions will positively impact the beneficiaries of the organization.



Although online career listing sites can increase visibility for potential volunteers, targeted networking frequently leads to the discovery of more suitable candidates. For example, if you are looking for a skilled volunteer specialized in media outreach, consider attending a media mixer to meet PR practitioners and journalists. Don't be afraid to reach out to individuals who seem overqualified or uninterested.

## Step 3: Matching Volunteers

It is crucial to ensure that the volunteer is the right fit for the project and organization. Meetings and discussions with potential candidates can serve as an effective method for assessing their skills, interests, motivations, and overall suitability. There are three potential outcomes after the discussion:

- ✓ • The person is a good fit.
- ✗ • The person is not a good fit.
- 🔍 • Both parties agree to explore the match further.



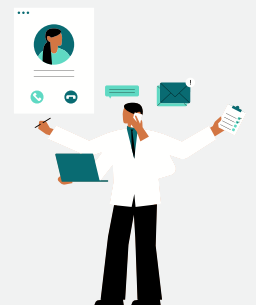
All of these outcomes can be considered equally positive. Avoid placing square pegs in round holes. You will get the most out of a volunteer with suitable skills if they are aligned with your cause and believe in the project. Focus on finding more successful matches that benefit both the skills-based volunteer and your organization to avoid wasting your and the volunteer's time.

### A successful match hinges on different factors:

- **Alignment with the organization's goals** Individuals who appreciate the goals already achieved by the organization are more likely to be committed and engaged.



- **Openness to learn and listen** Volunteers who are interested in learning and actively listening can gain a better understanding of the challenges your organization faces. This makes it easier for the volunteers to properly adapt their skill sets to the industry in which your organization operates.



- **Mutual benefits** The ideal match is two-sided. Both the skilled volunteer and your organization perceive the partnership as beneficial. The volunteer will gain valuable experience and a sense of fulfillment in exchange for their efforts. Simultaneously, your organization benefits from the skills, efforts, and experiences the volunteer brings. A sustainable, long-term collaboration will often arise from such a balanced relationship.



## Step 4: Develop an Agreement with the Volunteer



Creating a detailed agreement between the volunteer and the organization is essential for a successful partnership. The agreement should include the following:



- **Scope of work** A clear understanding of ultimate goals and outcomes that the volunteer can focus on achieving using their unique skills and perspective. Volunteers value a high level of autonomy, so the expected outcome is more important than the way the tasks will be accomplished.



- **Deliverables** The exact tangible results that are expected to be delivered by the volunteer.



- **Schedule** Deadlines for the deliverables and a timeline for milestones leading up to the deliverable deadlines.



- **Available and required resources** Identify the tools and resources required by the volunteer and the tools and resources offered by the organization. If there is a gap in needs, discuss potential solutions with your volunteer.



- **Accountability and evaluation** A specific outline of how the deliverables will be tracked and evaluated. Discuss with your volunteer the level of quality that is expected and set milestones to evaluate early on the status and quality of the deliverables.



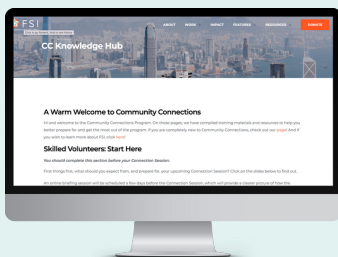
It is important to be aware of the risks derived from working with a professional volunteer. Recognizing potential challenges you may encounter when working with a volunteer will help both parties identify preemptive measures to avoid misalignments and disputes. Potential risks may include:

- **Schedule delays** Ensure that the project timeline is realistic and make sure to highlight the time-sensitive tasks.
- **Overwhelming the volunteer** Set a clear scope of work to prevent the volunteer from taking on more work than initially agreed upon and losing interest in the project.
- **Lack of sector knowledge** Ensure that the volunteer is familiar with the sector in which the organization operates. The social impact sector may differ in many aspects from the professional environment the volunteer is used to. Taking the time to educate the volunteers and/or provide them with the necessary level of background to work on their tasks can help address this potential pitfall.

## Our Resources

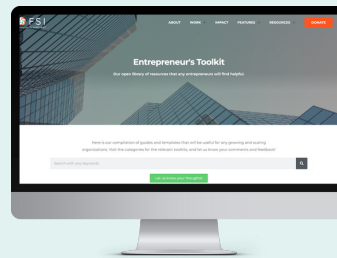
Check out our other resources for Volunteers, NGOs, and Entrepreneur's in Hong Kong.

### Knowledge Hub



Scan to access

### Entrepreneur's Toolkit



Scan to access

Contact us

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