



**Volunteer  
Ireland**

Obair Dheonach Éireann



**Involving  
volunteers from  
new communities**

# Involving volunteers from new communities



**Volunteering is crucial to building stronger and more connected communities**, and is integral to society in Ireland. Involving volunteers from new communities – including immigrants and people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds – brings many benefits to volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) and communities as a whole.

**This fact sheet shows the benefits of involving volunteers from new communities** and provides **tips on developing a vibrant volunteer programme** that champions diversity and inclusion.

- Involving volunteers from new communities can bring many **benefits to organisations and communities** as a whole.
- **Organisations should strive to involve volunteers from diverse backgrounds** and create a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone.

## 13.8%

According to the **2022 census**, over 13.8% of Ireland's population are classified as 'non-Irish nationals'. Ireland has residents from more than **210 nationalities**.

# Benefits of involving volunteers from diverse backgrounds



## Diversity of perspectives

Including volunteers from new communities helps in providing a diversity of perspectives. When people from different backgrounds work together, we contribute **different ways of thinking, different ways of problem-solving, and different viewpoints**. This can lead to innovative solutions to challenges, resulting in better outcomes for the organisation and the community.

## Learning opportunities

Involving volunteers from diverse backgrounds provides an opportunity for cultural exchange. When we volunteer alongside individuals from different backgrounds, **we have the opportunity to broaden our understanding of diverse cultures, traditions, and lifestyles**. This can help to break down stereotypes and build bridges between communities. Volunteers can learn from each other and develop a greater understanding and appreciation for different cultures. This is particularly important for organisations that work with diverse communities, as it can help to build trust and stronger relationships.



## Community building

Involving volunteers from new communities can help to build stronger and more resilient communities. **When people work together towards a common goal, we create strong bonds and a sense of belonging**. Community building is particularly important for immigrant communities, as it can help to provide a sense of connection and belonging in a new country.

# 6 Steps to a more inclusive volunteer programme

These tips will help you develop a vibrant volunteer programme that champions diversity and inclusion.



**STEP 1**  
Understand  
volunteers' needs  
and expectations

Before engaging volunteers from new communities, it is important to understand their needs and expectations. **Conduct a focus group or survey** to understand what motivates volunteers and what they hope to gain from volunteering. **Talk to representative groups** and do your research, and don't forget you can always ask questions. This will help you create volunteer opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of volunteers.



**STEP 2**  
Provide cultural  
awareness training

It is important to provide cultural awareness training to all staff and volunteers in your organisation. This training should cover **cultural differences, communication styles, and cultural sensitivity**. This training will help staff and volunteers understand the cultural context of their work and create a more inclusive environment for volunteers from new communities.

**(Volunteer Ireland offers such training.)**



**STEP 3**  
Use clear  
communication

Clear communication is essential when engaging and managing volunteers from new communities. Ensure volunteers have access to clear and concise information about their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. You can do this through the use of **multi-lingual materials, interpreters, and technology-based communication tools**. Remember, good communication is important throughout the volunteers' time with your VIO.



#### STEP 4

Provide training & support

Volunteers from new communities may need extra training and support to perform their roles. This can include **language supports, role-specific training, and cultural orientation**. Providing this training and support will help volunteers feel more confident in their roles and better equipped to contribute to your VIO.



#### STEP 5

Foster a sense of belonging

Volunteers from new communities may face social isolation and cultural barriers that can affect their ability to feel included and valued. Create a sense of belonging for these volunteers by **promoting diversity, inclusivity, and respect for cultural differences**. Creating opportunities for volunteers to connect and build relationships helps foster a sense of belonging.



#### STEP 6

Recognise & celebrate diversity

Recognising and celebrating diversity is an important aspect of engaging and managing volunteers from new communities. This can include **celebrating cultural/national holidays and events, showcasing the contributions of volunteers from diverse backgrounds, and creating a culture of respect and appreciation for different cultures**. Don't forget you can celebrate your volunteers during National Volunteering Week in May, and on International Volunteer Day on 5 December.

Thanking your volunteers shouldn't happen on a one-off basis though – it forms a regular part of good volunteer management practice.

# Conclusion

Engaging and managing volunteers from new communities requires special attention and consideration, but is extremely rewarding and beneficial to your organisation. These tips will help your organisation create meaningful volunteer opportunities for volunteers from diverse backgrounds, leading to a positive impact on your organisation and the community as a whole.



[volunteer.ie](https://volunteer.ie)

[info@volunteer.ie](mailto:info@volunteer.ie)