



Family Volunteering Feasibility Kit

**Family Volunteering
A new form of engagement**

Research compiled by Volunteer Ireland during Spring and Summer 2020.
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Is my organisation ready for Family Volunteering?

On December 1st 2019, a number of European Volunteer Development organisations came together for an Erasmus+ project, through which we aimed to present and convince you of the value of Family Volunteering.

We started this project by carrying out research into Family Volunteering, together with the six partners, the volunteers, and volunteer-involving organisations in their respective countries. You can read our findings [here](#).

During the research stages of this project we became aware that a lot of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations were keen and interested to start Family Volunteering programmes. While this appears to be the case it is important to ensure that you have the adequate resources in place to support family volunteering.

As a first step we'd encourage you to reflect on your current volunteer management practice. Ask yourself these questions:

- **Is there a quality experience for current volunteers engaged?**
- **Do you have the capacity to take on family volunteering?**
- **Can you provide a positive volunteer culture within the organisation for family volunteers to feel welcome and accepted?**

Clear parameters and concise role descriptions for Family Volunteers will help the development of any new programme. Make sure you get the feedback of your current volunteers in how they too see family volunteering integrating into your volunteer programme, a good way to do this is by individual survey so that people can express their feelings about the programme. If they have an issue or concern it is best you find out now, not when the volunteers have started.

Diversity and family volunteering should be integrated into your current programme to ensure its success so perhaps now is the time to look at spending time building cohesion and quality in your current volunteer programme to ensure that when family volunteering starts that feel integrated and welcome into your organisation.

Successful Volunteer Management & Leadership



Source: volunteer.ie

This Erasmus+ project is about supporting and promoting family volunteering within an organisation however it is important to remember that there are different pathways to Family Volunteering for volunteers.

Our focus is on family volunteering either “together” or “alongside” members of the same family or household, however there are different steps to involvement in family volunteering. Let’s look at how different forms of volunteering and they may lead to a family or extended or members of a family coming together to volunteer.

volunteer separately

Two family members volunteering but having different roles in different organisations.

volunteer for

An adult family member volunteering in the same organisation that another family member is a participant.

volunteer alongside

Family members volunteer for the same organisation, not necessarily doing the same activity at the same time, and with different motivations.

volunteer with

One family member actively volunteering while bringing along family members with them in more passive roles

volunteer together

Family members volunteer together for the same organisation doing the same activity at the same time.

The Stages of Family Volunteering



Family Volunteering Survey

To assist you in deciding whether to proceed with family volunteering and to help you understand some of the barriers that volunteers might face we have developed a short survey. This survey is derived from the Volunteer Impact Assessment which is an excellent tool to assess the impact of your volunteer programme.

We'd suggest you send this survey to a wide audience of volunteers to garner their interest in Family Volunteering. It is important to remember that the word "family" can and should be as broad and inclusive as possible, child and parent or grandparent, nephew or niece with an uncle or aunt, child, and adult from a same-sex relationship. Get a broad range of people to give their feedback.

Below are the questions we'd recommend you ask. These are reflective of the questions we asked in the research for this particular project so you could compare your local experience with that of our international research.



Family Volunteering Survey

Question 1: I am aged....

under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85 - 94
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				95+
				<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 2: My gender is....

male	female	other	(add any other options)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 3: Have you ever participated in Family Volunteering?

(Volunteering alongside another member of your family)

yes	no	no, but I would like to	no, I am not interested
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 4: What would you consider to be barriers for you and your family to join a Family Volunteering programme? (Tick all that apply)

- ☐ There are no family volunteering opportunities available
- ☐ I have to travel very far to join a family volunteering programme
- ☐ I am not aware of family volunteering
- ☐ I would not be comfortable volunteering alongside a member of my family
- ☐ lack of time or resources

Question 5: What are the barriers for you?

.....

.....

.....

Question 6: What would make it easier for you to get involved in Family Volunteering?

.....

.....

.....

Question 7: What kind of tasks/projects would you enjoy doing with your family?

.....

.....

.....

Getting ready for Family Volunteering

So you've got the green light from potential Family Volunteers and other stakeholders, there are still a few things to consider before getting things started.

Family Volunteering activities

Preparation is the key to any volunteer programme so ask yourself the questions below, before setting out on your path. Remember, all "Yes" answers don't mean no problems will occur, likewise all "No" answers don't mean it'll never happen.

What this list will help you do is find out where you are and where you want to be with the development of Family Volunteering in your organisation and will act as a set of simple setting stepping stones to getting a Family Volunteering programme underway.

In completing this list be realistic and think of how long it will take you to turn complete the various actions, don't try to get it going in 2 weeks, but instead pace yourself over a realistic period of time.



Getting ready for Family Volunteering Checklist



	yes	no	notes
Do you need to develop new methods of recruiting family participation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you need to develop family volunteer role descriptions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Can you apply your existing screening process for individuals to family groups?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have current programmes that can be made family friendly?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have activities that will be attractive to families?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have tasks that can be developed or altered to be appropriate to the ages, education levels, cultural identifications and experiences of family volunteers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have orientation and training material that is sensitive to culturally diverse populations or that cross-generational lines?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there additional training programmes that need to be considered? (such as diversity or LGBTQ+ awareness)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any laws or legislation that impact the engagement of young people in the programme?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Volunteer Recognition

Volunteers give freely of their time for many different reasons, and it's important to find out these motivations when each new volunteer starts with your organisation. In Family Volunteering the motivation for the young person and adult could be very different so make sure to ask volunteers independently.

There are many ways to recognise the contribution of volunteers. A starting point is always to ask your current volunteers what they would like? Remember that you may have different forms of recognition for different age groups.

Recognising family volunteers checklist



	yes	no	notes
Do you have ways of recognising each family member uniquely?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have a budget for reimbursing volunteer expenses? travel expenses, childcare, volunteer meals, gifts and vouchers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you need to adapt any materials or language used on promotional items to say that you welcome application from Family Volunteers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have policies around volunteer recognition?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Volunteer Scheduling

Flexibility is key to a successful volunteer programme. This is imperative in family volunteering, there can be many demands made of the family and while the benefit to the organisation is that at minimum they double the pool of volunteers, we must remember the added pressure that two family members volunteering simultaneously can have on other family members who remain at home in a caring role.

Flexibility checklist



	yes	no	notes
Do you have a facility that can accommodate family groups? i.e., physically accessible and / or child safe.	✓	✗	
Do you have a process and procedure to accommodate families with young children? i.e. Is childcare available?	✓	✗	
Do you have staff trained to work with children, youth and all types of families?	✓	✗	
Do you have the ability to provide flexible scheduling sometimes required for family volunteering?	✓	✗	
Do you have a process to accommodate for the absence of an entire family on occasion?	✓	✗	

Volunteer Engagement & Management

While it's essential to have volunteer role descriptions in place for everyone involved, a clear volunteer policy will help support families and the organisation to ensure that correct practices and procedures are in place to ensure that families have the same level of access to programmes as individual volunteers.

Volunteer management checklist



	yes	no	notes
Do you have proper intake process, data recording? i.e., ability to document family statistics and relationship of the family participant?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have policies around discipline and performance management?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the language and tone of your Volunteer Policy appropriate to family volunteering? Does it talk of the benefits of inclusion and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have staff trained to work with children, youth and all types of families?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have adequate insurance?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have policies around health, safety and welfare that apply to Family Volunteering? families?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Next steps – your Family Volunteering plan

While it's essential to have volunteer role descriptions in place for everyone involved, a clear volunteer policy will help support families and the organisation to ensure that correct practices and procedures are in place to ensure that families have the same level of access to programmes as individual volunteers.

What changes are required to ensure to Family Volunteering can be effectively implemented?

Refer to the questions outlined in the programme checklist and study the resources provided to identify which programme areas require changes and / or further development. Keep your points clear and actionable, start out slow and develop your Family Volunteering programme over time.

Don't try to jump into the depths of Family Volunteering but instead take slow but confident steps in the rollout of your Family Volunteering programme. The fun starts here, good luck.

Volunteer Activities

Volunteer Recognition

Scheduling

Volunteer Engagement & Leadership

Family Volunteering Spectrum: Levels of Engagement

This table highlights different methods or strategies for organisations to engage family volunteers.

Volunteer Activities	Offering childcare to enable family members to volunteer	Offering distinct activities for children or youth in a family	Pairing volunteers by family age groups	Offering activities that an entire family can do as a group	Arranging unique activities for different ages or abilities at the same time
Volunteer Recognition	Volunteer Awards / Appreciation	Gifts / Certificates / Vouchers	Meals and snacks	Travel Expenses	Family care: childcare costs / aging parents
Volunteer Scheduling	Episodic / Occasional	Short Term / Seasonal	On-Call	Flexible	On-Going
Volunteer Resource Management	Evaluating a family volunteer programme and volunteer performance	Periodic review of family volunteer opportunities	Formal prearranged evaluation meetings	Incorporating feedback from family members into the program	Offering decision making authority to family members

Original document: Volunteer Canada

Family Volunteering Activities

Organisations can develop activities specifically for families with young children. While there may be a limit to how much independence you can grant young people have abilities that can be tremendously helpful for organisations. Finding tasks that young people feel confident with and enjoy is a useful strategy. Providing options for young people and letting them pick the activity they are most interested in can also lead to more fulfillment for children. Make sure you explore all your current activities and see how they can be made more fun and interactive for young people.

If an organisation is seeking to engage family volunteers on a more episodic level, or for a specific event, different families can be paired together around a variety of tasks to form a bubble. This can be a fun exchange for children or youth, providing them an opportunity to work with other people of a similar age. If an organisation requires a large number of volunteers for a specific activity or event, providing collaborative volunteering opportunities for different families can be a way to gather numbers while also creating meaningful experiences for volunteers.

There are a number of group opportunities that can be made available by an organisation to a family. This can sometimes be a more favourable option, as less coordination is required if adults are able to supervise their family members. Clear channels of communication are extremely important when working with a diverse group of people. Ensuring reciprocity of communication between the organisation and family can serve to establish a positive volunteer environment.

As an example, a family can be involved in preparing food at a food bank, with each member involved in an age-appropriate task. Families can collectively help with activities at a community centre or staff a booth at a festival or event.

Volunteer recognition is a theme that has surfaced as being an important element for all demographics of volunteers. A gift does not necessarily translate to higher intrinsic value, but by showing that the volunteer's opinions, ideas, experiences, or hobbies have been heard, an organisation can more evidently display appreciation. Listening to volunteers' interests, and then finding a way to support them, can go a long way in increasing engagement levels.

Volunteers can be supported and recognised in a variety of ways. Providing food or snacks during a break can be appreciated. If a family is volunteering after work or school, offering a selection of a few healthy snacks prior to their volunteering activity can help satisfy hungry young people and allows for some brief socialising before diving into the activity.

Providing a dinner, whether cooking something in a kitchen or taking a family out for dinner at a local restaurant can give parent figures a break from dinner responsibilities while fostering social exchange between a family and organisation. This can be done at a milestone of their volunteering or as an end-of-year appreciation.

Organising a pizza party is another way to show appreciation to volunteers. It gives time for volunteers to unwind and can be an opportunity to connect volunteers with each other, or with staff.

Travel costs can sometimes be an impediment for families to be able to commit to volunteering opportunities. An organisation can provide assistance by providing bus tickets or reimbursing transportation costs. Youth volunteers have identified transportation costs as a barrier to volunteering. It has been expressed that the provision of bus tickets for volunteering can be especially helpful for students who have to travel far from their schools or homes to volunteer. Organisations can talk to family volunteers during orientation to identify whether travel support would be needed or helpful to a family.

Families are often busy with a variety of commitments. Between work, children, aging parents, homes, hobbies, friends, and appointments, it can be challenging for a family to commit to regular and consistent volunteering. Organisations can improve volunteer recruitment by offering a variety of volunteer scheduling opportunities from which families can decide the option that is most convenient. Providing a variety of options or talking with families about what is most convenient for them (while still remaining effective for the organisation), can serve to improve the satisfaction levels of volunteers. In some cases, offering short-term or one-time opportunities, also called episodic volunteering, can be the most viable option for families. Occasional volunteering can require creativity on the part of volunteer-involving organisations to design suitable positions that fit the volunteer's schedule.

Short-term or interim volunteering involves providing volunteer opportunities to families on a regular basis but for an intermediate period of time (for instance a family may volunteer weekly for a six-month period). An organisation may find this option desirable if they are planning a large event which requires advanced planning and support. Families can contribute time leading up to and during the event.

Organisations can allow family volunteers to contribute to a specific project with a specified term of commitment. Organisations can provide families the opportunity to design their own projects, terms, and activities. This gives volunteer families the ultimate flexibility and influence in their organisation.

Families may opt for seasonal volunteering, whether in the form of a winter drop-in program, summer nature walks, or skiing buddies. There are a variety of opportunities to target potential volunteers who may wish to participate in seasonal activities.

Conclusion

It is concluded in our research that a Family Volunteering Programme, has the potential to provide a very positive experience for volunteers, their family members, and organisations alike.

From the organisations who responded to our survey, family volunteering is seen to be already taking place, albeit in small pockets, in most organisations across all countries in activities such as fundraising, supporting family members of service users, and environmental protection. Although such volunteering roles are not specifically advertised as “family volunteering”. Organisations in Ireland have specifically reported that it is now becoming more common for couples and families e.g. parent/child or couple duo to sign up together. Many organisations report that family volunteering was not currently taking place within their organisation. In these cases, it is clear across all countries that those organisations are interested in developing family volunteering in the future.

The main barrier noted to offering a family volunteering programme is the lack of capacity and resources - organisations do not feel they would have the time, resources, or funding to develop a programme such as this.

Volunteer Involving Organisations we surveyed see the main benefit a family volunteering programme could bring such as - providing valuable opportunities to build family relationships and enhancing the importance of volunteering as an integral part of life to the younger generation from an early age, specifically, Croatia - where over half of Croatian organisation respondents see this as a huge benefit. Most organisations scored similarly in the benefit that a family volunteering programme would allow them to engage a broader range of volunteers than they would normally engage, volunteer respondents also reported that a family volunteering programme has the potential to help build solidarity within the community.

Acknowledgment

In developing this feasibility toolkit we recognise the work of our colleagues in Volunteer Canada in the development of resources for family volunteering.



This publication has been created as part of the “Follow your Vision - FAMILY VOLUNTEERING, a new form of engagement” project, which is an Erasmus + Strategic Partnership that aims to be a strategic answer to a mix of needs, interests, and combined opportunities.

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Learn more about this project on our web page: www.familyvolunteering.eu.

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The strategic partnership implementing the project is made up of 6 organisations with vast experience in volunteering and developing quality volunteering programmes:

- CEV-European Center for Volunteering from Belgium - europeanvolunteercentre.org;
- Croatian Volunteer Development Centre - hcrv.hr;
- Volunteer Centre Augsburg, Germany - freiwilligen-zentrum-augsburg.de
- Volunteering Ireland - volunteer.ie
- Vestre Aker Frivillighetssentral, Norway - vestreaker.frivilligsentral.no;

and the applicant organisation – Pro Vobis– National Resource Centre for Volunteering from Romania - provobis.ro.

