



performance hub



Future Focus 2

What will our volunteers be like in five years' time?

Published by the Performance Hub

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For more information see our website www.performancehub.org.uk

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Future Focus 2

What will our volunteers be like in five years' time?

Whatever plans we make, changes in our external environment have an influence on third sector organisations (TSOs)¹. These

might be reducing or shrinking sources of funding, changing government policies and regulatory priorities, shifting social attitudes, new technologies, and so on.

All organisations can become more successful by spending some time improving their understanding of the likely future of these external pressures and using this to make a stronger organisational strategy.

Some view this as a luxury: "It's only for rich charities", or as impossible: "It's stargazing. You can't predict the future!" Others think that it is just an intellectual exercise that will not change what their organisation does. Others appreciate that it is one of the critical tasks of the chair, the board, the chief executive and senior managers, but still they put it off: "I'll do it after this next funding application";

¹ charities, voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises

“...after this next board meeting”; “...once the new trustees are recruited”.

This is understandable; a good analysis of the future does take time, and can involve learning new skills. For people with little time on their hands, NCVO Third Sector Foresight and the Performance Hub² have produced the *Future Focus* series to provide a ready-made analysis of the future changes that are most likely to affect small and medium TSOs. Each guide focuses on a different topic. For those keen to learn how to do it themselves, we have also published an accessible introduction to help TSOs develop these skills.³

This is the second guide in the series (see page 45 for details of the full series). This guide looks at how volunteers are changing – who they are, what they do and what they expect – and the effect this might have on your organisation. It suggests ways for you and your colleagues to use this information to help make strategic choices and plan ahead.

² See Further Information and Support page 46 for details.

³ Looking out: how to make sense of your organisation's environment, www.performancehub.org.uk/lookingout

⁴ For a full list, visit www.3s4.org.uk or read NCVO Third Sector Foresight's annual publication Voluntary Sector Strategic Analysis, www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/vssa

How to use Future Focus 2

The following pages outline some ways in which volunteering may change in the coming years. We identify six of the most important **drivers** affecting who your volunteers will be in five years' time, how they will be managed and what their motivations will be.

What are drivers?

Drivers are major forces or trends that could positively or negatively shape the future of your organisation.

These are the six drivers which we think will grow in importance for small and medium TSOs in the next five years⁴. Some of these drivers may be influencing your organisation or some parts of it at the moment.

This guide will help you explore how your volunteers and the nature of volunteering is changing, enabling you to ensure your organisation can retain, recruit and manage volunteers in the years to come.

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Each driver includes:

A short description of what is happening, what is likely to happen in the future and why, plus an outline of some of the risks and opportunities this might present for your organisation.

Strategic questions designed to help you think about how the drivers may affect your organisation in the future, and whether/how you might need to respond.

How will your organisation respond? Jot down your thoughts in the blank spaces provided as you read.

So what? Now what? 36

A worksheet to help you pull together your thoughts about the drivers and to start considering responses and next steps. You might find it useful to work through this section with colleagues or with your trustee board.

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How considering these issues can result in practical actions.

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Helpful links for finding out more.



The big picture

All organisations rely on volunteers through the contribution of voluntary trustees. Many organisations also depend on volunteers to deliver services, to advocate for clients or campaign on their behalf. Volunteers are often critical in assisting in the day-to-day work of organisations.

There are currently 17.9 million people in England who volunteer at least once a year and 11.6 million who volunteer every month. The volunteer workforce has the potential to grow in the next five years as the third sector grows and as political parties and policymakers pay more attention to volunteering⁵.

⁵ In the Future Focus series, volunteering is defined as giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment across all sectors.

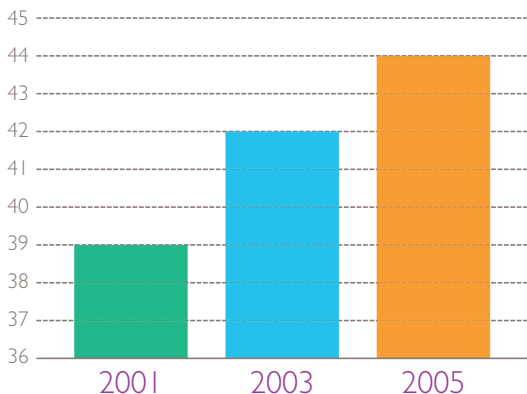
Who is volunteering now?

- There has been a slow increase in volunteering, from **39%** of the population in **2001**, to **44%** in **2005**.
- There has been a shift towards more short term volunteering; the most popular activity amongst volunteers is helping to run an event or particular activity.
- Young people aged 16-19, and 35-49 year olds are the most likely groups to volunteer, with nearly a third (32%) volunteering at least once a month.⁶
- Third sector organisations continue to experience difficulty in recruiting a diverse range of volunteer trustees. Ninety-three per cent of TSOs have between one and five trustee vacancies.⁷ The typical trustee is still a white, 45 year old male.

⁶ UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007, NCVO, analysis of 2005 Citizenship Survey, DCLG.

⁷ Support and Resource Needs of Trustees and Chairs in Voluntary and Community Organisations, Office for Public Management, for the Governance Hub, 2006

Percentage of people in England who had volunteered at least once in the previous year



2005 Citizenship Survey, Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

Next steps

In the rest of the guide each driver is introduced in straightforward terms with a few questions to get you thinking. Alternatively, you could read the example on page 42 now, to give you an idea of how this guide could help your organisation plan ahead.



Driver 1

More 'professional' volunteering

Volunteering is becoming more 'professional'. Some of the signs of a more 'professional' approach to volunteers are the increase in staff

who are paid to manage volunteers, formal role descriptions for volunteers, volunteer programmes tailored to each volunteer and the publication of National Occupational Standards for managing volunteers.

A number of issues have contributed to a more formal and bureaucratic approach to managing volunteers, including the changing job market in which volunteering can be perceived as a means of developing skills and a career, and higher expectations from volunteers themselves (see Driver 5 for more details).

This 'professionalisation' of volunteering opportunities may encourage more people to volunteer as a way of developing their career, particularly younger people. However, the introduction of rigid structures

risks discouraging those who would prefer a less formalised approach, further increasing levels of complexity for managing volunteers, and stifling spontaneity and the more personal links between volunteers and the organisations they work in.

Moving forward

- If volunteering is increasingly seen as a path into the sector, do you need to think more about the different skills volunteers can develop with your organisation?
- Could your organisation do more to recognise the wide variety of skills needed to manage volunteers?
- Do you have policies in place to ensure your organisation is covered against potential risks associated with more 'professional' volunteering?

How will the 'professionalisation' of volunteering impact on your organisation?

In five years' time will your organisation have more developed structures in place for managing and recruiting volunteers?

Use the box to jot down your thoughts.

How important will this driver be to your organisation in the next five years?

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Want to know more?

Volunteering England

www.volunteering.org.uk/law



Driver 2

The ageing population

As the UK population ages and birth rates fall, the ratio of dependents to employed citizens rises. By 2031 a quarter of Britain's population will be of pensionable age.

In the short term, the 'baby boom' generation may provide a rise in the number of newly retired people available as potential volunteers. However, in the longer term people will work until they are older, because of the rising of the retirement age, anti-age discrimination legislation and better health. Many may need to work beyond the age of retirement for financial reasons linked to the pressure on state pensions. And while people will be living longer, for many, their ability to volunteer will be limited by age-related illnesses.

This is likely to decrease the pool of people able to volunteer. Organisations that rely on newly retired volunteers may need to recruit relatively younger volunteers to try and address this.

Moving forward

- Do your volunteers span a diverse age range?
- Do you over-rely on a specific age group of volunteers?
- How could your recruitment and marketing draw in a new generation of volunteers?

How will the ageing population impact on your organisation?

In five years' time, will the age profile of your volunteers have changed?

Use the box to jot down your thoughts.

How important will this driver be to your organisation in the next five years?

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Want to know more?

Volunteering Initiative for the Third Age

www.vitavolunteering.org.uk/resources.php



Driver 3

Time poor society

A working culture that encourages long hours, careers that require a high level of commitment, longer commuting times and higher

expectations of levels of income and leisure time, often leave people feeling they do not have the time or energy to do everything they want to do in their lives. Research on volunteering cites lack of time as the biggest barrier to participation.⁸

With so many things competing for their time, individuals may need to prioritise more ruthlessly and as a result, are often less inclined to spend time on things that do not have an obvious and immediate return for them.⁹ The shift towards more short term or episodic volunteering reveals that individuals are either less able or less willing to engage in longer term volunteering commitments¹⁰.

⁸ 2005 Citizenship Survey, DCLG.

⁹ The Responsibility Gap, Henley Centre and Salvation Army.

¹⁰ UK Voluntary Sector Almanac 2007, NCVO.

Moving forward

- Could offering more flexible volunteering opportunities help keep committed volunteers engaged in your work (e.g. flexible hours or drop-in centres)?
- Do people have to be on site to volunteer with you? Could they contribute from a distance?

Will a decrease in the amount of time available to people impact on your organisation?

In five years' time, will the time commitment of volunteers have changed?

Use the box to jot down your thoughts.

How important will this driver be to your organisation in the next five years?

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

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Driver 4

Weaker ties to geographical communities

Changes to the economy and the labour market have led to people travelling further and more frequently, and relocating more

often. It is becoming less common for people to stay in the same location in which they grew up. This has caused a shift from traditional geographical communities.

Once, generations of families stayed in the same place. Now there are more temporary communities of convenience where individuals choose to reside, meaning people often feel stronger bonds to where they work and socialise, and have looser ties to community and family.

Advances in globalisation, media and technology also mean that a wider variety of interests and causes can reach people. The internet, for instance, has encouraged the growth of new online communities, not limited by geographical boundaries. Appeals for people's time, money and support are no longer limited to local community issues, and potential

volunteers have a wider range of issues, causes and areas competing for their attention than just those from the place they live in.

Moving forward

- How much do you know about why volunteers choose to volunteer with you? Are these reasons changing?
- Can your organisation keep volunteers who move away from your area still engaged in your work, perhaps in different ways?
- Do you have the systems and processes in place to manage a more transient team of volunteers?

How will loosening geographical ties impact on your organisation?

In five years' time where will your organisation be attracting its volunteers from?

Use the box to jot down your thoughts.

How important will this driver be to your organisation in the next five years?

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH



Driver 5

'Consumer culture'

As society has grown more affluent over the last twenty years, people have become more used to an exchange culture, expecting things in return for

their personal time, effort and commitment. People are also seeking out a greater variety of new experiences in their life (e.g. more widely available global travel and the growing market for gift experiences) and have higher expectations for their quality of life.

There has always been a balance of different motivations for volunteering, including a sense of duty to care for and help others, and getting something back for volunteering. The balance of motivations is likely to shift strongly towards what volunteering can offer the individual in return for their contribution. Firstly, there are the benefits of career skills that volunteering offers (see Driver 1). Secondly, there is the motivation to seek a bigger variety and diversity of life experiences. The rising expectations of volunteers can be seen in the

greater number of personalised volunteering schemes. It is very likely that volunteers will expect more quality and choice of opportunities and experiences in the future. Thirdly, reward vouchers are being discussed as a way of offering volunteers more tangible benefits, though these are controversial and there are significant concerns that they would create formal contracts for volunteers.

Moving forward

- What does your organisation offer your volunteers in return for their time? This might be training, both formal and informal, or a wider variety of life experiences.

How will ‘consumer culture’ impact on your organisation?

In five years’ time why will people choose to volunteer for your organisation?

Use the box to jot down your thoughts.

How important will this driver be to your organisation in the next five years?

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Want to know more?

Institute for Volunteering Research information on assessing voluntary experiences

www.ivr.org.uk/Assessing_Voluntary_Experiences_Sept_06.pdf



WENDY H. ANDERSON
Vice President
Human Resources
Human Resources Forum

Driver 6

Changing ideas about volunteering

Volunteering has always had an intrinsic value and been seen as a positive activity in itself. However, in public and political discussions,

volunteering is also being offered as a method of responding to social problems, including the falling engagement in formal politics, and fears of declining social responsibility and the breakdown of communities.

In an attempt to address these issues, political parties are trying to increase public engagement in civic institutions and society by promoting volunteering and active citizenship as a responsibility of every individual. The government is keen to embed a volunteering culture into people's lives. This can be seen by the promotion of volunteering in schools through the introduction of citizenship as a subject in the national curriculum, support made available for employee volunteering, the creation of new institutions that promote citizenship and new funding initiatives for volunteering.

However, it is unclear whether the government's motives are to promote volunteering as a way of delivering public services or to encourage volunteering as an activity that engages citizens in their communities. There is also a risk that if volunteering becomes something that everyone is expected to do, it may change the nature of what it means to volunteer and why people volunteer.

Moving forward

- Are there funding streams available that you could use to develop the way your organisation engages volunteers without letting go of your independence?
- Do you need to promote the value of volunteering in your organisation to colleagues, current and potential volunteers?

How will the changing ideas about volunteering impact on your organisation?

In five years' time will the idea of volunteering mean the same things to your volunteers as it does now?

Use the box to jot down your thoughts.

How important will this driver be to your organisation in the next five years?

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

**So
what?
Now
what?**

**Considering
strategic
implications
for your
organisation**

Hopefully you now have a better understanding of some of the key drivers that will influence what your volunteers will be like in five years' time. The next step is to turn this information into choices about future actions.

This process is covered in depth in our guide to understanding the external environment¹¹ but the questions below will get you started. Why not consider these questions with colleagues or with your trustees?

¹¹ Looking out: how to make sense of your organisation's environment, www.performancehub.org.uk/lookingout

Selecting the most important drivers

First of all, how important did you think each of the six drivers would be for your organisation?

Driver 1: 'Professionalisation'

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Driver 2: Ageing population

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Driver 3: Time poor society

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Driver 4: Weaker community ties

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Driver 5: 'Consumer culture'

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

Driver 6: Changing ideas

LOW

MEDIUM

HIGH

How much time do you have to consider these further? If you're short of time, pick the one or two which are the most important for your organisation. If you have more time, consider more.

So what? Strategic opportunities and challenges

You may already have started to jot down ideas about what these drivers will mean for your organisation in the future. We suggest you develop these ideas a little more, perhaps by drawing up a table like the one below. Opportunities and challenges should be medium to long term and focused on the changes to your organisation's strategy that you may need to make.

Driver	Opportunities	Challenges

Thinking about your stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who have an interest in what you do. Don't forget to consider how these drivers may impact on them, and how this may then influence your relationships. Consider:

- Your workforce – both paid and voluntary
- Your users and beneficiaries – both direct and indirect
- Your funders – individuals, corporates, trusts and foundations, statutory agencies
- Other players – your competitors, your collaborators, those who complement you, other TSOs, private sector providers, public sector providers
- Other stakeholders – the media, general public, policy makers.

Now what? Strategic opportunities

Once you've understood what the future could look like, you can identify actions that you can take which will maximise opportunities and minimise the negative effect of risks and challenges. It can be helpful to think about three kinds of opportunity:

- **Improve** – what opportunity does your new knowledge give you to **do what you do better?**
- **Innovate** – what opportunity does your new knowledge give you to **do different things?**
- **Improvise** – what opportunity does your new knowledge give you to **manage risks and threats?**

Why not develop some ideas and options for these different types of opportunities? You could draw up a table like the one below:

Improve	Innovate	Improvise



Taking action

An example

This example sets out the actions an organisation takes in response to these drivers to help put it on a stronger footing in the years to come.

This organisation is fictional, but its story is based on a number of anecdotal experiences from real TSOs.

Taking Root is a local volunteer-led community organisation that runs a gardening and regeneration scheme for people with learning disabilities in Andover. Its work involves service users in the local community through a variety of short term projects that improve community owned green areas. The scheme is managed by a group of committed volunteers who founded the organisation thirty years ago.

After reading this guide, the trustees realised that there were some important trends that would affect the management and recruitment of volunteers in the coming years which could have a big impact on their future success. Using the foresight they had

gained from reading *Future Focus 2*, the board discussed the 'So what? Now what?' questions to help them think about how their organisation could respond to these changes, helping them to maximize the success of their scheme and mitigate and prioritise some of the major risks.

As the Taking Root programme relies on a small number of older volunteers, the trustees were prompted to review some of the existing working arrangements and policies they had in place for their current volunteers. Together, they drew up some practical actions to implement:

- **Recruitment:** Taking Root realised it wasn't fully emphasising to potential volunteers that volunteering with them may be a way of developing new skills. So they drew up role descriptions for their volunteer placements and identified the best places to advertise them. This included local volunteer centres, local college notice boards and volunteer websites like www.do-it.org.uk. They have also run a stand at a local volunteer fair where they were able to recruit some graduates who wanted to pursue a career working with people with learning disabilities or the environment.

- **Developing skills:** Without specific resources to offer their volunteers formal training, the trustees are going to ask some of the existing volunteers if they would consider coaching new recruits and they will now use informal appraisals for volunteers.
- **Flexible hours:** Taking Root is interested in offering more flexible volunteering opportunities but it also needs to have experienced staff on site for each project. If it is successful in recruiting more volunteers, it will review this idea in six months' time and possibly offer flexible working for the roles that don't involve working directly with service users.
- **Risk management:** As an organisation that works with particularly vulnerable people, Taking Root decided a more thorough approach to managing risks would help them be more effective. It has prioritised developing a risk management policy to help it monitor the major risks of bringing in new and inexperienced volunteers. Two trustees attended a workshop on risk that their local council for voluntary service was running and found some useful resources to help them on the internet www.volunteeringengland.org/risk

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foresight@performancehub.org.uk

Future Focus 2

**What will
our volunteers
be like in five
years' time?**

This is the second in a series of guides to help third sector organisations think about likely changes in their external environment and how these changes could

affect them. A good analysis of the future does take time, but it's not impossible and shouldn't be seen as a luxury.

All organisations can become more successful by spending some time improving their understanding of the likely future external pressures they will face and using this information to help make strategic choices and plan ahead. This guide aims to help you do that.

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