

Step-by-Step Guidebook on Family Volunteering

Family Volunteering Educational Guidebook for Adult Educators

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Introduction

Why this Guidebook?

The aim of this guidebook is to provide adult educators with a greater understanding of the needs of participants in a family volunteering activity or programme. We acknowledge the great diversity of the Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs), so whether you are a volunteer manager, a project coordinator, a counselor, or a social worker, the term Adult Educator applies to you.

This guidebook is meant to be a source of information and empowerment for you to better prepare for designing and implementing a Family Volunteering Programme (FVP) in your community.

In the following chapters, you will find a comprehensive approach to the setup of a FVP with resources and advice for each phase of the programme design, as well as some valuable tips and tricks on running a successful FVP

For a more theoretical approach on the topic we invite you to check out the [ABC on Family Volunteering](#), and in case you are still not sure about whether family volunteering is suitable for your organisation, try our [Family Volunteering Feasibility Kit](#) or watch the Family Volunteering Videos .

Family volunteering programmes are as different as the organisations that run them, yet as you will see further on, they have some important common characteristics. This possibility for variety also gives you **two main options** when deciding to kick off such a programme. This guidebook covers both options so we're sure it is for you, regardless of the approach you are choosing.

The first option is to slowly add volunteers joining as a family in your day-to-day activities, test this approach, and then grow your programme together, by adding new “ingredients” in time. This brings less disruption to your organisation, but of course, the impact will also be smaller in the beginning.

The second option is the one we will mainly focus on in this guidebook, designing and setting up a complex, full-grown family volunteering programme, with all its specificities and challenges, but also with all its potential impact.

But first, if you're still not convinced you should try family volunteering, here are some of the benefits of this type of programme, for different stakeholders (inspired by [Family Volunteering Final Report, Volunteer Canada, 2017](#))

Benefits for the organisation:

- Successful recruitment of families could increase volunteer resources, with increased potential for long term retention;
- An expanded culture of the organisation;
- An expanded skill base of volunteers to draw on – organisations will attract new types of volunteers because of the family connection;
- Organisations are better able to meet the needs of beneficiaries with a more varied skill base;
- A solid potential for the increasing commitment of volunteers, if they no longer have to juggle between volunteer engagements and family interests;
- Sharing the volunteer tasks with family members could ensure more consistent contact with the beneficiaries, improved service, and care (greater reliability);
- Reliability can be enhanced - individuals will be more inclined to join in if they have family/friends counting on them;
- When aiming to involve vulnerable families, the engagement activities may end up supporting these families in becoming more involved, more connected to their communities, more anchored in the social life around them, with higher chances of being seen and recognized as valuable community members.

Benefits for the family:

- Brings families together, helping create fun memories and mutual understanding;
- Teaches children the positive aspects of volunteering and teaches them how to contribute;
- Opportunity to “plug-in” the next generation to values and community involvement;
- Increased gratification if the whole family gets involved;
- Enhances family functioning, with a broader base of common experience;
- Volunteer experiences give family members a new perspective on each other's strengths and promote mutual respect;
- Generates learning opportunities for the different members of the family and the potential to have their (new) skills & competencies validated.

Benefits for the community:

- Shared values - a sense of caring makes stronger community, stronger family connections
- Promotes socialisation - bridges isolation/loneliness issues
- Sparks up civic involvement, increasing citizens' participation, through family ties
- Enables the individual to consider one's good fortune, to get out and get something done, not wait for it to be done for you - essential for community services.
- Enhances the cohesion between families of different backgrounds within the community
- Involves vulnerable citizens easier, who might otherwise not be able/ motivated to participate to the life of the community (minority groups struggling with language, elderly, migrants, specifically women)

The exciting fact is that all these benefits come on top of the countless benefits our regular volunteering programmes are generating! What could be better?

1. Tips & Tricks in Running a Family Volunteering Programme

You might already be familiar with the Volunteer Management process, so the tips & tricks below will guide you through its 9 steps, reminding you of some specific elements to take into account when planning but also implementing a FVP.





2. Getting Ready for Family Volunteering

What is FV-family volunteering?

A Family Volunteering Programme (FVP) in your organisation is basically a volunteering programme with an extra kick, as well as with some extra benefits, as you could discover in the previous chapter. Further on, we will draw your attention to the specific aspects of this type of programme and activity, without getting into all the details of general volunteer management.

In defining a family, various states, cultures, and religions chose different criteria and as such, different limits. In defining family volunteering we believe that it is most important to start from the values we would like to foster and encourage in our communities and the values that our mission as an organisation holds us to. We invite you not to limit the way you see family volunteering to the legal definition of family, unless it fully reflects your own values.

You can define the term “family” in family volunteering based on blood ties or legal connections or you can focus more on the relationship that exists between people who decided to share their lives and consider themselves a family.

Regardless of your understanding of the term, setting up a Family Volunteering Programme means creating a volunteering opportunity for a group of people, not for individuals, as you might have been used to doing until now. This fact brings with it a few more challenges, but it definitely brings a great many benefits as well.

The family volunteers could be one or two parents or guardians with their child or children, an aunt with her nephews, a child with the grandparents, two partners with or without their children, siblings, or really any two or more people, considered to be part of the same family.

Even at a first glance, there are some key aspects to consider:

- The family members could have different ages, and the activities should be suited for each of them;
- The family members could have varied schedules and the times of the activities should be flexible enough to accommodate them;
- The interests might be different from one member of the family to another;
- Family volunteering is not yet a very common or wide-spread activity, many families are not aware of the opportunity and you might have to promote it distinctly.
- The learning dimension of a family volunteering programme has a huge potential that one could easily stimulate.

While Family Volunteering is around for many years, it may be a new concept, so it's always helpful to explain to people at the beginning of your session that you welcome Family Volunteers and maybe introduce them to others in the group.

Pilot activity in Ireland

Of course, the larger the family that gets involved, the greater diversity of ages, skills, variety of schedules, and interests, and it will make it that much more challenging to find the most suited volunteer positions.

Still, with some planning and a little practice, your organisation could host family volunteering projects successfully and in some cases in almost no time. In fact, there are some activities that are suitable for families right from the start, as you will see in the next chapter.

Types of volunteering programmes suitable for FV

Starting from the traits of the activity we are looking for, we could already imagine a great number of projects that could involve families. Better yet, we can just refer to some activities that have already proven to be suited for families, planned and hosted by other organisations. Here are some examples:

Environmental activities

- Spending time with animals from rescue centres and creating communication materials to help get them adopted.
- Planting and caring for a community garden, maybe together with other families included in the programme
- Planting, trimming, and caring for an area of a national park or botanical garden, or even a neighbourhood park or playing area.

Social Services

- Shopping, cooking, and/or delivering food for a food bank.
- Organising reading clubs for the elderly in a nursery home

Leisure or creative activities

- Spending time playing games, walking, dancing, or reading to the isolated senior citizens.
- Painting and decorating a space to be used by your beneficiaries or the community.
- Cleaning and organising an outdoor space so that more people can enjoy it, building simple outdoor furniture.

Fundraising

- Fundraising or in-kind donations raising campaigns, where the tasks vary from designing the campaign materials to presenting the cause to potential donors, to sorting through the donations, packing them carefully, and presenting them to the final beneficiaries. Environmental activities
- Creating handmade promotional materials for your cause and selling them in order to raise funds.

Research and communication

- Applying research questionnaires in the community and centralising the findings.
- Writing articles, creating videos, blog posts, journals, vlogs, content to feed your social media tools about your organisation's cause, an event you are running, or their involvement, in order to inspire other families to join.
- Offering informal language lessons for migrant families.

Family Volunteering is a great way to include more vulnerable volunteers, in risk of social isolation. They can volunteer with a member of their family which gives them security and support they need at the beginning.

Pilot activity in Croatia

Event management

- Booth hosting at a festival, a holiday event, a conference, a marathon, or any other event. Whether it's a presentation booth of your cause, an info point, a photo booth or a hydration and snack point, a merchandise selling booth, family members could share their tasks of inviting and informing the public, arranging or even designing the booth, managing the water, sandwiches or materials, in shifts or all together.
- Hosting tours of national parks, botanical gardens, museums, cities or events areas.



These are **traits that an ideal activity should have**, considering the specificities of family volunteering:

- It should imply a **wide array of skills**, starting from the most basic. It should include something really easy to learn and do, but also a few more complex tasks so that everyone has something captivating to do.
- The tasks have to be **safe for everyone** involved, just like in any other volunteer activity. In the family volunteering case, if you think about involving many children, you should plan for some extra supervision.
- The **level of involvement** is definitely something to consider. Occasional actions might be easier to organise than long-term engagement. If the activity takes place on one day, or one weekend, the family involvement will be easier to schedule. This does not mean that a family could not also do regular volunteering activities, it might just be more difficult to start off like this.
- **Flexibility** is also very important. If you can, plan for activities that can be implemented at various times or even locations. There could even be the possibility that the family does something for your beneficiaries from the comfort of their own home.
- It should include and clearly communicate the **learning** that takes place at the same time. Whether the participants will develop more civic engagement skills or other skills more specific to an activity, learning happens, and the family should be aware and celebrate it.



For more examples and concrete activities, we invite you to check our ABC on Family Volunteering - a practical handbook for adult educators and Volunteer-Involving Organisations.

Ask! Research suggests that many people - up to 8% of the population in Norway - are not volunteering because nobody has asked them.

Pilot activity in Norway

The task of matching a whole family with the best-suited activity might seem daunting at first, but we can see now that there are countless activities that can turn a volunteering opportunity into a family volunteering opportunity, even without drastically changing the way an organisation functions.

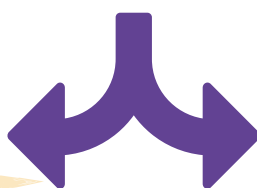
Preparing an Organisation to Welcome Families of Volunteers - What to Pay Attention To?

We believe there are two approaches to including family volunteering in your organisation's activities:

Starting small - this means starting from what you are already doing and simply adjusting some activities to include one or two families in your volunteering activity.

This approach is great if you like the idea, but don't have the resources right now for starting a completely new programme.

Even by involving a couple of families you can start building some experience and see if a family volunteering programme is right for your organisation, if it's worth piloting and adopting.



Designing a FVP from the beginning- this means designing and planning a completely new programme or project that involves family volunteers.

The process is similar to designing and launching any new project, which we all know takes some resources. However it could also bring bigger rewards.

This approach is for you, if you already know that family volunteering will fit into your activity like a glove, you have some resources available, or even an ongoing project that could be nicely complemented by volunteering families, or you really feel it is worth it to make the effort needed to produce this new service.

Present FV as a usual volunteering activity with a twist. Presenting it as an innovative method of attracting volunteers is more discouraging than empowering, coordinators feel like it involves a lot of work and new methods to implement, when in fact it is volunteering as you know it, but with a twist

Pilot activity in Romania

Since the second approach is the more complex one, we will focus on it further on, presenting the steps and the aspects that you need to take into account.

Even though it might be a new type of activity or programme for your organisation, family volunteering follows the same steps as any other volunteer programme design:

- assessing the internal and external needs of the organisation
- developing a vision of what to accomplish and a clear timeframe
- setting clear, smart objectives
- imagining the activities that lead to meeting the objectives set
- developing roles and responsibilities for team members and volunteers
- analysing the levels of involvement and choosing a structure of the programme
- assessing the risks and taking measures to deal with them
- compiling the budget
- creating the communication plan
- planning the impact measurement and evaluation.

Give a variety of examples. It can inspire organisations and volunteer coordinators to develop different family volunteering programmes or activities.

Pilot activity in Romania

Of course, there are some specifics to a FVP and we will go through them in detail in the following chapters. We hope this will be useful if you want to start a completely new programme, as well as if you simply think about including some families in your volunteering team and are now looking for the tips and tricks to ease that process. Whether building a design from scratch or only bringing some adjustments to your existing programmes, you will find further on just what to focus on and keep into account.

Many families are more attracted to the cause that they are volunteering for, than the volunteering itself.

Volunteering in a community garden when they don't have a garden themselves so that they can introduce children to where our food comes from in an interactive way. Knowing this, always have in mind the cause, so you can emphasise it when needed.

Pilot activity in Belgium

3. Programme Design - Setting up a Family Volunteering Programme



Setting up a family volunteering programme is a process following the same steps as any other programme, but still having in mind some of the specificities of family volunteering.

The absolute must is to start off from assessing community and organisational needs and understanding as best as you can the context in which you want to operate. Your programme team will then need to develop a vision and clear objectives for the Family Volunteering Programme (FVP), detail an action plan, define roles and the target group, decide on the most suitable structure for the programme, foresee the risks and prepare to respond to them, secure a programme budget, design the communication plan of the programme, as well as pinpoint the monitoring and evaluation methods to be used to determine the programme impact. And because we are envisioning family volunteering as an educational opportunity, when designing a FVP you might want to consider also the learning dimension.

But let's start from the beginning!

Needs assessment

A needs assessment process is vital for every volunteer manager, so let's assume you already have a list to start from. We invite you to go over the list again and make sure it includes:

The needs addressed by your organisation. They are the **needs of your target group** or groups, the needs that the organisation is responding to through its activities.

The internal **needs of the organisation**: whether it's helping out when changing location of the offices, decorating a space, creating certain materials, promotion, fundraising, arranging a library or even doing any kind of administrative work, or hosting an event, they should be on the list.

The needs that are **always on the wishlist** (either external or internal) - these are the ones that never seem to be urgent or a priority, but you know they will contribute to your services or the successful functioning of your team.

We recommend having an actual list of the needs, whether on paper or in an online document because it's easy to update and it saves you a lot of time when designing a new role. Check out your need list and see if there is any task or activity that could be accomplished by a diverse group of family members.

So what do you look at in this very famous process of Needs assessment, when you are at the very beginning of your FVP? We encourage you not to make your review on your own, but to bring along more team members, with different perspectives and to focus your analysis on 3 different dimensions:

Community needs - reviewing the direct beneficiaries you serve or intend to support, their issues, requirements, lack, need of support, and the ways you and the volunteers can act to respond to the identified needs - this will generate the backbone of the programme activities and will inform your decisions on WHAT to do and HOW to act.

Organisational needs - analysing the need of volunteers that your organisation has, based on its programmes and projects, the tasks available and unresolved, the current team of active volunteers, the specific results and outcomes planned for - this will end up with a clear indication of how many volunteers you need to deliver on your objectives and also what their profiles will be.

Volunteering infrastructure: is there (funding / in-kind) support for FVP from local authorities? Are there any restrictions to consider & observe? Does the law on volunteering (if the case) set a certain frame on who can volunteer? Is there a need of formal agreements, insurances, etc.

When we think about the community needs we need to consider in a FVP, we have in fact not one, but two communities to investigate:

- > The one receiving support from the volunteers - the beneficiaries
- > The volunteers themselves, a.k.a. families involved in family volunteering

To assess beneficiaries needs, we can use classic methods such as:

- Direct observation - visiting the community, interacting with its members, preferably of different ages and occupations, listening to their stories, needs and concerns
- Talking with community representatives or leaders, such as social workers, public servants, priests, local role models living in the community - the purpose is getting to know their different perspectives and their perception on the needs of the chosen community
- Analysis of documents, reports, statistics addressing the issues - search on the internet for studies done on your topic of choice, try to gather data and research information that can support your intervention and justify the need for you to mobilise volunteers to approach a certain community need
- Investigating previous projects, their results and lessons learned, discussing with other organisations or institutions that have tackled the issues we are about to tackle, to not reinvent the wheel, but also to identify areas where we can bring an added value

When it comes to the families we are aiming to attract into the exciting family volunteering activities, before asking them to come volunteer with us, we must first consider their needs. While we can try to plan in advance working mechanisms and tools for the families who volunteer with our organisation, we must be aware every family is unique and has its own needs, desires, habits, and motivations and its own mix of skills.

We therefore must get to know them, whenever possible, and try to assess each family's needs individually.

Focus on the self interest of volunteers. It is important to volunteer because that makes you feel good also. Research suggests that volunteers are both happier and healthier.

Pilot activity in Norway

This can mean direct interviews with families that show interest in volunteering with your organisation, which you can customise, so that you can find more information that can serve you later, when designing tasks and schedules.

You can also try to include a section on the application forms (or intake forms), where the family members can list their preferences, goals, or particular needs and then you make sure you use that information when assigning them to specific roles.

Vision and objectives

To function well and achieve results, even in the harshest times, any organisation needs, besides human, financial and material resources, a force to drive them - the VISION. The same goes for any programme, especially one that aims to generate sustainable results in a community and within a target group, or even more.

So when the time comes for your team to establish the vision of your FVP, start by thinking about why volunteering and families are a good match and go well together - and what does it make you feel, as an organisation, and as the individuals working in your organisation, when you imagine family volunteers successful at their activities, satisfied about the results and their time together. Then try to link these reasons with the beneficiaries of your programme, whether they are children, the elderly, vulnerable people, animals, or the natural environment. How do you see family volunteering connected to the cause you support or embrace? Once this picture is well sketched, try to find the right words for it and communicate it further, share it with the community so that others can also embrace it and get a boost of energy from your vision statement!

This may be the first time you intentionally involve family members as volunteers in your programme so, one clear goal of the programme will be to have families engaged and to offer opportunities for family members to volunteer together. When making this commitment to family volunteering, “make sure that everyone in your organisation – including board members, staff and other volunteers – understands the importance and benefits of engaging families” [13].

Other objectives will depend on your specific programme, the needs of the community that you have previously identified, the capacity of the organisation, the available volunteering infrastructure.

Family volunteering can give a new perspective and role to volunteer involving organisations: they bind and connect families.

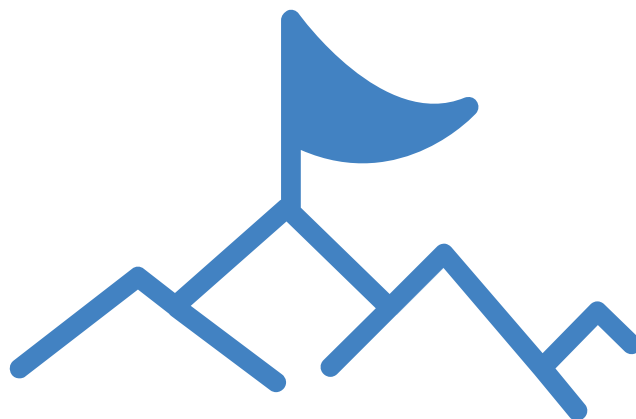
Pilot activity in Croatia

In the modern times when families encounter lack of time spent together, FV is a perfect way to do something useful for the community and to bring families closer.

Pilot activity in Croatia

You may decide to aim for a specific number of family volunteers you would like to recruit in the next 6 or 12 months, or a certain number of families attending your annual spring planting or “Kids Day” event.

Plan of action



Now that you have a vision and clear objectives you know “the destination” of your programme and it’s time to get down to figuring out the best path to take you there - in other words, it’s time to think about the activities.

You are probably already implementing activities that involve volunteers, so we will not pretend to reinvent the wheel. We would however like to propose to you another tool for designing your activities, that we believe is most suited for family volunteering programmes.

Keep it simple. Most organisations have much work to do in little time. The focus should be on the activity, volunteers, and beneficiaries rather than the method and reporting.

Pilot activity in Norway

Vision	
Objectives	
Activities	Main activities
	Support activities
	Learning activities

The **main activities** are the ones that help you directly reach your objectives. They could include cooking 500 meals each week, trimming the trees in a national park, picking up the trash from a forest, planting and caring for the community garden, educational activities for children, spending time with seniors, renovating a building, and so on. These are the activities we are thinking about straight away, in each programme we design.

The **support activities** while not directly addressing an objective, are certainly necessary and add to its value.

For example, you could have a team responsible for the communication activities. They could take pictures, record, interview the other volunteers and create communication materials about your FVP. In case you are spending a whole day outdoors, or even a few days in a remote location, you can have teams responsible for cooking/ preparing meals for all the volunteers, or that are in charge of morale and free-time activities.

There could be a team of volunteers helping you in the monitoring and documentation process, or a team in charge of the logistics, monitoring, and organising the materials needed. One other support activity could be researching the topic and delivering a presentation to inform the whole volunteer team about the reasons why your programme is important for the community.

Some support activities could even happen separately from the main activities, such as fundraising for the programme, presenting the programme for the press, in relation to the partners, the authorities or in other relevant gatherings.

The limit for these support activities is the limit of your team's imagination and capacity. As long as they're connected to and in support of a main activity, they can only enrich your programme.

We want to encourage you to think about and list these activities as well. In this way, when you reach the point of involving families, you have a lot more options to offer them, and a greater chance of meeting their needs, skills, and interests. You can offer them to be part of the main activities, the support activities, or a mix of the two.

The activities in which you offer the input can be:

- Some of these activities will be planned from the beginning, but when you get to know your volunteers and their interests, you can organise such moments tailored directly for them. This does not necessarily mean extra work for you, as you can invite one of them to present a certain topic or even have an outside guest come in for a talk.

Pilot activity in Germany

The activities dedicated to the **validation of learning**, or the **reflection activities** are the ones that help your volunteers become aware and formulate the new information they acquired, the skills they developed, and even how their attitudes changed in relation to a specific topic.



The reflection does not always have to be a long and deep-digging process. Sometimes, when the experiences are not that complex, it can take the short version of simply answering the question “What did we learn today?”.

In case you're not used to organising reflection moments, here are some ideas about when they could and should take place:

- at the end of the day
- at the end of a training activity
- after a more intense volunteering activity
- when reaching a milestone
- after encountering an obstacle
- at the end of the involvement period of a volunteer or volunteering family

For more details on reflection and the connecting process of validation of learning and competences acquired during volunteering, please see [chapter 4](#).

When involving very young children (primary age) be sure to allow extra time for everything.

Pilot activity in Belgium

Of course, for each of the activities, you will need to set up a timeframe, responsible staff members or volunteers, the needed materials, and budget just like in every programme you run. In the end, your plan of action will look more like this:

Vision					
Objectives					
Activities	Main activities	Tasks	Responsible	Timeframe	Resources
	Support activities	Tasks	Responsible	Timeframe	Resources
	Learning activities	Tasks	Responsible	Timeframe	Resources

It is always useful to have a plan B in case a family does not show up.

Pilot activity in Romania

For a quality FVP, all these types of activities, as well as the back-ups, need to be planned in as much detail as you can, while also keeping in mind that for some of them, the responsibility will be taken on by your family volunteers.

Defining roles and target groups

Create the best group roles

Now you have all the information you need - you know what you plan to achieve and how - you can start designing the roles for the family volunteers. You should make sure that each and every role is:

- **Meaningful** - the role you are about to propose should clearly contribute to your cause or your activity. Working for something bigger is one of the great motivational factors of the people who choose to volunteer. Even if some of the tasks could be considered menial or chores in another context, make sure you present the connection they have with bringing change in your community or serving your common cause.
- **Appropriate** for the volunteers' age, skill-set and availability. This does not mean you can't help the volunteers acquire new skills, after all, learning is a big part of volunteering, as well as a great motivator for some of the people involved. In case you plan to involve family members of significantly different ages, below you will find some traits of different generations and some tips on how to best involve them.
- **Exciting** for your target candidates - with different ages comes different interests and characteristics. Make sure you know what your volunteers are looking for and you have something to offer each of them.
- Includes the **motivation for the family as a group**: passing on the values to the next generation, spending quality time together, learning together, raising the self-esteem and self-confidence of the young - these are potential benefits of getting involved as a family and the volunteers should be aware of them.
- **Clearly described** - clarity from the onset is very important, even from the moment in which the volunteers come across the opportunity you have to offer. If you let them know exactly what to expect and help them picture their activity, the chances for them to accept your invitation increases.

Family volunteering comes with a new exciting way of producing impact - getting people from different generations on board. While you are probably used to designing roles that are meaningful, motivating, and clearly described, if your volunteers have mostly been part of the same age group until now, a family with members of different ages might pose some difficulties.

Some may need more guidance and some may need more space for taking the lead or being independent in their activities. What is important is that every volunteer feels like they can contribute, but most certainly, they will not be motivated by the same factors. This leaves the volunteer coordinators with an intriguing, yet satisfying new area to explore - approaching volunteers based on their specific age and interests.

Below, we aim to give a short insight into the particularities of different generations, as observed by some commentators on the topic.

These can be useful in some cases but are certainly not a rule in all cases. They can nevertheless be helpful for some volunteer coordinators to start differentiating their approach when working in family volunteering programmes.

Intergenerational collaboration is truly inspiring and completely worth the trouble!

Pilot activity in Romania

A part of the details regarding the attitudes or preferences of these generations were taken from studies regarding the labour market. Despite that, we believe that these needs and tendencies also apply to the way these generations would behave in a volunteering setting, given the fact that working styles, motivational structures and incentives are similar. We invite you to explore them!

Generation Z - Born 1997- no endpoint has been set

Generation Z is the first generation that doesn't know what the world looks like without the internet - they develop interpersonal relationships through technology and they're deeply absorbed by social networking sites.

According to studies, Gen Z is focused on their humanitarianism and altruistic beliefs - they "yearn for a satisfying and fulfilling professional life" and they choose to volunteer "in order to obtain relevant knowledge and skills for refining future career objectives" [1].

Based on these findings, here are some tips and tricks volunteer coordinators can have in mind in order to motivate Gen Z volunteers and ensure a successful collaboration:

- Volunteering can be a great space for youngsters when it comes to understanding what they like and what they can become good at. Presenting volunteering as a context that can help them discover themselves, a way in which they can experiment and play with different tasks, can be a key aspect in attracting this generation.
- Learning plays a huge role for this generation. organisations should also take this into consideration when working with them. Offering them new learning opportunities can drive them closer to the mission of the organisation and could enhance their participation. There are studies that even showed that gaining professional skills and learning can even be more important for this generation than altruism or the desire to help others.
- Gen Z volunteers require a more close and personal relationship to the authority figures in their life - they like to treat people higher in hierarchy like their friends and they will have a better response to volunteer coordinators that try to know them on a personal level. Unlike other generations, they are more likely to disclose personal information as a way of creating closer relationships and building these relationships is important for them [14].

- New is exciting! Especially when it comes to tasks - they like a good challenge and seek the lack of boredom, so organisations must not be afraid of letting Gen Z experiment with different ways of making a contribution to the end goal of the project. Studies have also found that "Gen Z can do several tasks simultaneously and without losing quality", so in the preparation of a project for them, coordinators can choose to prioritise multitasking and diversity [25].
- They prefer visual content over documents. For capturing their attention, coordinators may need to package the information into presentations or graphically facilitated resources, especially in the induction period - this will catch their attention [10]. Pay close attention also to where you communicate with them! Although they are very in touch with technology, they prefer face-to-face communication to digital communication [15].
- They really like feedback - so don't be shy in offering them suggestions for improving their activity. After all, they "grew up in digital environments full of real-time feedback (likes, comments, shares, etc.)". They would rather take more frequent feedback, which is short and on the spot, than very elaborated reviews of their activity that take more time [12].

Millennials - Born 1981-1996 (Sometimes listed as 1980-2000)

The millennial generation has been "...growing up at a time of unprecedented prosperity—and unprecedented pressures" (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p.7).

The authors identified seven key traits of Millennials: special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured and achieving. Millennials "expect respect, individualised attention, and prompt response to any problems they perceive" [21]. Millennials volunteer for self-improvement, both personally and professionally, and organisations that recognise that part of them and honour it, have a lot to gain.

- According to the study above, millennials "like to identify and associate with different organisations, people, places". Associations help them construct their social image and enhance their sense of self, while offering them status and even prestige. Millennials can be inspired by organisations that have a strong mission or that have a social status. In recruiting them, organisations can highlight their organisational values and look for similarities with the soon-to-be volunteers - this will inspire Millennials to take action and to feel like they found the right place for getting involved.
- Show them the impact! Millennials have a soft spot for seeing what their work can produce - "seeing the impact of their time and talent reaffirms their commitment to give back". Volunteer coordinators can motivate them by periodically telling them how their contribution helped beneficiaries or how their willingness to volunteer makes a difference for the community. Don't forget to add growth opportunities to this mix - millennials value knowledge and the possibility of gaining new skills makes them more willing to volunteer and give their time for a cause [19].

- They want flexibility and have a strong desire to progress - they will appreciate environments in which they feel like their role can develop and grow, leading them to discover themselves even more and tackle some new challenges. They also like to see the bigger picture and volunteer coordinators should show them how their position fits into that bigger vision and shouldn't be afraid to give them responsibilities and empower them - trust also plays a big role in keeping them pumped up about their contribution [7].
- Let them experiment and come up with creative ideas - they love innovative solutions! If you can create your FVP with the help of volunteers, millennials would probably be more than happy to be part of the process - this will help them showcase their out-of-the-box ideas, as well as present them with that bigger picture they crave of having. Reinforce their positive behaviours by periodically recognising their contribution and appreciating their presence. It will do wonders for them!
- In giving them tasks, volunteer coordinators should set clear expectations - be attentive to this, especially in the induction period. Tell them what you need from them and when, but make sure you also offer some surprises along the way, especially if they get involved in medium or long-term volunteering - they like variety in their work. Feedback along the way is also important - "frequent feedback helps Millennials stay on track with their goals and addresses problems as they arise." Volunteer coordinators can offer their feedback frequently, it makes them feel seen and helps them become more effective [18].

Generation X - Born 1965-1980 (Sometimes listed as 1965-1979)

Generation X grew up in a different world than their parents and grandparents - they were the first generation in which "it wasn't uncommon to be raised by two working parents". They are independent, with entrepreneurial spirits and they have increasingly more time to give [5].

Unlike their parents, the Baby Boomers, they don't associate success with the ascension of a vertical workplace hierarchy, Gen Xers "value skills over long hours," seeking validation and satisfaction through meaningful effort rather than traditional markers of prestige [3].

- One word - flexibility! Gen Xers usually have a lot on their plate, so they deeply appreciate this when it comes to volunteering - "they need volunteer programmes to leverage their time efficiently, personalising the experience and allowing for flexible schedules." That doesn't mean that impact won't move them - quite the contrary! As well as Millennials, they like to see the meaning in their work. When setting up the volunteering programmes, if you choose to work with Generation Xers, be sure you check with them and create options that will support this need - they might be the perfect match for on-call or seasonal volunteering opportunities [5].
- But what about how an ideal environment looks to them? They value informal settings and appreciate having fluid access to information and leadership - don't make them deal with heavily hierarchical structures and make sure they have a clear path to someone in charge [3].

- Less supervision, more autonomy! Although autonomy can be a motivation for all of these generations, Gen Xers have been proven to appreciate it the most! They really don't like micromanagement and need their space when it comes to implementing tasks. But make sure tasks are always clearly delivered to them! Take the time to answer all their questions when you are presenting them with an objective - they want to gather all the information before getting started, but they will most probably develop their own plan to achieve that goal [11].
- They like getting things done - "they expect immediate gratification and can get frustrated if they perceive that they are working hard but not making progress toward their goals." If they are involved in a medium or long-term volunteering programme, make sure you break goals into shorter milestones to create momentum and help them see results all throughout their involvement activity [16].

Baby Boomers - Born 1946-1964 (Sometimes listed as 1943-1964)

Baby boomers "have a tendency toward hard work and long hours, valuing independence, and appreciating the clarity and efficiency that comes with organisational hierarchy" [6].

Baby Boomers praise collaborative, operational teams. They are ambitious, goal-oriented, and work-oriented. The impact of their work is important for them – they want to be part of the change and they want to be effective [5].

- Baby boomers will engage in volunteering "as a means to remain active, use their skills, and pursue interests that they have not previously had time to do." Although they enjoy using their skills and knowledge, they are more inclined to choose volunteering roles that are different from their occupational careers. They can be quite the resource for an organisation! Volunteer coordinators must make sure that they put them in roles that will give them the space to "make a meaningful contribution in a limited amount of time" [26].
- Another important factor in recruiting and working with them is how they are perceived by the organisation. They don't respond well to campaigns or projects that put emphasis on their aging process - elderly, retiree, retired people, seniors - are words to be avoided. Instead, organisations should focus on their life experience and capacity to be an example for others, using messages that highlight their ability to serve and to share their valuable wisdom. Even more than that, "boomers should not be asked to volunteer; they should be asked to apply their skills to a particular task in order to meet a community need" [26].
- This generation values flexibility - especially since they are more mindful of their time. Activities that provide the option to volunteer with families will appeal to them, especially in societies where adult and senior volunteering has already become usual! They also appreciate a broader range of volunteering opportunities from which they can choose - this gives them the chance to select the roles that are best suited for their skills [26].

- They don't like to feel replaceable so volunteer coordinators must credit their work and should recognise their value. Baby boomers can be excellent in roles of mentorship and supporting younger generations - this can be great for FVPs that are focused on periodically meeting with youth from difficult environments or offering counseling to certain target groups that face adversities in their lives [26].
- They respond very well to acknowledgment and recognition - it motivates them to get involved even more! Public recognition can also be important for them. Volunteer coordinators can choose to establish campaigns such as "the volunteer of the week", to credit their Baby boomer volunteers' hard work. They also like a little competition, so gamification systems would probably work wonders for them! [4]

There is a lot of information regarding this topic, but we hope that the summary we put together will help you navigate intergenerational family volunteering programmes with more ease and interest towards making the most out of every volunteer and their unique set of skills and outlook in life!

Gather enough people to look after the children. If you don't have enough staff members, maybe you can work with volunteers.

Pilot activity in Germany

We invite you to really use these generational characteristics as mere guidelines, once you know the exact mix of ages in the families that join your FVP. It could actually be fun and insightful to test these assertions and study their outcomes on real families!

Don't forget to also take into consideration your cultural background, the level of development of the country or region where you run your activities and the general public perception to ages, the process of aging, the relationships between generations - all these are deeply culturally rooted and this cultural framework can also influence how these generations will behave and react to social or civic involvement!



Levels of involvement in family volunteering

Before starting a new volunteering programme one of the things that must be decided is the level of involvement that specific programme will require from both the organisations, as well as the future volunteers - the families.

Organisations can choose to structure their activities by taking a closer look at their own personal organisational capacity, but can also craft volunteering programmes by looking at the time commitment they require from families. Of course, establishing how the volunteering programme would look like in the end will most probably be a blend of these valuable perspectives.

Although family volunteering programmes require structure, organisations should not forget about flexibility - an extremely important ingredient in attracting and engaging families.

Encouraging organisations to extend their usual activity to family members of their own volunteers works better and it's easier to embrace.

Pilot activity in Romania

Levels of involvement from the perspective of organisations

To help you out in choosing what works best for your organisation, we set out to explore the **differences between short-term and longer-term FVPs**. When deciding the duration and frequency of activities included in your FVP, you have a series of factors to weigh in:

- The **profile** of your potential volunteers - what type of families, the relationships among their members, their free-time models or preferences, their interest in learning and developing new skills
- The **community needs** you chose to address - how urgent they are and what kind of volunteer input they require
- The **capacity of your team** to manage a larger hoard of volunteers on shorter terms or rather fewer volunteers for longer periods of time
- The **flexibility of the programme** and the way you establish it - being willing to allow for one-off activities mixed with more constant tasks, or on the contrary, preferring a clear set of predictable tasks that are ongoing and can generate visible results, but only on the medium or long-term

Considering all of these, it will be your choice whether you start off with short-term family volunteering activities, piloting a variety of approaches and being able to compare among several roles and styles, or you launch a clear-cut and structured long-term programme, with explicit and quite distinct volunteer roles, a more detailed procedure and flow of the entire volunteer experience and a more intensive process of supervision, review, and assessment of the volunteers' involvement.

When we say short-term FVP we think of occasional, flexible, or on-call type of volunteering opportunities (described in detail below, with examples). When we say long-term FVP we have in mind ongoing opportunities or even the flexible ones, but spanning over an undetermined period of time.

No matter what the choice is, we believe it is useful to know some of the differences between these two timeframe approaches, taking into account several criteria, so you can make an informed decision.



Profile of volunteers

Short-term FVP

We can aim to offer opportunities for engagement to a larger array of volunteers, including more vulnerable adults, or busy adults.

At the same time, in short-term volunteering, it will be easier to manage more diverse relationships among family members and we can include even volunteers living usually far away from each other, but who happen to be together for a few days in the year (holidays, vacation time).

Long-term FVP

In long-term programmes, we will have the chance of working with family volunteers that are closer to each other, have an active life together, and want to bring also doing good in their daily interactions or, on the contrary, will be committing to volunteering together so as to enhance the quality of their time together as a family.

The volunteers choosing longer-term commitments are usually more anchored in the community they serve, they know what is happening in their neighbourhood and want to be part of the solutions to problems, to contribute to their improvements, on a regular basis. They are usually people who have done volunteering before and they will have a higher willingness to return to other projects.



Costs and resources

Short-term FVP

Costs of transport for short-term volunteering activities may be higher, if they take place outside the venues of the organisations, in a far-off area, a natural reservation or other venues for which transportation needs to be arranged (and families do not travel with their own means).

Also, there may be more costly projects in case they need a lot of materials, tools or facilities (for example, refurbishing a day centre, large free time events, planting trees, etc).

On the other hand, child-care costs for shorter activities may be less needed or the organisations may plan for dedicated volunteers taking care of small children families bring along, which would be easier to do in a one-afternoon event than on a weekly basis.

Long-term FVP

In long-term, regular activities, you will surely have smaller costs for the large expenses (transportation, meals, T-shirts for large numbers of volunteers in large events), and you will probably need more materials, which are usually not very costly though (for example, stationery and creative materials for arts & crafts activities, for playtime interactions or fun workshops for elderly, to name just a few).

Costs of transport of volunteers to venues may be small or none, as usually such constant activities are done in community centres or neighbourhood locations, close to where the families live and where they can pop in when they have 2 hours to spare, just to lend a hand (this applies when volunteering is a regular part of their daily life and they know the organisations quite well).

Volunteers agreeing to take part in long-term FVP don't have the high risk of childcare costs or such unpredictable changes in their schedules.



Schedule

Short-term FVP

With on-call or one-off volunteering activities, the scheduling is quite clear and it usually cannot be negotiated, it is more like a “take it or leave it” type of opportunity. So volunteers looking for short-term engagement will need to know exactly when they must be available and for how long.

Their time commitment will be very specific as they have busy and sometimes unpredictable family schedules, complicating your task to match their availability time slots, in between work, school, sports and other extracurricular activities, with your own needs and the usual operating hours of your organisation. If you have such volunteers who still want to support your cause, you may think of “activities that are not time-dependent or that can be achieved within a flexible time frame” [13], even if more families contribute to the achievement of one result, doing only parts of the work.

For example, “an all-day tree-planting event could allow families to drop in whenever they have time. Alternatively, a family could take on the job of distributing flyers throughout a neighbourhood over the course of several days or a week.” [13]

Long-term FVP

If what you have on offer are tasks that can be performed whenever the volunteers are available, that are not conditioned by other external factors or time pressures or having to finalise the outcomes by a certain deadline, or if you simply have repetitive tasks (such as organising a weekly language class or book club), you will be able to attract longer-term volunteers.

Even flexible activities can be maintained for longer periods of time, but your organisation must be ready to manage different levels of involvement - sometimes an abundance of volunteers, sometimes a lack - so when choosing this, you must assess the risk of sometimes not being able to run the activities, if no volunteers are secured on a certain week or day. So you need backup plans for such an occurrence.

Long-term programmes will allow you to agree on the schedule of the activities with the volunteers themselves, so as to accommodate their needs, while you can trust that they will show up and you can count on them. So this is usually more suitable for loyal volunteers, who have committed to your cause, have declared their dedication to your programme, and have a little variation of their schedule, to generate sudden absences.



Management effort required

Short-term FVP

A more intensive management effort will be needed on the short term programmes and your organisation may need more people on the ground to coordinate and lead teams of family volunteers - such as in a sporting event or any event with different stations and activities, where tasks may be very different or people may be physically distanced, making it harder to coordinate them or make rapid changes in their activities, if needed.

Long-term FVP

In the case of long-term FVPs, the volunteer coordinator will be much more focused on supervision and general capacity building for the volunteers, being close and readily available, to offer feedback or just to feel the pulse of activities, offer support when needed, and generally focusing on the review of activities, assessment of volunteer satisfaction, adapting the programme to the needs of the volunteers, but having most of the times a “behind the scenes” role, empowering more their volunteers to self-manage their tasks and resources.



Potential for learning

Short-term FVP

In short-term occasional or even on-call volunteering activities, the potential for learning for the family volunteers is not so high. These activities will generally develop quite basic abilities, harder to grasp or acknowledge and then transfer in real-life.

There are though exceptions of one-off activities that can in fact develop skills, even if volunteers spend just a few hours developing them - for example - trimming trees, planting flowers, creating funny cards - these can all be learned in just one day of volunteering.

Long-term FVP

With longer-term commitments comes also a much greater chance for more in-depth, sustainable learning. The potential for learning in family volunteering activities is very high, as also described in chapter 4, but when you know the family volunteers are committed and there to stay and return, maybe one month, or 6 months, you also can plan for a variety of ways to enhance their learning process and to offer learning on multiple levels, with a chance of actually developing transversal competences, such as social competencies or digital competences or sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, to name just a few.

These competences acquired through volunteering can then be also assessed and validated, thus really supporting the professional development of the volunteers and the transfer of this learning to their work life.



Impact of volunteering

Short-term FVP

In short-term activities, which pinpoint very specific one-off needs of a community, outcomes are usually very clear and very visible.

The level of excitement at the end of short-term activities can be very high for the entire group of volunteers, including the organisation.

Media will be more attracted to write about this type of activity, because the results will speak for themselves and are understandable to a large audience. The first impact may be bigger on the volunteer than on the community.

Also, short-term FVP can be more appealing to corporate volunteers willing to get engaged with their family members.

Long-term FVP

When you have sustainable volunteer involvement, a clear base of volunteers you can rely on for more than just a few single activities, you run a much higher chance for generating meaningful impact on both the beneficiaries, the cause being served and the volunteers themselves, their family dynamics and the cohesion of the neighbourhood or local community at large.

With this in mind, you can see clearly the advantages of attracting and retaining families of volunteers that are committed to the causes you serve. All you will have to do is a plan for ways to capture the impact they are generating through volunteering

The impact created must also be acknowledged and made visible!

Levels of involvement from the perspective of families

As mentioned above, the structure of the volunteering activity is also dependent on the time commitment that is required from the families - this decision will impact the strategy of the programme and it will influence its implementation. When it comes to seeing family volunteering programmes from this particular perspective, these are the options identified by Volunteer Canada, which we briefly mentioned above as well [9].

Now we take a closer look:

→ Occasional

Families are often dealing with a variety of obligations. Organisations can facilitate participation by offering a variety of volunteering scheduling options - this will help families find the most convenient alternatives for their schedules. Choosing this specific strategy will give families the chance to experiment volunteering at least a couple of times a year and can be beneficial especially for holiday season, annual events or special events. Here are some examples of activities that can be organised:

- Cooking holiday meals in a social cafeteria
- Creating holiday kits for homeless people (with blankets, food, warm socks, etc)
- Creating hygiene kits for any type of vulnerable beneficiaries
- Wrapping presents for different types of beneficiaries (children from foster homes, low-income families, etc)
- One time only events, such as marathons, swimathons, public fairs, open galleries, etc.

→ Short-term

Short-term family volunteering programmes provide volunteer opportunities to families on a regular basis but for an intermediate period of time. In this way, families can volunteer for a longer period of time, while having tasks spread out throughout a month or even half a year. This type of structure can be highly effective, especially for bigger events, such as summer camps, galas, and fundraising events. The main advantage is that the organisation works with the same team and doesn't have to put into place induction procedures for every volunteer that chooses to support their mission. Short-term volunteering programmes are also more efficient for families - they can design their own projects, terms and activities. These type of FVPs may include:

Understand that some families find it difficult to plan in advance, especially for outdoor activities that depend on the weather. So be prepared with more families or alternate volunteers.

Pilot activity in Belgium

- Organising educational events such as conferences, non-formal education camps, small scale "festivals"
- Preparing and maintaining a community garden
- Helping out a local animal shelter
- Visiting a local nursing home or senior centre
- Reconditioning or building homes for those in need

→ On-call

On call volunteering programmes are beneficial for families, but also for organisations. This type of volunteering programme makes volunteering more accessible for families because it gives them the option to specifically select those volunteering offers that are compatible with their needs and sometimes complicated schedules. This could be useful for organisations, since it makes it possible to develop a list of regular volunteers when there is a need for increased support in their activity.

- Spending a day cleaning up a local park or the shore of a lake
- Helping the organisation with sorting clothes or documents
- Raising donations for different causes
- Driving around people with disabilities for errands or even a simple walk
- Offering consultancy on certain needs such as accounting, law, technology, etc
- Delivering meals to hospitals or to people who are physically impaired

→ Flexible

This option allows family volunteers to work on a consistent weekly or monthly schedule, but can be adapted to the preferences of the family or the needs of the organisation. The main advantage is that it can turn volunteering into a steadier part of the lives of the families that choose to get involved, but it also provides the needed flexibility.

- Volunteering at the local zoo or at animal shelters
- Painting, restoring, or cleaning different locations from a community
- Supporting youth in looking for a job or other professional opportunities
- Periodically creating and/or delivering products or meals to people in need

→ On-going

This option supports families who regularly volunteer, usually on a fixed day or in a particular time frame. It is ideal for cases where organisations may depend on volunteers for specific tasks and are heavily reliant on volunteers during very specific hours.

- Offering guided tours in museums
- Mentoring children or young professionals
- Spending time with elderly from senior homes
- Talking and reading to patients recovering in hospitals

Structuring tasks and activities for family volunteering programmes can be a challenge for organisations, but taking all this into consideration can carve the way for a flourishing volunteering culture in a community! Family volunteering can shift how volunteering is perceived by different generations and can be inspiring in a multitude of different ways to different ages and interests!

Online family volunteering

The COVID-19 pandemic put a new light on online volunteering, showing the world one can help others even from home. Online volunteering has reached a rapid growth in 2020 and organisations that choose to invest their time and energy in these types of volunteering programmes gained from this strategic decision! Seen from the point of view of family volunteering programmes, online volunteering has many advantages - it can grant flexibility for families and it can offer new, diverse and exciting ways of getting involved for those that have mobility problems or a difficult schedule.

Here are some ideas for online volunteering options that organisations can turn into family volunteering projects:

- Fundraising campaigns can be done by email, social media channels, or even by phone, in which several members of a family can get involved. Fundraising can also have atypical forms - crafty families can create paintings or any other type of art that afterward can be put up for sale in online auctions and gather more resources or money for a certain cause!
- Family members can also team up in creating content that supports different causes! Together they can find ways in which the message can be appealing to different ages.
- Adapting different resources such as books, articles, or podcasts by reading or writing them in order to make them accessible for visually impaired or deaf people.
- Knitting or crafting different objects that can be donated to people in need.
- Sharing their special talents with others - singing, yoga, drawing, anything can be taught and families can prepare lessons together, having fun and also getting better at their hobbies!
- Mentoring children or other people who come from difficult environments can also be a chance for family members to feel like they're making a difference. If they want to keep it simple, organisations can even create a "phone friend" system, through which family members can periodically contact and speak with lonely elderly people or any other category of beneficiaries that could benefit from a nice, caring conversation.
- Book clubs with different types of beneficiaries can also be fun! Families can also get involved by reading stories for children - they can even be recorded and increase their chance of being reused.
- Crafting handwritten cards, thank you notes, positive messages, and encouraging letters, for a variety of people dealing with negative feelings, isolation, depression, sadness, loneliness.
- Creating online quizzes, games, and fun competitions - researching information, generating funny questions, and preparing visuals, as well as facilitating game nights and online meetings where the quizzes or trivia are played (with elderly, youth, people in hospitals or quarantine, etc).

As you may be just now diving into the new and exciting realm of family volunteering, we suggest you start with Short-term activities, so that you can practice with this new target group of volunteers and their unique needs or challenges. You will have a chance to observe how families react, what changes you need to make to your volunteering programme, what skills your leaders or activity facilitators need to add or improve, what elements of the programme design need more attention. At the same time, you will be able to see the benefits of family volunteering faster, to harvest results and impressions, to build upon lessons learned and expand your intervention or make needed changes.

While many families may be looking for a fun outdoor experience, there might appear some family teams that would like to work together on not-so-typical projects, who might take an interest in a research project, developing a website for a local cause, or organisation, or staging a fundraising event. The possibilities are endless! If your organisation is flexible enough in planning the FVP, **try to get the families on board in planning** the programmes and the specific tasks. If not, try to know as much as possible about your future volunteers, so that you can adjust as much as you can the programme proposal to their specific needs and limitations, especially when it comes to flexible schedule options, the variety of tasks for different family members or the desire to “have a say” in how the results are being produced for the direct beneficiaries.

Risk assessment

In designing your FVP you must also initiate a process of risk assessment, thinking about the specifics of working with family volunteers and how that may add new risks to your activities or may increase the likelihood of some risks occurring.

Always do a headcount, you'd be surprised how easy it is to lose a volunteer

Pilot activity in Ireland

As in family volunteering you will be dealing with volunteers of various ages, health risks and liabilities are the first to come to mind. So before calling upon families to join your events, check with your insurance provider to see how your coverage applies to volunteers of all ages. There may be special insurance policies available, to cover your volunteers for the activities they are about to perform - especially when dealing with outdoor projects or physical activities. Please make sure you review the insurance options, assess the potential risks and inform the volunteers of their options, warning them of potential hazards. In case no insurance is available or the organisation is not in a position to cover such insurance, you must secure Protection and Security Instruction to all your volunteers, so they can consciously commit to the volunteering tasks and reduce injury risks to the minimum. You may also consider asking parents to sign a waiver.

Another way to manage this risk is to focus on adjusting the usual activities with a lower risk to fit the interests of family volunteers and become family-friendly events.

Another way to manage this risk is to focus on adjusting the usual activities with a lower risk to fit the interests of family volunteers and become family-friendly events.

If you are providing food or snacks always be aware of dietary requirements and check with parents that their children are allowed to eat what is on offer.

Pilot activity in Ireland

Next to health risks, there can also be emotional risks in involving family volunteers, as the family members know each other and may bring along with them a variety of behaviours, frustrations, or feelings belonging to the dynamics of their family and their family relationships, which may come out during the volunteering activities.

Teenagers may feel they want to prove themselves to their parents or siblings, spouses may carry unresolved issues that can burst while teaming up, especially in time-pressuring tasks, older members of the family may feel left behind in tasks, or that the level of skill required does not match their skillset.

However, even with such delicate emotional context, which might appear in a small proportion of cases, the good news is that if it is well planned, a FVP has a great capacity of strengthening family ties, diminishing frictions among family members, allowing them to spend quality time with each other, to know each other in a different way, through the service activities, to see each other in a different light, while serving others.

Organisations should also be careful of the capacities of the volunteers they involve! Family volunteering programmes are a wonderful way of engaging people of all ages, but that comes with a responsibility - paying even more attention to their needs! If you choose to work with seniors, make sure you have a complete image regarding their physical wellbeing.

Create volunteering tasks that will not limit their involvement or challenge them physically. It is important that they receive the most suitable tasks for their condition and that they feel they can truly contribute, despite any limitations they may have.

In the outdoor family volunteering activities, wear waterproof and strong grip shoes - and make sure you inform family volunteers to come prepared.

Pilot activity in Ireland

This will make them even more excited and willing to volunteer again when the occasion is presented, but will also provide them with the best possible volunteering experience, to begin with!

Dress warm, remember the weather can change during the day. You always take layers off during the day, while volunteering

Pilot activity in Ireland

The same principle applies to children or any other volunteers with mobility issues or disabilities - family volunteering really reinforces organisations to be inclusive and flexible in their approach. You must create a volunteering space that is inspiring and all-encompassing for your future volunteers!

The same principle applies to children or any other volunteers with mobility issues or disabilities - family volunteering really reinforces organisations to be inclusive and flexible in their approach. You must create a volunteering space that is inspiring and all-encompassing for your future volunteers! This will only boost their willingness to volunteer with your organisation and it will strengthen their sense of giving back to their community and feeling inspired by helping others!

Pay close attention to the legal framework of your own country! Every country has its own rules and regulations regarding volunteering - make sure you know the appropriate age for young people to be involved in volunteering activities. While in some countries it may be legal for children to volunteer or the volunteering age is not even regulated at all, in other countries (such as Romania), volunteers have to be at least 15 years old. If you want to engage smaller children in your volunteering programmes, you can choose to make the legal agreements with their parents - but be careful to check with a legal counselor in order to fully understand what are the documents that need to be prepared and signed.

Don't forget about GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation! The European Union has clear rules regarding the use of data such as contact details or pictures. Add a paragraph about this in the volunteering contracts or registration forms to make sure you have a written agreement from the volunteers of all ages regarding usage of data - this can be especially important if you choose to use pictures from the volunteering days! Anything you post online or use as promotional material must be backed up by a contract/agreement/ waiver so that you protect the volunteers that choose not to have pictures with them taken and posted online.

GDPR works for everyone - beneficiaries should also give their consent regarding the use of their personal information and pictures. Be especially mindful if you work with beneficiaries in delicate conditions - don't post anything that would degrade their image or put them in an unpleasant position!

Bring hand sanitiser, we used it before Covid arrived!

Pilot activity in Ireland



Budget

In the voluntary sector, we all agree no volunteering programme is cost-free. A family volunteering programme makes no exception. You therefore have to consider and elaborate the budget needed for your programme to function properly.

Here is a list of potential costs to estimate, based on the complexity of the programme you design. You can of course add other costs, depending on the specifics of the activities.

If you are doing a beach clean or outdoor clean up remember you can empty your beach cleaning bag into a public bin, which means saving your bag for another cleanup if you are using a plastic bag.

Pilot activity in Ireland

Expense	Units	Cost	Observation/Justification
Management and Administration costs			
Volunteer coordinator - salary	6 months - part-time	... EUR/ month	Coordination of all volunteers, administrative tasks, etc.
Office rent - (partial cost)	6 months - 30% of the total	... EUR/ month	Working space for volunteer coordinator and the volunteers working indoors
Communication costs (partial cost)	6 months - 30% of the total	... EUR/ month	Internet, mobile phone - to communicate constantly with all stakeholders
Promotion costs	Per project	... EUR	Printing brochures/posters, promoting volunteer calls of social media, ads in local media, T-Shirts for volunteers or other personalised items to promote the project/organisation/ team identity, etc
Activity costs			
For instance: - for a planting activity - trees to be planted, digging and raking tools, garbage bags, protection gloves - for a creative handcrafts activity - papers, scissors, glitter, glue, stickers, thread, envelopes, etc. - for a cooking activity - vegetables, meat, other ingredients, cooking supplies, packaging for delivery			
Materials, supplies, equipment, etc.	Per project	... EUR	These can be detailed, according to the specific tasks (some can be bought, others rented)
Food and coffee breaks	Per activity	... EUR/ volunteer	To provide for volunteers during the breaks in the day, if the activity lasts more than 2-3 hours
Transport	Per activity	... EUR/ volunteer	Taking the group of volunteers to the activity location (if outside the city and volunteers cannot ensure their own transport)
Celebration costs	Per project	... EUR	Volunteer certificates, organising a get-together event for recognition (food, drinks, decorations, etc)

When operating a family volunteering programme - bring water to drink, outdoor volunteering is energetic and it is very thirsty work, volunteers will be thirsty after volunteering.

Pilot activity in Ireland

External Communication

Just like with any new type of project, in the beginning, you need to make sure that your target group and partners are informed about your family volunteering programme. If you are determined to try it out, even as a small pilot project with one family, you should shout it from the rooftops!

You could start by including family volunteering in your service-offer, in regular presentations you deliver, in your brochures, on your website and announce it on your social media channels.

Anyone trying to find out more, should easily find the answers to the following questions:

- What is family volunteering?
- Why should I volunteer with my family?
- What is the project I could involve my family in?
- What would we be doing?
- How much time are we expected to offer?
- How can one family member convince another to join?

Organisations don't always publicly call it Family Volunteering, you can call it what you like, but perhaps highlight that you welcome members of the same family or that you welcome volunteers from X age to Y age. Everyone is welcome to volunteer!

Pilot activity in Ireland

When speaking about your family volunteering opportunities, do not forget to keep your partners, funders, and potential donors aware that this is a **learning context** as well as an **engagement path** the organisation offers to the community. Attracting potential volunteers and their families might be key, but so is keeping as many stakeholders aware as possible.

When communicating and promoting your new family volunteering opportunities, some good tips to have in mind are:

- Make the message clear, explain shortly what family volunteering is. But also keep in mind that all families already have a full schedule and loads of obligations. So make sure family volunteering doesn't sound like an extra burden to them, as additional work – but like a really fun and meaningful way to spend quality time with your family. It has to be light and appealing.
- Use family festivals and other such events to promote your activity. Make sure you have attractive flyers or handouts for the potential family volunteers.
- If you have local family magazines, ask for a space to advertise FV testimonials. Check if they have an online or printed schedule and put the dates of your FV activities there.
- Try out Facebook Event planner and Advertising. While teenagers may not use Facebook so much anymore, their parents do (that's part of the reason while teenagers don't). Even with a small budget (5-10€) you can reach via advertising and boosting posts a larger target group than only your "organic" followers.
- Announce the dates in your local newspaper. A really concise text with dates and contacts makes it more likely to be published than a long article.
- If you have a local volunteer centre, provide them some printed information they can hand out to their interested volunteers in their open days or opportunities promotion.

Your communication strategy

There are a lot of motivating factors that can influence a person's decision to volunteer and **communication can be a great ally in the process of getting people on board**. When creating a communication strategy, organisations should take into consideration the following:

What is the message?

Anything that is communicated regarding family volunteering aims to inform someone about the activity of that specific organisation. The message should be kept simple - we are doing work that matters and we need your support (either in the form of others joining the family volunteering programmes or for the community to become familiar with the volunteering programmes of the organisations and offer their help).

If the aim of the communication action is recruitment, the focus will be more on communicating advantages and convincing people to come on board. One of the challenges in communicating about family volunteering can be adapting the message to different age groups. It is important for organisations to make their promotional messages diverse so that different age groups can resonate with what is being communicated.

There are a lot of motivating factors that can influence one's decision to volunteer and communication can be a great ally in the process of getting people on board. More than that, communication in itself can be a process of trial and error - organisations can test their content and see what type of style or messages are better received by the audience.

Make sure that your family volunteering activity sounds appealing to families and not like an extra burden.

Pilot activity in Germany

Who is the target audience?

Adapt the message and channel to the audience:

- Current and potential volunteers and their families - if we are looking for volunteers,
- local authorities and donors - if we are looking for support,
- the community - if we aim to raise awareness about the needs of the community and the solutions offered by the organisation.

Communicating to stakeholders such as the City Hall, schools, universities or other organisations can boost the popularity of the volunteering programmes and can later on become a way of finding new volunteers - especially if these stakeholders respond to the communication and also share the content on their pages.

How is the message delivered?

When working with different generations, keep in mind that the one-size-fits-all approach doesn't apply. Online content has the chance of being highly effective if it's done in the proper way - organisations just need to identify the channels where their audiences are. The content needs to be funny, refreshing and exciting, but also accurate and easy to absorb.

There are numerous social media tools at hand, and the choice about what to use is also based on the resources available - time, budget, human resources, type, and size of the family volunteering programme being implemented.

Extensive theoretical material can be perceived as overwhelming. Short, informative materials and easy planning tools are preferred.

Pilot activity in Germany

Offline communication has the same principle as online communication - go where the audience is! Offline communication could be used more for recruiting older volunteers. When promoting family volunteering programmes, organisations can create strategies for recruiting an entire family - the promotion can be made directly in schools or universities (for children to invite their families onboard), in companies (for parents, uncles, sisters, and brothers to give the information further to other family members), or in a more public place, like the city centre, a library, a community centre, a park (which can help organisations discuss with more families).

Some guiding questions to help you make the best choices in communication can be those below:

- Is it necessary to translate your communication in different languages, to reach out to newcomer families in your communities?
- Did you adapt your materials to be accessible to the community members that are differently-abled?
- Is your communication style relevant for the different age groups, education background,s and digital skills of the ones you would like to see involved in your family volunteering programme?
- What about creativity and uniqueness? Are your communication materials innovative?
- Do you show environmental care when planning your use of paper and digital carbon footprint?

How to measure success?

Always remember to follow-up on your campaign, check indicators and see how to improve your communication actions, to include new approaches or different channels, in order to share your message to your audience.

We know that most of the time we tend to get caught up in the organisational part of setting up a volunteering activity, but don't miss the chance to also plan ahead when it comes to communication! This is an essential component in the success of any volunteering programme!

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Programme Results and Impact

No one will argue that being able to express in words what is the true impact of a volunteering programme matters tremendously. And that we need proof to show that the activities volunteers carry out, actually make a difference.

So now we are left with the task of deciding **HOW we monitor and assess** all this.

- Who does it?
- What tools are best to use?
- What indicators should we set for our FVP?
- What is specific to it and differentiates it from other volunteering programmes?
- What elements do we want to point out and to whom?

Starting from these questions we can already sketch our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan, always having in mind the objectives set out in the beginning and the intended results.

In order to measure the success of the FVP, you first must ask yourself

What do you consider a success?

And in your answers, you must be very specific. For example:

- To have a 90% participation rate of all the 5 families of volunteers in the 6 months of our programme
- To attract at least 3 more families during or at the end of the FVP
- To ensure a return rate of one-off family volunteers of at least 1 in 5
- To increase the satisfaction of the beneficiaries of our social programme (elderly in care homes, for instance), concerning their free time activities run by volunteers
- To plant or care for a certain number of trees
- To diversify the volunteer pool - each volunteer brings along another family member
- To have at least 3 local newspapers/media write positively about our FVP
- To raise a certain amount of money in the volunteer-run fundraising activities
- To have 80% of the family volunteers declare volunteering with their family members has positive effects on their family dynamics
- To have 50% of the adult volunteers willing to start a process of validation of the skills acquired during their family volunteering activities

Having such **clear success indicators** will make it easier for you to map out the new volunteering programme and unfold its planning, while at the same time you will have the elements needed to check if your programme has achieved its ambitions.

Have loads of fun! Check if others are having fun and spread the fun :)

Pilot activity in Ireland

Making these indicators so specific will guide you in what exactly is to be measured to assess success, but it will also enable you to know what still needs adjustments or improvements in upcoming programmes.

So in fact, **planning well your monitoring process** and really giving it the time and depth it deserves, helps you double-check the design of your activities and the overall programme and will indicate what you need to still include or modify. If there is still time to reconsider it, you can ask yourself if you have the needed resources for the activities you proposed, if the timeframe is realistic enough and correlated with those who will be implementing, if you have planned enough milestones and carefully considered all the risks.

Detailing the monitoring and evaluation will in fact help you see not just results, outcomes and indicators, but also **the process** of getting there.

Once the above-mentioned targets are established and internalised by the entire team implementing the programme, you can plan on how to measure and attest that you have reached your success. Use these guiding questions to support your planning:

- What is the concrete data you need to collect?
- Who can offer/collect what information, so the process of collecting doesn't overburden the volunteers, your colleagues, the beneficiaries?
- What would be the best, simplest, and most straightforward tools to use to collect this data?
- When do we collect which piece of information?
- Who will interpret the data collected and what skills would they need?
- How do we communicate our findings and to whom?

Discovering the answers to these questions will give you the planning elements for most of the backbone of your project - it will show you where you need to consult with other staff members or other organisations, where you still need to research and learn more, where you are covered and where you need to simplify.

Part of the evaluation of any FVP, we believe special attention should be given to **evaluating the learning** that took place for the volunteers involved.

For this, we need to integrate specific moments of reflection - during and after the activities - that have a clear focus on harvesting learning achievements the family volunteers have experienced. You will have to use specific **evaluation or assessment tools or activities**, which create the needed setting for a suitable reflection process and for the acknowledgment of skills or competencies acquired during the volunteering activities, by both adults and youth in the families taking part.

Moreover, you may decide to offer opportunities for validation of competencies acquired through volunteering, especially for the adults with fewer opportunities or belonging to certain vulnerable social groups, so as to contribute to their upskilling. More details regarding the validation of learning outcomes in family volunteering activities, the importance of such a process, and its benefits for the adult volunteers, can be found in the very next chapter.

4. The Learning Dimension of a Family Volunteering Programme

In volunteering, learning happens. If you agree to this, read on, if not, you just finished the entire guidebook! Maybe better yet, read on - you might get surprised!

Volunteering activities are invaluable learning opportunities for both youth and adults of all ages. While formal education generally constitutes the main learning context for youth, adults of all ages have the opportunity to learn through non-formal programmes or informally via a multitude of activities set also by volunteering projects.

We believe that through family volunteering we could re-focus family education and learning within the family and offer a new perspective on the role of adults within their families, as both role models and participants in the learning process of family members.

Contributing to a higher extent to participative, enjoyable, sustained learning, through community involvement for their younger family members, setting an example but also re-activating themselves as citizens, and taking the opportunity to build new skills themselves.

Family volunteering will give adults of different ages a great chance to rediscover who they are and what they can do for people around them, how they can help others, how they can start developing skills and attitudes that support their professional lives, without needing to attend formal education.

Another important aspect is how they can teach life skills to their children, in a completely different setting, not in a unidirectional approach, but in fact by learning together, with and from each other, with and from others.

How is learning linked with volunteering?

In addition to all the amazing benefits volunteering brings for communities and society at large, it also offers important benefits to the volunteers themselves and one of these is the **process of learning** that volunteers experience. In family volunteering - learning can be more exciting and varied, so it is important to acknowledge this and plan for it to be made visible.

Once you know the family volunteers you will work with, sit down and talk to them about the volunteering programme - present them all the activities, the different ways each of them could get involved, and bring a contribution linked with their own experience, skills, and talents. But in this discussion, try also to discover what they want to learn during their volunteering time with you, decide together what would be some learning achievements they could gain - individually and together.

Some skills are developed easier, for instance, while learning by doing. When one trims trees and bushes in a daycare centre park, besides the practical way of doing this and maneuvering the scissors, one could also learn about those trees and their life cycle, about other vegetation around, and ways to preserve it. Or in another setting, if one cooks meals for the homeless people - one can learn not just about nutrition and its importance for health, but also about housing issues and poverty.

As a volunteer coordinator and facilitator of the FVP, your role will be to also explain to the volunteers why their tasks are important, even if sometimes small and apparently unrelated, how they are useful for a larger activity or programme. If they will put together Christmas packages for children in need, it is important they understand who the children are and what their living and social conditions are, how the content of the packages supports their living, hygiene, or education.

In a marathon, if you have a grandmother and her grandchildren managing the hydration booth and offering water to all the runners, they must understand what is the role of hydration and why it is so utterly important that one drinks water when they engage in great physical efforts, but also why they need to not drink it too cold or too fast, as this may have negative effects. So as an activity leader, you will place a nugget of theory and knowledge in each of the volunteering activities you are in charge of - given out either by you or the partner organisations for which you rallied up the volunteers.

Explaining the WHY of the activities is the first step in facilitating the learning process for the volunteers. And it is the strongest impulse that can work as a trigger, as most of the time, it is the point when volunteers, no matter their age, will start to ask more questions about the beneficiaries, their situation, ways to improve it - so it will open up a chance for more detailed discussion. Their interest will be more genuine because they have decided to serve these people, so their doing good now has a face, a name, it is more than a story, it is a lived experience.

If they return as volunteers after the first activities, you may get a chance to know them better, as individuals and as a family also. You can then establish together with them what they want to learn while volunteering or what skills they dream to improve - it might be very easy to find options within your programs for them to develop such skills. Maybe they want to learn photography, so you can offer them the chance to take photos at events. Or they may want to be content writers - so they can be in charge of posting on social media about the volunteering activities, or even write short stories for children you serve. Some might want to improve their public speaking, so you offer them a chance to run workshops or present the organisation; others could be interested in leading a team or testing what it is like to be part of the team - so then you can bring together more families on a larger project.

You can certainly enhance and expand the activities and roles of your family volunteers, according to what they want to learn, reaching a win-win situation - they get even more invested in the activity and they build useful skills for the other areas of their life, while you get more dedicated volunteers, involved in a wider set of activities.

When you intentionally take into consideration the learning dimension and you look for relevant and meaningful ways to generate learning, you add a much more sustainable layer to your FVP and you can also plant seeds for future projects and initiatives these volunteers might come up with, as they now start to see links and opportunities for the cause they are supporting and they even have a broader skill-set to offer.

How do we ensure the development of the volunteers' skills?

Sometimes you plan activities and work with volunteers whom you have just met, so you cannot know very well what they would like to learn. But this does not mean they are denied the learning. As we agreed before, learning and volunteering go together, so when you offer them a space for practical activities, volunteers will surely learn different things, either more general information or straightforward abilities or sometimes even specific knowledge related to the topics you handle.

Depending on the depth of the learning you want to generate, it will take a shorter or longer period of time for your family volunteers to actually develop skills they can then transfer to other areas of their life and work. Learning takes time and planning. So how can you increase your chances that each of your volunteers will in fact develop skills? Tailoring the process helps, as always. The profile of your volunteers will be a big help in determining this.

If you have **young volunteers**, you may bump into a perception they carry due to formal learning environments - that learning is restrictive, impractical, and even really, really boring. And it's not their fault that they see it like that! In some countries, some schools make learning feel heavy and disconnected from reality - but it doesn't have to be like that. Volunteer coordinators have the chance to display learning as the awesome undertaking that it actually is.

Present learning from a different perspective - emphasise its diversity and real-life applicability. Youngsters hear about learning all the time in other more formal contexts and you don't want them to reject it before realising what it is about. Instead, try to present the activities as creative and fun as possible, focusing on the interesting elements, the ownership and responsibility, the chance to make a difference and bring a smile, the opportunity to have a great time while doing good, and the usefulness of the skills one gains whilst volunteering. Coordinators should carefully consider the ways in which the chosen activities and tasks may develop specific skills and openly discuss these with the young volunteers in evaluation moments or at the end of the volunteering programme.

In the case of **adult volunteers**, learning can be part of the "benefits package" presented, as long as you make it specific and connected to their immediate reality. Learning can also represent a context in which they can share what they already know, either by using their skills for supporting the goals of the volunteering program, but also by teaching others and helping them get familiar with different abilities. If you find the ways to put the potential skills they may gain in a context that makes sense to them, if you can pinpoint how each activity can contribute to their set of skills or real-life situations where they might use them, you will win them over. Of course, in order to do this, you will need, once again, to know your volunteers quite well, to be able to trigger learning connections.

From the first moment of interacting with the volunteers, you start to get-to-know them and you will continue to do this in all the upcoming interactions with them, sometimes because you plan to gather more information and at other times, simply by socialising, you find out useful tips about their life, which you can convert into potential learning paths. If the volunteers come for a one-afternoon activity and then never return, of course, your chances of knowing them well and what they want to learn or develop, remain slim.

The more they come back to volunteer, in other events, even if again short-term ones, you will be able to add layers to the “image” you created, gathering valuable information for later on. And then one day - bam! - you come up with a volunteering activity proposal they cannot refuse. So yes, we cannot reiterate enough - get to know your volunteers! You don't have to have hundreds of them, but the ones you have should not be strangers to you.

Moreover, with adult volunteers, you can very easily foster a commitment to learning, by linking it with multi-generational learning. Parents or grandparents will surely be more open to a volunteering project that offers learning opportunities for their children or grandchildren. At the same time, young adults or teens might positively react to the chance of a volunteering activity to polish some of their parents' digital skills. Even within the same generation - if for instance, 2 adult siblings join your volunteering activity, they might also appreciate learning from one another.

In working with adult volunteers, don't neglect the fact that most of them already possess an impressive set of skills and abilities that they crafted and improved all through their professional lives! Be attentive and mindful of the abundance of knowledge they have and shine a light on that! Get to know them and offer them the possibility to use their know-how and expertise, by either helping the organisation, the beneficiaries, or even learning other new exciting skills! They will deeply appreciate this and see your organisation as a space in which they are truly seen and appreciated for their abilities!

If you address **senior volunteers** - learning for them can either be the process through which they use their knowledge and give back to the community, or the one-major advantage to the FVP, when they recognize a specific ability they can acquire in volunteering - like dealing with digital tools or grasping a new language. Or learning can be for them an intrinsic benefit, not at all mentioned by the organisation and not something to think about, but perceived as a nice surprise at the end. Again, you don't know for sure, until you know exactly whom you are referring to. And then you can choose the best strategy to ensure the development of senior volunteers' skills.

What is certain and could work very well for them is to recognise they are a true source of learning and they like to share what they know. So we can invite them to recognize they are a true source of learning and they like to share what they know. So we can invite them to speak about their experience and how they can share it with others - both their family members who volunteer alongside them or the beneficiaries of their volunteering activities. Thus mentoring tasks can be very suited for senior volunteers, as a space of imparting life experience or even very concrete skills, like cooking, gardening, sewing, or sport.

Seeing a family volunteering programme through the lens of learning and acquiring skills will make seniors more invested in it, as they don't just go there to help other people out, but they also commit to it because it gives them a sense of deeper meaning and they truly need that in their lives.

If we look at how nowadays society treats the elderly we will see that aging comes with a tendency to be isolated or marginalised to some extent. There are fewer contexts in which one can get involved and they are somehow deprived of activities they did as a middle-aged or young person. We can also see this in volunteering - especially in Eastern European countries, where there are very few programmes that invite seniors to try volunteering! But we can change that and we can give aging a beautiful meaning - a time to use in order to contribute and be with your family!

Creating this context for seniors will only help them understand that their experience is still relevant and valuable and can be used for the greater good of society! They don't have to feel forgotten and through our work, as non-formal organisations, we can reignite their spirits and truly benefit from their vast and invaluable expertise!

In a nutshell, how can you ensure skills development, no matter the age of your volunteers?

- you speak with your volunteers about their motivation, and their interest in learning whilst volunteering
- together you set learning objectives, if they opt to follow closer their skills development
- you carefully plan and design the activities in such a way that learning actually takes place - you make it intentional.

And then is it over? No, because you also have to make sure the learning is revealed!

Harvesting the learning

Since we are approaching family volunteering as an **educational programme**, it is not enough that you plant the seeds for learning in the way you select and combine the volunteering activities, you will also need to take concrete steps to **reflect upon, reveal and valorise the learning** that is happening. After all, it is one of the elements of volunteering impact, sometimes unfairly neglected.

There is already a lot of literature available on skills assessment and recognition of learning, even in non-formal contexts, such as the one fostered by a FVP. So we do not aim to recreate that theory here.

If you want to read in detail about the theory of learning, the power of non-formal and informal education, the ways in which skills are developed and can then be assessed, the importance of recognizing and validating learning in non-formal and informal settings, to add to the learning journey of any individual and to certify the variety of skills and competencies they possess, there are a few websites you can go to:

[Validation of learning](#) - European Association for the Education of Adults

[Validation of prior learning](#) | EPALE - EPALE - Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe

[Validation of learning](#) - Lifelong Learning Platform

[European Guidelines for Validating Nonformal and Informal Learning](#) - CEDEFOP - Center for the Development of Vocational Training

[European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018](#) - CEDEFOP

[Recognition of skills and qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning](#) – the practical input of organised civil society - European Economic and Social Committee

[European database on validation of non-formal and informal learning](#) - CEDEFOP - Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

[The Global Observatory of Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning](#) - UNESCO

[Validating skills: the recognition that young people deserve](#) - Youth Forum

[Blueprint for European Volunteering 2030](#) - CEV - Centre for European Volunteering.

What we would do instead is give you some **tips and tricks on how to deal with the reflection process** you will organise with your family volunteers so that you can harvest their learning.

First of all, reflection on learning can be done individually or in a group, team, or family. Generally, hearing the perceptions, feelings, and conclusions of people in your situation will enhance your own learning, because more than hearing something from an authority figure or someone you admire, or experiencing it, the learning is reinforced or adjusted by the group.

While it can be valuable to hear other people's insights and lessons learned, as one may feel inspired about their own learning, group reflection cannot be the only way - as **individual reflection or introspection** is the most relevant way in which one can become aware of their own learning. But the process must be guided, supported, and even led sometimes, with the help of reflection questions and/or a variety of reflection activities. So here is where the volunteer coordinator or adult educator comes in, wearing this time the hat of a **facilitator of learning**.

To keep the process light, engaging and meaningful, reflection should also be fun and creative, leaving enough space for the volunteers to express themselves, to dive into their learning experience, to see and then pick up the exact learning achievements - the "fruit" they went to harvest, but without feeling overburdened by the complexity of the process.

So you can try one of the following ways:

- using visual cards to associate learning with the images on the cards - it can be Dixit [2] cards or any other set of cards with vivid, creative and pluralistic images, that have a variety of symbols which trigger reflection in the minds of the volunteers, either young or adult
- creating collages, play dough models, posters, photo slideshows, or any other representations of what they learned - with paper, stickers, colours, cut-outs from magazines - it is another way to find metaphors and associations and convert your learning process to something visible and playful, which can be then used to present what one has learned
- reflection journals or diaries - encouraging volunteers to write down on regular basis their insights, dilemmas, reflections and achievements from their volunteering experience
- answering questions or even interviews, writing testimonials, giving presentations about family volunteering to other people - which may work for the more extrovert volunteers - can be a way to review, analyse and summarise their learning experience - so when faced with a clear set of questions about their volunteering, they will in fact start a reflection process which will invariably also lead to learning awareness. With family volunteering, this process will be even more exciting - hearing their family members how they perceived the activities together and discovering maybe the different elements each of them learned or developed.

Generally, for the reflection process, the main tools of the facilitator - the adult educator which is most of the time the volunteer coordinator or a tutor/mentor who is supporting the volunteers - are the questions. The way you work with questions, making them open, and choosing to focus on various elements about the experience of the volunteers, is what can differentiate a tedious evaluation process from a revealing reflection.

Here are some suggestions for reflection questions that can stimulate volunteers to look at their learning from different angles:

- What is the most unexpected thing you learned while volunteering?
- How was the experience of volunteering with your family?
- What would you keep for the next time you volunteer with your family?
- What is the number one skill a volunteer in our programme needs?
- Where and how do you think you can use what you learned with us?
- What does family volunteering mean to you now?

One other way to work with questions is to follow a more structured process - the ORID model [22], indicating a clear sequence of questions, applied to a certain learning experience:

Objective	What happened? What did we do or what new information did we learn about?
Reflective	What do I feel about it as an individual? How does it affect or relate to me?
Interpretative	What is my conclusion - can I extract some rule / principle / piece of theory from it?
Decisional	How would I or will I apply it in my life in the future?

Another option is the STAR method - a reflection tool that is helpful for volunteers to move from just describing a situation, to the richer reflection opportunities within their role in the task, actions arising and the resulting impact.

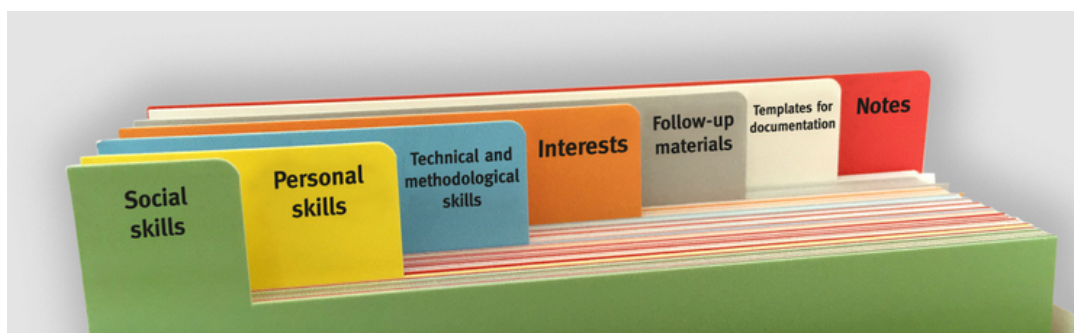
Step	Description	Questions to ask
S - Situation	Start your story by painting a specific picture of the situation you faced.	What was the exact situation you faced? Who was involved?
T - Task	Use this opportunity to explain your specific role in the task.	What tasks were involved in that situation? Why were you involved in that task? What is the background story?
A - Action	Discuss, very specifically, the actions you took to solve the situation.	What actions/steps did you take? Why did you choose to complete tasks this way?
R - Result	Clearly detail the result of your actions, pinpoint the accomplishments and highlight your strengths.	What were the results of those actions? How did you feel about the result/outcome? What did you learn? How did the situation influence who you are today?

Validation of learning

Some volunteers might be interested in having some of the skills and competencies that they develop while volunteering validated. Read the Validation Roadmap to see in more detail what a path to validation of skills and competencies can look like, how a volunteer can benefit from this process, and what is required from a volunteer organisation in terms of support. You can also find details about where a volunteer organisation can find support to offer validation possibilities to their volunteers.

In some countries, validation tools suitable to be used by volunteers are available - for example Vol+ platform [24] in Spain. In other cases, organisations develop their own internal validation procedures, such as the Scouts in Belgium [20].

If you don't have the resources or wish to develop your own system and in the absence of a dedicated tool in your country, the [Bertelsmann-Stiftung](#) Competence Cards can be a useful method that can be easily adapted for adult learners in the family volunteering context and can particularly work well with vulnerable adults, as it was initially created and used in Germany as counseling aid for people with migrant backgrounds.



There are 3 categories of competences included - Social Skills, Personal Skills, and Technical and Methodological skills, comprising in total 49 skills that are graphically visualised on one side and have guiding questions for the facilitator, on the other side. The facilitator of the validation process can be the adult educator, volunteer coordinator, or counselor that offers support to the volunteers going through this process. They can use the cards to discuss with the adult learner family volunteer and make notes on:

1. Skills the volunteer already has, and of those, which could be potentially further developed whilst volunteering.
2. Skills that the volunteer would like to develop during the volunteering but currently they have no experience of.

From these, choose, for example, 1 competence from each group that can be worked on, during the volunteering experience. For each of these 2, agree on specific learning objectives with the volunteer and develop an internal action plan about how the skills and competencies can be developed. Another way of working with the skills is to empower the volunteers to self-assess, using the rating cards with 1,2, or 3 + symbols, which they can allocate to a set of selected skills, based on how comfortable they are in them.

At the end of the volunteering experience, or after a suitable time period in case the volunteering experience is rather a long-term one, evaluate together with the volunteer if the learning objectives have been achieved. A certificate or Open Badge can then be issued, detailing the learning outcomes and “level” of competence achieved. See [here](#) an example of an open badge in the volunteering context.

If the discussion on skills and competences is too elaborated, the Competence Cards offer also the option of exploring interests, as the packages include an extra 11 cards reflecting interests people might have - and these can easily start a discussion which can then lead to skills they may want to acquire or improve, or competences they need to develop for their career or personal life.

Beyond any of the tools you may find to offer to the volunteers interested and willing to go through this reflection process, they also have the self-assessment available, which with some practice and guidance, can be the best choice for some of the more independent learners.



The great power of non-formal learning that volunteering has is an important added value for this type of activity, which allow for win-win-win situations: for the communities that greatly benefit from volunteering work, for the volunteers who feel useful, upskill themselves and spend quality time within their families, applying values they uphold, as well as for the organisations that reach their missions with the support of citizen groups that become invested in the causes and look for expanded ways of continuing to contribute.

More than this, the third generation - seniors, rather rarely approached in adult education projects, will have a chance to be involved in meaningful activities together with the active generation-the adults between 30 and 50 years old - allowing them both to stay active and connected to family, bringing forward the great benefits of intergenerational engagement, connecting older adults to modern life challenges and current community issues and the active adults to valuable learning opportunities.

So in family volunteering, it will not be just about the service offered to the community, but an equal gain is a service and support offered within the family. And what better way to reunite families or cement them, than through learning together in volunteering that makes sense?

Are you up for the challenge now? We hope you feel empowered to now set this system up :)

5. Connect to the SDGs

If you are not yet familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals [23], here is a very short introduction. In the most informal terms, the 17 SDGs are our great common plan that should be accomplished by 2030. They are included in the 2030 Agenda, adopted in 2015 by the United Nations, which comprises 193 countries. These are goals that most governments on our planet adhered to and took responsibility for reaching, together. If you are working in any non-profit organisation, the chances are really high that you are striving for at least one of the 17 goals, even if you have not fully affirmed it yet.

But let's test this theory! The Sustainable Development Goals are listed below, and you can find out more about each of them by clicking on the link:



How would a FV activity fit under a certain SDG? Well, let's see an example. If your organisation is offering educational activities, you are contributing at least to Goal 4. Quality Education. We say at least, because if the activities include information on other topics you might also fit into other Goals - like Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing, Goal 5: Gender Equality, Goal 13: Climate Action, and so on. If your beneficiaries are mostly people with fewer opportunities, then you could be in the frame of Goal 1: No Poverty, Goal 2: Zero Hunger, Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, or even Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

What we want to bring to your attention is the idea of linking the objectives and action plan of your family volunteering programme with the Sustainable Development Goals.

In a world of interlinked issues, solutions to small or large-scale problems should also be interlinked. Identifying the goals you are working for could help you identify solutions implemented by other organisations around the world, facing similar challenges.

Declaring your support for one or more of the SDGs will bring people closer (potential volunteers or donors) and organisations (potential partners) who are like-minded and believe in the same goals as you do.

Learning about the SDGs means learning more about what's happening in other countries and regions, it offers us a better understanding and appreciation of our local realities and develops our civic education and engagement.

We see family volunteering as a bridge between community needs and individual aspirations. The work of NGOs is already addressing many of these goals, even if not consciously or publicly affirmed. So you now have a chance to assert these goals, integrate them in your local interventions and activities, make them known to your volunteers and collaborators, so that your united forces can bring us closer to achieving them.



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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.

