



Volunteer Ireland
Obair Dheonach Éireann

Volunteer policy and best practice

Embedding good practice in all elements of the volunteer journey.



Waterford Volunteer Centre
Isaid d'Obair Dheonach Port Láirge
www.volunteerwaterford.ie



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The Training Link programme is funded by the Department of Social Protection, Department of Education and Skills, and the Department of Enterprise, Research, Innovation and Training.



Wexford Volunteer Centre
Isaid d'Obair Dheonach Linn Siomha
www.volunteerwexford.ie



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Everyone is welcome

 **DIVERSE**
 **INCLUSIVE**
 **ACCEPTING**
 **WELCOMING**
 **SAFE SPACE**
 **FOR EVERYONE**







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Obair Dheonach Éireann



Waterford Volunteer Centre
Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Port Lairge



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About me











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Introduce yourself

-  What's your name?
Where are you from?
-  Was your bed made or unmade before you left the house?
-  What's your favourite treat
biscuit, cake, savoury or otherwise?

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About Volunteer Ireland

 **Volunteer Ireland**
Obair Dheonach Éireann

**Our vision is an Ireland
where Volunteering thrives**

**Our mission is to promote, support and advocate
for excellent, accessible and inclusive
volunteering**

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Learning Objectives



The aim of this session is to help you explore the topic of Volunteer policies and the changes taking place volunteering



- 1 Explore the changing face of volunteering
- 2 What is policy?
- 3 Why are policies needed?
- 4 The policy development process
- 5 Encouraging compliance

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Definition of Volunteering

“Volunteering is any time willingly given, either formally or informally, for the common good and without financial gain.”

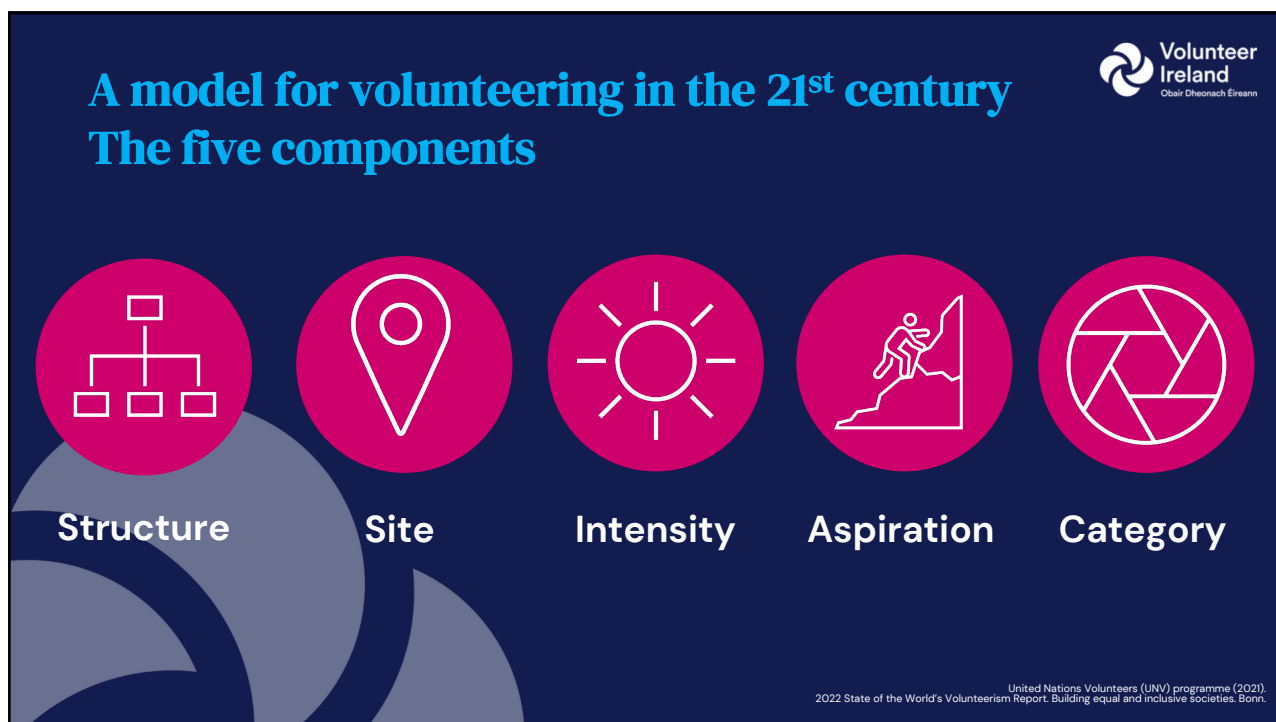
- **Formal volunteering** – that which takes place within organisations (including institutions and agencies)
- **Informal volunteering** – that which takes place outside an organisational setting; as well as:
- The individual who, in many cases, does not consider what they do as volunteering but sees their actions as ‘lending a hand’ or ‘being neighbourly’.



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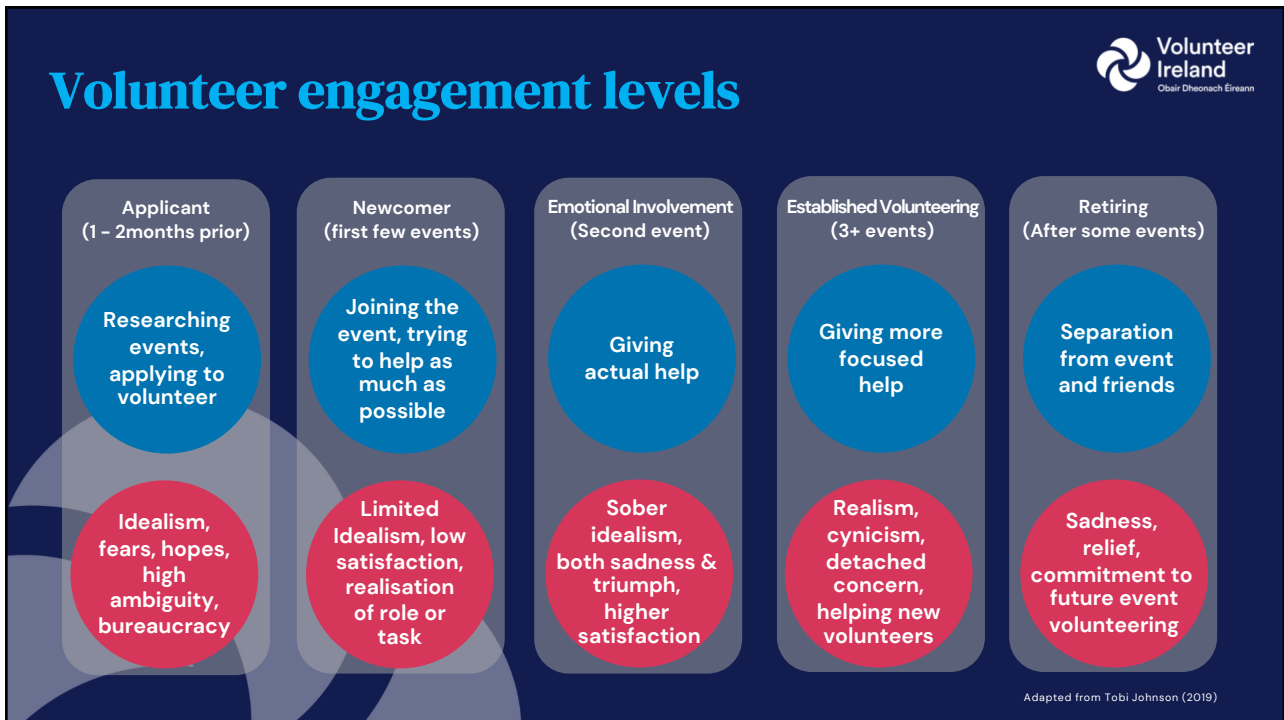
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Group Discussion

What are the impacts of the following:

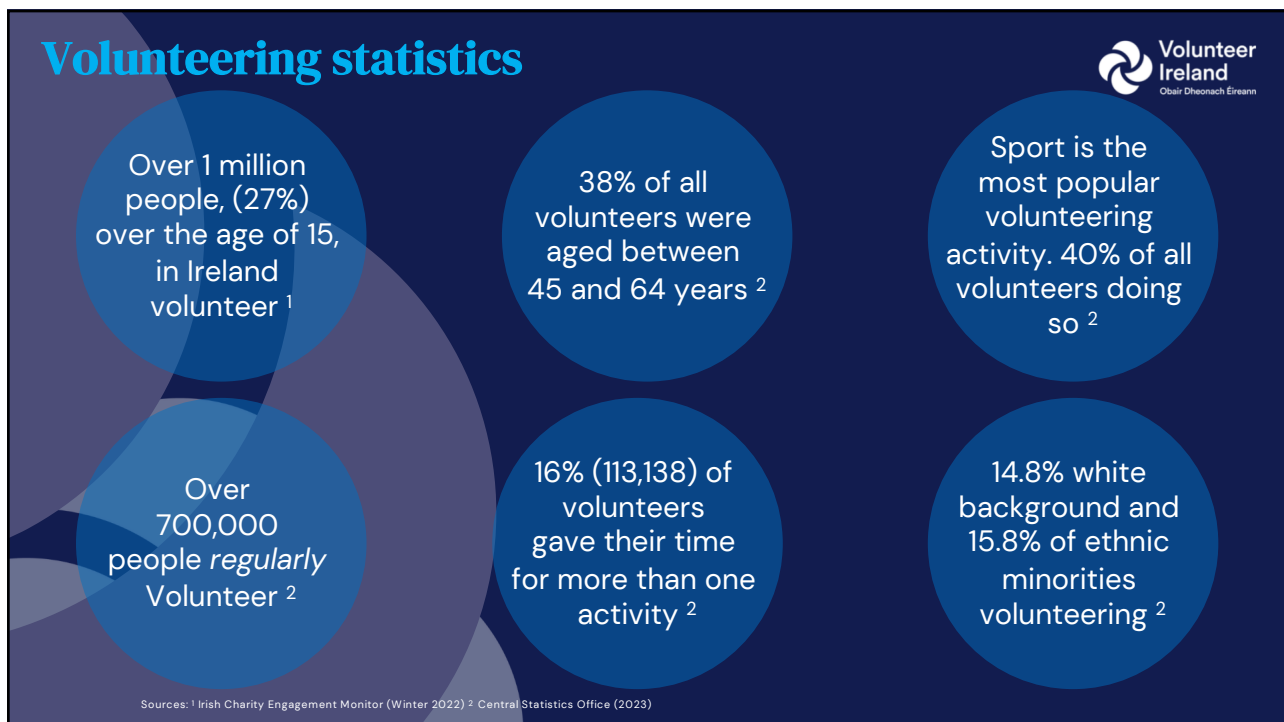
Scenario 1: The volunteer's needs are getting met but the organisations needs are not.

Scenario 2: The organisations needs are getting met but the volunteer's needs are not.

Do we try to keep everyone happy?

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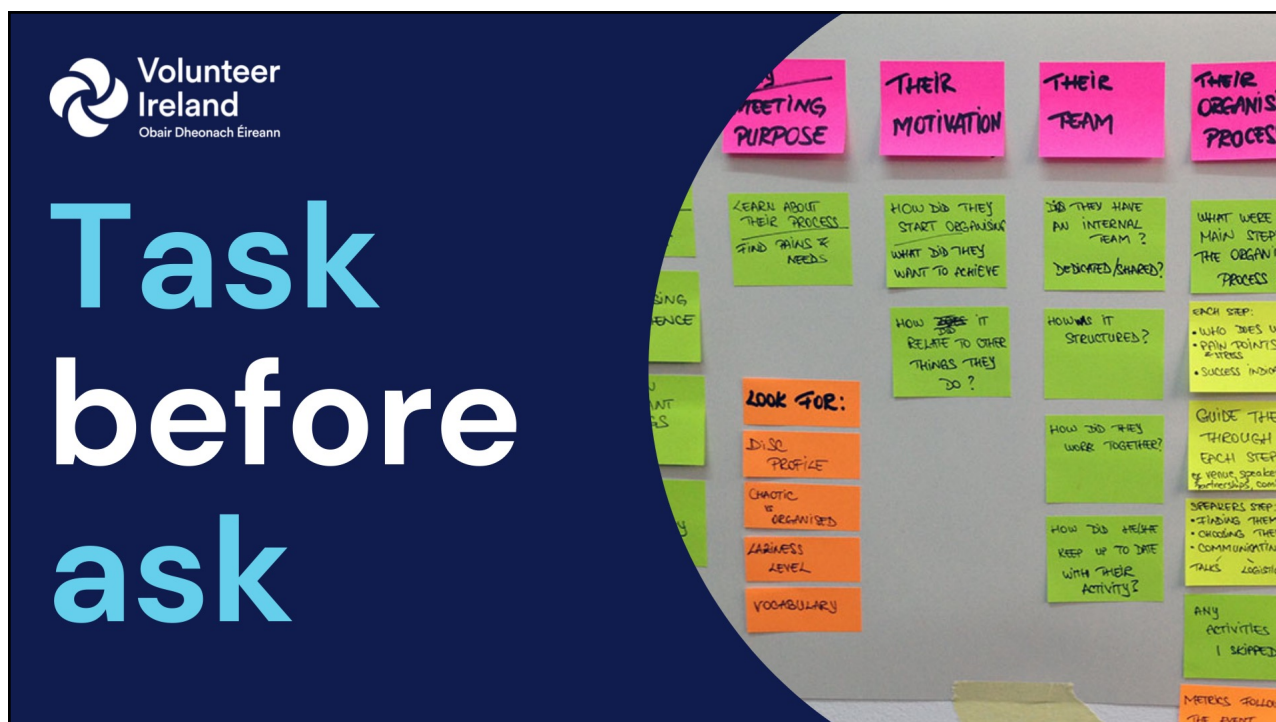
Volunteering statistics

- Over 1 million people, (27%) over the age of 15, in Ireland volunteer ¹
- Over 700,000 people *regularly* Volunteer ²
- 38% of all volunteers were aged between 45 and 64 years ²
- 16% (113,138) of volunteers gave their time for more than one activity ²
- Sport is the most popular volunteering activity. 40% of all volunteers doing so ²
- 14.8% white background and 15.8% of ethnic minorities volunteering ²

Sources: ¹ Irish Charity Engagement Monitor (Winter 2022) ² Central Statistics Office (2023)

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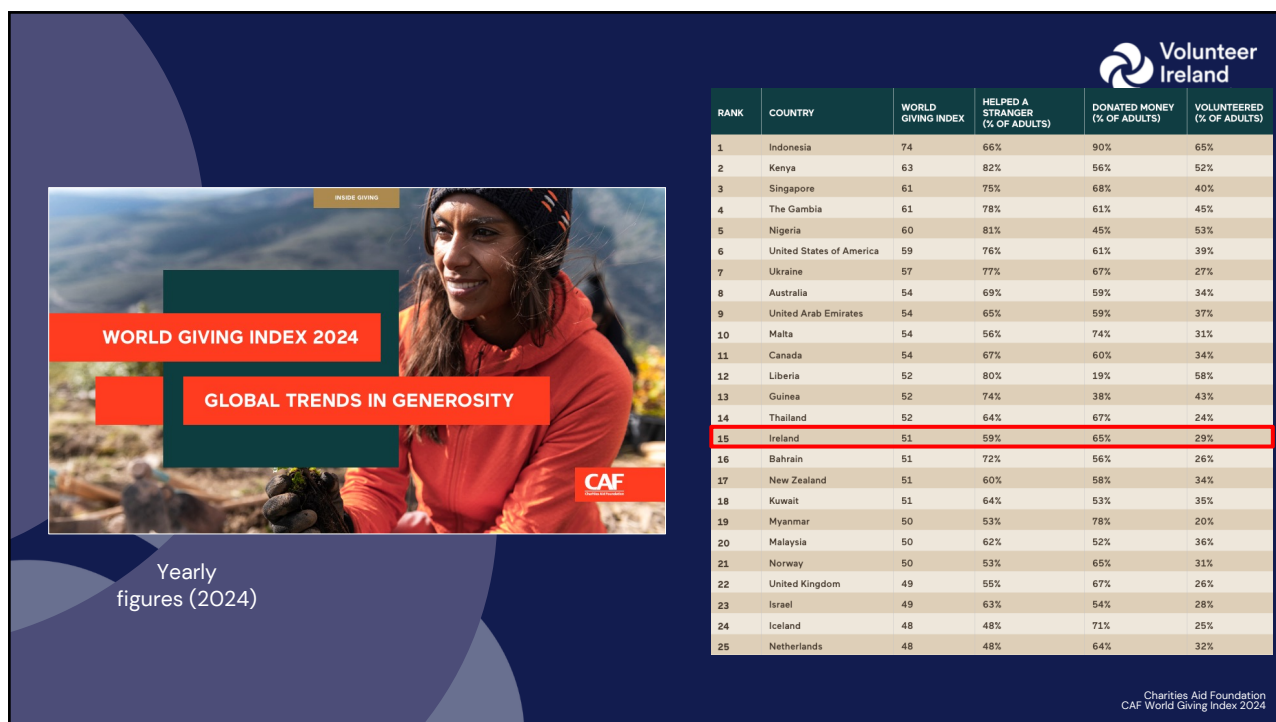
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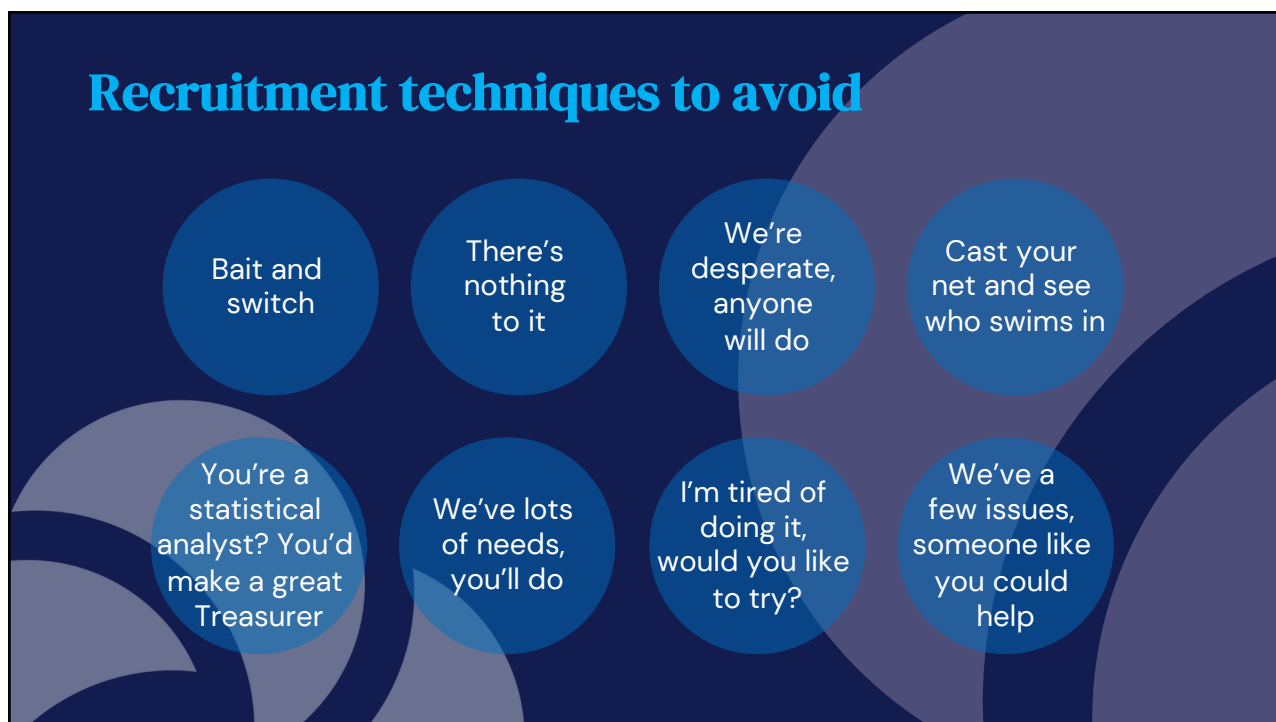
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What is a policy and what is a procedure?

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Introduction



What comes to mind when you hear or see the word “policy”?

- People frequently have had negative experiences with policy in their lives.
- Be open to policies being useful in terms of good practice and governance.



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What is policy?



- A policy is a course of action adopted by a government, business, organisation, person, etc.
- A statement of ethos and values which amongst other things serve as a basis for clarifying roles, relationships and responsibilities.

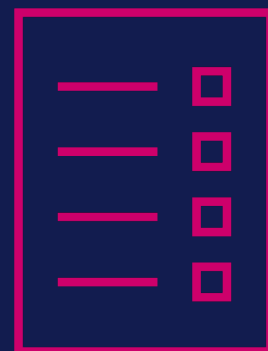


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Policy



- Legislation
- Organisation's Constitution or Memorandum & Articles of Association
- Organisation's Mission / Vision Statements
- Policies
- Procedures
- Day to day work



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Group exercise



Group 1

What are the benefits of policies?

Group 2

What are the challenges of policies?

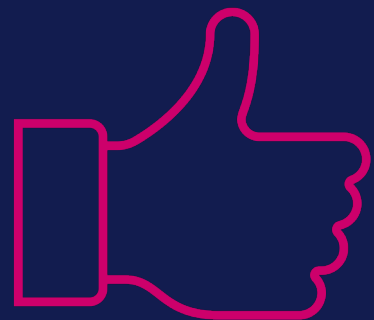


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Benefits of written policies



- They force the organisation to think strategically and professionally.
- They establish continuity over time.
- Being able to point to an agreed policy puts a safe distance between individuals in conflict.



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Drawbacks of policies



- Can appear overly bureaucratic.
- Can take longer than expected, and involve more work than originally realised.
- Can sit on a shelf and gather dust.



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Questions, answers & comments

I'd love to hear from you



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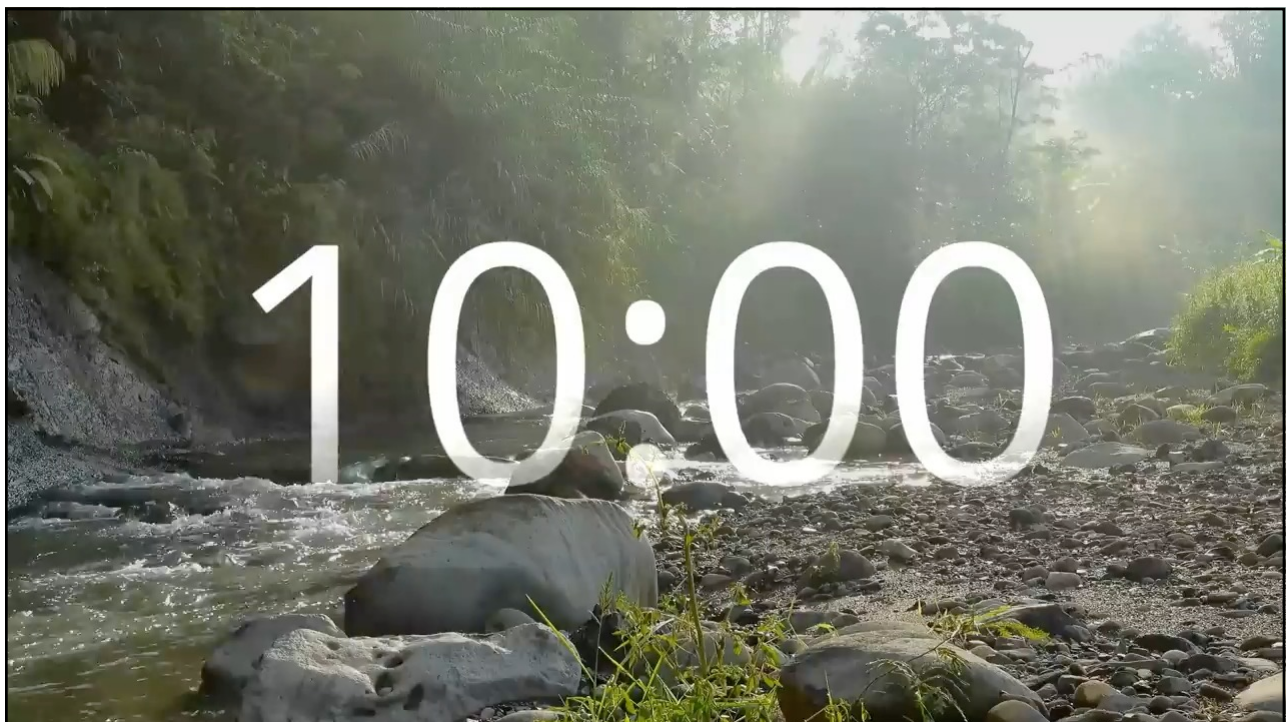
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Time for a short break

Get up, move around, stretch
your legs, grab a snack and we'll
see you back here in 8 minutes



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I'd love to hear from you



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Why would we need a volunteer policy

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Policies tell people what to do



- They form the written basis of operation.
- They serve as a guideline for decision making.
- They prescribe limits and pinpoint responsibilities within an organisation.

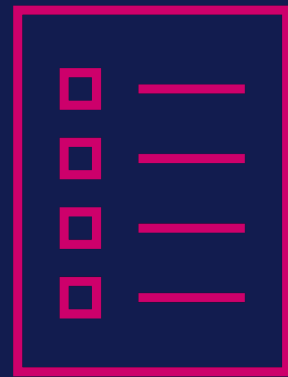


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Policies tell people what to do



- Policies can be viewed as laws, rules or expectations related to your organisations' purpose, functions, goals and objectives.



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Policies tell people what to do



- Procedures give directions for the daily operations that are conducted within the framework of policies.
- They are a natural outgrowth of policies supplying the 'how to' for the rule.
- Procedures can describe a series of steps, outline sequences of activities or detail progressions.



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Group exercise 2

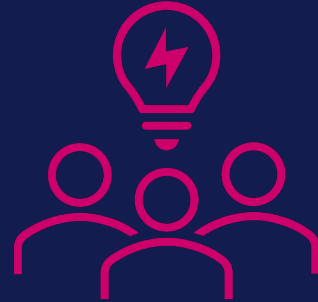


Question 1

What is the fundamental value / belief within your organisation?

Question 2

What is the worst possible scenario you can think of in your organisation as a result of involving volunteers?



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Group exercise 3

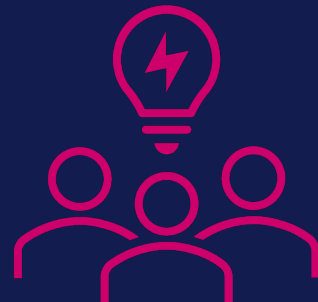


Question 3

Think of a particular rule that volunteers in your organisation have to adhere to in order for things to run smoothly on a day to day basis?

Question 4

Think of one area of volunteer management in your organisation which is going 'ok' but which could be improved?

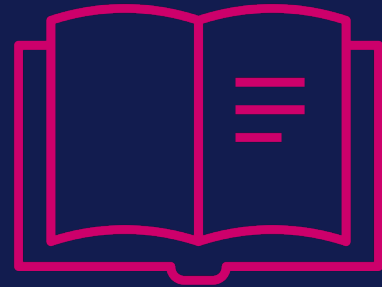


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Policy as a value statement



Reflective of how the organisation feels about their clients, their rights, their staff, their volunteers, their community etc.



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Example policy statement



We exist to promote and support high quality to promote and support high quality voluntary activity, primarily within organisations. We also acknowledge the important contribution made by volunteers in our own work and recognise that without them, we would not achieve our goals.

It is essential that we present a good model of good practice in volunteer management.

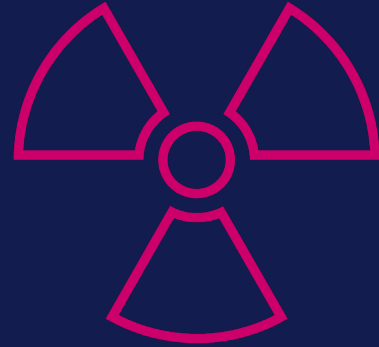
We regard volunteers as a valuable resource and encourage them to get involved at all levels of the organisation and within appropriate activities. We aim to train, support and supervise our volunteers to the best of our abilities and to act quickly and fairly if difficulties arise.

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Policy as risk management



Helps to prevent harm,
diminishes the likelihood of
something going wrong by
clarifying what is acceptable.



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Example policy statement



Volunteers are required to wear protective clothing and gear as outlined in the volunteer handbook and as specified in his / her job description.

Disabling / disconnecting or otherwise tampering with any safety mechanisms is strictly forbidden.

These policies are necessary to encourage the safety of volunteers, staff and the general public. Breach of any of these or other health and safety policies may be grounds for immediate dismissal

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Policy as a rule



Can be about the protection of people and the working environment.

Example Policy Statement

If a volunteer cannot attend their shift they must inform the volunteer coordinator one day before to ensure the volunteer coordinator can try and find a replacement.



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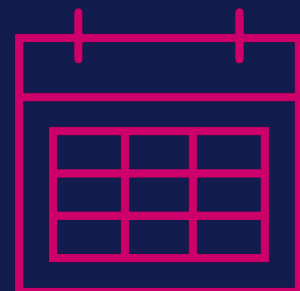
Policy to improve the programme



What's not operating all that great that can be improved through policy.

Example Policy Statement

All volunteers will complete and initial their attendance logs as provided by the volunteer coordinator and submit these at the end of the month



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A volunteer policy is ...



The foundation on which your organisation's involvement of volunteers should be based.

It forms the basis of your entire volunteer programme, giving cohesion and consistency to all elements in your organisation that affects volunteers.



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The background of the slide is a blue-tinted image of crumpled paper with several large, dark blue question marks scattered across it.

Why do we engage volunteers?

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**How do volunteers
fit in the role of the
organisation?**

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**If you were given a
guaranteed €5 million per
year for 10 years, would you
still involve volunteers?**

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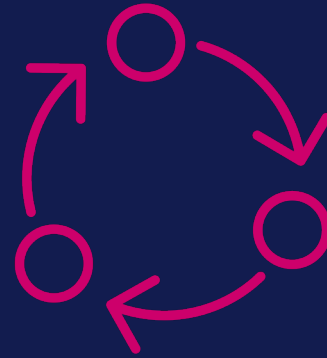
The process of policy development



Policy development can seem overwhelming, so the process must be planned and managed.

Who will do it?

- Don't do it on your own
- Set up a policy sub-committee (include volunteers)
- Ask one person to co-ordinate



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When to write your policy



- In an ideal world ... before volunteers start
- Avoid writing policies hastily after a crisis
- Policy development takes time: set a realistic timetable
- Prioritise, don't try and do it all at once.



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Policy development process



- Research
- Consultation and Involvement
- Writing it
- Getting it approved
- Distributing and implementing it
- Evaluation

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Writing the policy



- Directive tone
- Clear language
- Brief, concise
- Purpose
- Scope
- Illustrate
- Edit carefully
- Content, style, mechanics

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Mission statements



The achievement of the goals of this organisation is best served by the active participation of citizens of the community. To this end, the organisation accepts and encourages the involvement of volunteers at all levels of the organisation and within appropriate activities

Volunteers are integral part of our team. Without them, we would not be able to offer the outstanding quality of programming that we provide to our clients.

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The background of the slide is a blue-tinted image of crumpled paper with several large, dark blue question marks scattered across it.

**How can we
encourage
compliance with our
policies?**

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Encouraging compliance



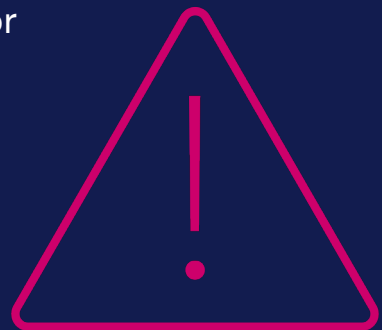
- Sensitive wording
- State the why
- Make compliance easy
- Make policies accessible
- Communicate policies at every opportunity
- Agreement and follow through

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A word of caution



- Simply lifting policy statements from this or any other sources can result in dangerous omissions and oversights.
- Well developed policies make a unique statement about your organisation, it is important to work through the process of policy development.



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