

Check every applicant is referenced in the same way – even if you already know them. Checking references verifies details gathered from the volunteer during the application and interview process and helps assess the applicant’s suitability for the role. References can be given over the phone or in writing. In some situations, reference checks are an appropriate alternative to the Garda Vetting process. In other situations, reference checks can complement the screening processes already in place

Recruitment & Screening Process

When developing your role description and advertising for volunteers it is a good idea to state that reference checks are a standard part of the recruitment and screening process within your organisation.

Who & When

Reference checks are generally conducted once you have interviewed your applicant and have a clear indication that you would like to involve the individual in your organisation.

Obtain Permission

Always request permission from the applicant before checking references.

Number of Referees

Usually an organisation requests two character references. Referees should not be relatives of the candidate and should preferably be from two separate sources e.g. academic, employment, volunteering or from a person of standing within the community.

Consistency

Check every applicant is referenced in the same way – even if you already know them. Using the same reference check process for both volunteers and staff ensures consistency and equality for all people involved in the organisation.

Create a Template or Checklist

A simple reference template or checklist ensures the process is consistent, straight forward and easy to complete. A template or checklist also guarantees that difficult issues are not missed or avoided deliberately in conversation.

Questions

Develop your questions ahead of time. Avoid asking ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions. Instead, ask questions that encourage the referee to expand and provide the desired information in a descriptive manner.

Gathering Information

The following are types of information you should gather during the interview:

Inform the referee that the volunteer has given you permission to contact

Let each referee know that all information given will be kept

Verify the nature of the relationship between the applicant and the referee, as well as the length of time they have known each other

Stress the type of responsibilities that the applicant will have if selected for the volunteer

Only seek information which you need, and which relates to the role in

Equal Opportunities

Do not probe into the marital status, age, religion, ethnicity or national origin of the applicant for the purpose of using that information in your recruitment decision.

Show Appreciation

Remember that the referee is doing you a favour. It is important to be polite, to respect their time and to thank them at the end of the conversation.

Confidentiality

Store all confidential information securely, restricting access to only those who really need it.