

# VOLUNTEERING AND SKILLS

## **Social Impact → Volunteering & Skills**

The new government strategy for sport recognises volunteering as a specific form of engagement in sport that should be encouraged in its own right rather than just as a means to an end. Volunteering helps people develop skills which can help them find work or improve their career prospects and can therefore support the government's push on reducing worklessness.

The successful delivery of many sporting and cultural events relies on the support of volunteers. Cultural events such as Carnaval del Pueblo and Pride London benefit significantly from volunteer inputs. 2,080 volunteers take part in Carnaval del Pueblo, including 700 volunteer artists during its street procession. Approximately 600 volunteers are involved in Pride London, including 80 all year round, with roles including marketing, event management and communications. The Ryder Cup in 2014 recruited more than 2,000 volunteers who paid for the privilege to offer their time to the event. People engaged by events in these ways are typically sourced from the host area although larger events requiring specialist experience might recruit volunteers from elsewhere.

Some events also provide people with practical training opportunities. A good example of this is the Cultural Olympiad's *Creative Jobs Programme*. This programme enabled 40 unemployed young people to undertake paid work within cultural organisations across central and East London. The training posts were open to 18-24 year olds who had been on Jobseekers Allowance for at least thirteen weeks and were targeted at residents of the Olympic host boroughs. All the jobs created were part-time (24 hours a week), six-month fixed-term contracts, paid at National Minimum Wage.

At a basic level, the recommended indicators to evaluate that provide evidence of the opportunities provided by events for people (especially those from the host area) to volunteer and benefit from real life work experiences in all aspects of event management are outlined below.

- The number of volunteers from the host area (e.g. city, region and/or country).
- The total number of volunteer hours delivered in host area (i.e. the number of volunteers x average number of hours contributed per volunteer).
- The number of young people (16-25 year olds) from the host area engaged on work placement and /or internship programmes.

Measurement of these indicators requires event organisers to maintain an accurate and transparent database of the people that they recruit to volunteer or take part in practical training opportunities linked to the planning, preparation and delivery of the event.

Other aspects linked to volunteering that event organisers may wish to evaluate depending on their aims and objectives include:

- The number of volunteers from targeted groups such as those with a disability (in support the government's commitment to halve the employment gap with the general population) or on low income.

- The economic value of the time contributed by volunteers to the event. For example, the 'value in kind' contribution of volunteers to The Ryder Cup in 2014 was estimated at £1.1m. This figure was calculated by multiplying the total number of volunteer hours (98,000) by an average hourly wage rate of £11.54. The UK average hourly wage can be accessed in the *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings* produced by the Office for National Statistics.
- Volunteer experiences, perceived benefits and their likelihood of volunteering in the future.

A post event online survey was designed to gauge volunteer perceptions at The Ryder Cup in 2014 - see below - which provided responses from 600 volunteers in a cost effective manner.



Face to face surveys can also be utilised to gauge the perceived benefits to volunteers. The vast majority of volunteers identified through a face-to-face street survey of visitors across two events in 2009 - the Notting Hill Carnival and the Mayor's Thames Festival - reported positive impacts by way of improved teamwork skills (80%) and increased personal confidence (75%). A survey undertaken for Carnaval del Pueblo in 2007 revealed similar results, with two-thirds of volunteers feeling that their participation had helped improve their skills and knowledge, and three-quarters believing the experience would help create new opportunities for them.

Measuring downstream effects such as whether someone has maintained their volunteering activity requires longitudinal research, which is often beyond the scope of the average event organiser. The extent to which volunteering at a specific event results in subsequent personal benefits to volunteers such as career progression also requires longitudinal work which again is beyond the scope of most events.