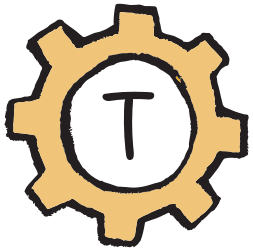
Volunteer management

Using the ‘what’s working/not working’ tool to recruit, support and retain volunteers



The ‘what’s working/not working’ tool supports the generation of actions and ideas. It is an efficient and practical way to capture the perspectives of different people within a situation or a particular issue. This tool encourages individual volunteers to reflect on what’s working and not working about their role. It can also be used as a framework to support feedback from the volunteer manager, people supported by your services and anyone else whose perspective needs to be represented.

By considering ‘what is working/not working’, you can create an accurate snapshot of the current situation. This will result in effective changes being made where they are needed, without impacting on aspects of a situation that are working well. The tool ensures that in any situation, people look at the positives as well as the aspects that need work. Gathering this information from different perspectives also results in specific positive feedback for the volunteer.

Using this tool will identify:

* What everyone agrees needs to stay the same.
* What everyone agrees needs to be different.
* Where there are disagreements needing further discussion to reach an agreed understanding or outcome.

Capturing ‘what’s working/not working’ can, over time, highlight if issues are being addressed effectively. This could be topics such as:

* An individual volunteers performance.
* Reflections and feedback on ‘what’s working/not working’ around their role in general.
* Involvement within the organisation.
* Availability and applicability of resources and other support.

This can provide useful information in future supervision sessions and as part of general volunteer support.

This tool can be used as a whole-of-organisation approach by gathering the top 3 things working and not working for each volunteer, collating the information and looking at the overarching themes.

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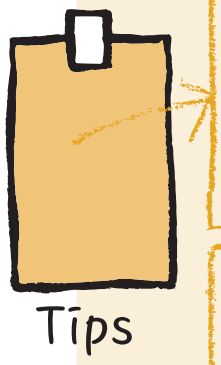
This can give you a sense of what's working and not working for volunteers within the organisation and influence future planning in relation to volunteer management and support.



Recruitment and general volunteer support
Before recruiting new volunteers you can use the 'what's working/not working' tool to reflect on how volunteers are currently recruited and utilised within the organisation. This can provide you with solid information to create new actions and ideas about future volunteer recruitment and management within the organisation.

This can be done by gaining perspectives of a variety of stakeholders involved such as:

* Individuals who receive volunteer support.
* Staff who work with volunteers.
* Those responsible for managing and providing support to volunteers.
* Current volunteers, as they will have a valuable perspective of the role of volunteers within the organisation and their own experience of recruitment.

Supervision
Support the volunteer to look at their role using 'what's working/not working'. Capturing and reflecting on this information can be done when preparing to review the volunteers role. If supervision is done over the phone, Skype or other technology, share 'what's working/not working' in an agreed format before the meeting.

Tools such as 'one-page profiles' and 'praise and trouble' provide information on effectively structuring and approaching elements of the volunteers performance that are not working or need action.

Supervision is also an opportunity to reinforce and build on the positives as a way of ensuring volunteers feel valued. Take the time to discuss aspects of the volunteer's job where they perform well.

Agree on actions or next steps. Identify a person responsible for each action and review the actions by an agreed time.

Performance planning and support
Capture 'what's working/not working' from the perspective of the volunteer, people they interact with in their work and individuals they support to give you a broad perspective of areas of strength.

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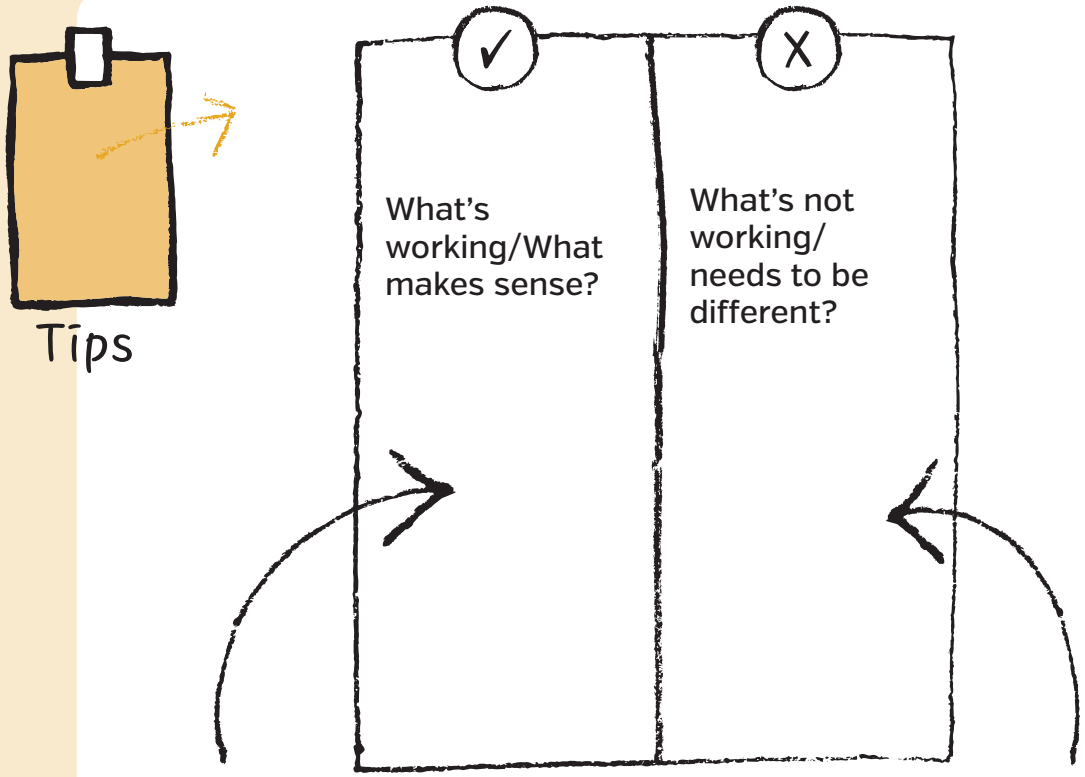

What is working for the volunteer member right now about:

* What is working for the volunteer right now about:
  - How they feel they are performing.
  - How they are supported.
  - The resources they have available.
  - Their interactions with other colleagues.
  - Their role within the organisation.
  - The different elements of their work.
* What do different stakeholders like about how the volunteer does their job, works with others and performs tasks?

What elements of the volunteer's performance should be maintained/ stay the same?

* What elements of the job aren't working for the volunteer?
  - Stresses or issues
  - Aspects of their role they feel they could improve on
  - How they feel connected to the organisation as a whole and the contribution they make
  - Any resource issues they may have.
* What needs to change about performance?
* •What do others or the volunteer themselves want see improved or done differently?
* What are people unhappy with in relation to how the volunteer works?
* What are some issues in relation to performance?

What's working/not working

✓ What's working/ What makes sense?	X What's not working/ What needs to be different?

Template

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Additional resources:

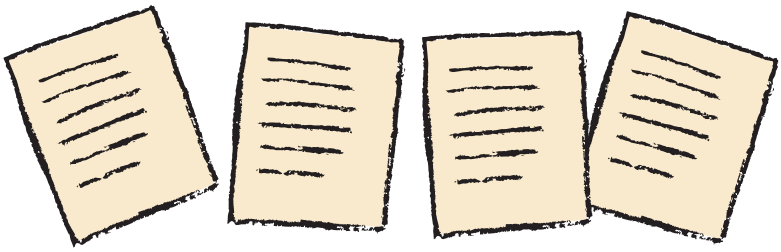
* Tips - Supervising volunteers.
* Technique and tips – using a person-centred approach in employee reviews.
* Tips – building on a one-page profile through performance planning, support and supervision.
* Tips – using the 'stress and support' tool in supervision.

Definitions

The term **individual(s)** refers to an individual with a disability and their family and/or circle of support.

The term **staff/employees(s)** refer to paid members of the organisations workforce. Employment relationships with the organisation may be permanent, casual, full-time, part-time, etc.

The term **volunteer(s)** refers to an unpaid individual willingly giving their time to provide a service or support.



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