



How to make volunteering more inclusive? Effective strategies to increase volunteer inclusiveness

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What strategies can be used by organisations that recruit and place volunteers to guarantee a more diverse and inclusive environment for participants? Certain groups tend to be excluded from volunteer opportunities based on perceptions about lack of previous volunteering experience and perceptions by receiving organizations. Reasons for the lack of previous volunteering experience can include a lack of economic, social, and cultural resources needed to volunteer. This means certain groups, such as unemployed citizens, ethnic minorities, and physically disabled individuals, are underrepresented in volunteering due to the exclusion.

Gatekeepers are individuals within intermediary organisations who are the first point of contact for prospective volunteers. Gatekeepers direct potential volunteers toward volunteering opportunities within nonprofit organizations.

The strategies to be used by gatekeepers in sending organisations should be: enforcing, enabling and encouraging the current and potential volunteers.

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Background

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Context



- It has been argued that volunteering actually **exacerbates social exclusion** and reproduces existing social hierarchies. In turn, social exclusion **diminishes pro-social behaviours** such as volunteering.
- Certain groups, such as **unemployed citizens, ethnic minorities, and physically disabled individuals** are underrepresented in volunteering as a result of exclusion.
- Gatekeepers in intermediary organisations might be able to reach individuals **outside the scope of the receiving organisation**.
- **Screening and matching** volunteers are efficient and effective strategies to meet organisational goals, but they **jeopardise volunteer inclusion**.
- The article argues that nonprofit organizations can **enhance volunteer inclusion** if volunteer recruitment would deliberately target audiences with non-volunteer antecedents.

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Take aways & Learnings



- This qualitative research was conducted in a **two-phased interview process** and included 15 interviews with gatekeepers. The gatekeepers were selected from a database provided by the Dutch Organization of Volunteering.
- Participants agree that the **current mechanisms and processes to attract and place volunteers are not sufficiently inclusive**. In their experience, individuals with non-volunteer antecedents are often underrepresented, possibly due to not being asked to volunteer.
- Encouragement actions such as **lectures, inspirational workshops and tutorials should be carried out** to make volunteering more attractive to the new participants. It will remove barriers and show new participants that volunteering is feasible.
- Enabling can occur when the gatekeeper is provided with the chance to place the prospective volunteer in a specific position by providing **facilitated access to information through training and support**.
- **Mandated volunteering can enhance volunteer inclusion**. Volunteering can be mandatory for all employees or students in some companies or community service. Although this strategy can have disadvantages, such as the lack of motivation of the participants, the authors note that **encouragement and training can be employed to overcome this challenge**.

Strategies to promote volunteer inclusiveness

Encourage



Enforce



Enable



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