



For Hosting Organizations

Managing and Supporting Online Volunteers

No two organizations manage online volunteers exactly the same way. Styles and methods vary, depending on the organization culture, the nature of assignments, and the organization's experience in managing volunteers. No one system will work for all organizations, or with all kinds of Online Volunteers, all of whom represent many different experiences and cultures. The following are basic guidelines that can help organizations using our Online Volunteering Service to maintain good relationships with Online Volunteers and support them in completing assignments.

1. Clarify expectations and deadlines

When you are inputting an assignment into our Online Volunteering service, don't just write one sentence in the "description" field; instead, explain the assignment, why it will benefit your organization and those you serve, and why it would be a great opportunity for an online volunteer. See a detailed tip about creating assignments. The description field is where you should highlight all of the reasons this assignment is worthwhile for an Online Volunteer! [Read more about our advice for writing task descriptions.](#)

Once you have chosen an online volunteer to work with, you need to review the assignment with them to make sure expectations and deadlines are clear. Send the assignment the volunteer has signed up for via email, with clear details on your expectations, and any supplemental information: What format should the volunteer submit completed work (text only? a spread sheet program? an .html file?) Will the volunteer need text from your organization's existing materials (old funding proposals, annual reports, etc.)? What's the first thing the volunteer should do in pursuit of completing this assignment?

Make certain that the volunteer understands what is expected of each of him or her as part of each assignment, and that there are real objectives and deadlines associated with each assignment. Ensure that the volunteer understands how each assignment is in support of a particular organizational objective and goal as well.

Remind Online Volunteers to regularly check [the support pages on our service](#). These pages provide many resources and tips for Online Volunteers.

Give every assignment an end date.

" Perpetual" assignments do not work well, neither from the host organization's nor the volunteer's perspective. A clear end date gives you both an opportunity to look at the progress made, make adjustments, acknowledge accomplishments, and [notify us](#) of the completed assignment. An end date on every assignment also gives every volunteer a natural "out"; in case they need to withdraw from volunteering online for a while, they are more likely NOT to quit midway through an assignment if they have a definite end date for the assignment. At the end of each assignment, you can give the volunteer the opportunity to continue, as you like.

2. Ask the volunteer to report in to you weekly

Ask the volunteer to send you a simple email every week (many organizations set a deadline of by every Monday or Friday) that provides an update on their progress. Ask the volunteer to tell you each week:

- the number of hours worked (even if it's none)
- what percentage of the assignment is left to do (is it half done? 75% done?) and how "on track" the volunteer feels
- what tools and resources are proving most valuable in completion of this assignment

Post Assignments

Why Join This Online Volunteering Service

As a member of our service, you can apply for your organization to be eligible to recruit online volunteers, and use our service to manage them and to report on their progress. You also receive support for your online volunteering activities, and opportunities to provide input to UN Volunteers about OV and its impact.

[Join](#)

Online Volunteering Update

This twice-monthly email update provides practical tips for both volunteers and organizations on how to make the most of online volunteering. [Join](#) to subscribe if you are not yet an OV Service member.

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The United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV) is the volunteer arm of the United Nations. UNV manages this Online Volunteering service.

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[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

HOME PAGE

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[FAQS](#)

[FOR VOLUNTEERS](#)

[FOR HOSTING ORGANIZATIONS](#)

[Are you ready?](#)

[Writing assignments](#)

[Examples of assignments](#)

[Recruiting and involving OVs](#)

[Managing OVs](#)

[Security & privacy](#)

[STORIES](#)

[WHY OV?](#)

[EN FRANÇAIS](#)

[EN ESPAÑOL](#)

[PRESS ROOM](#)

[ABOUT US](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

- any problems/obstacles the volunteer has encountered in completing this assignment.

Save these emails! This is how you can ensure that a volunteer is progressing, and will alert you to any problems in the assignment early on. Reply to these progress reports as soon as possible to acknowledge receipt (a simple email "thanks" is great!). If the volunteer doesn't report in, be proactive -- write him or her to check in on progress. Without such ongoing communications, your volunteers will feel out of the loop and unsupported. Actually, you will too!

This regular reporting can also help show you what Online Volunteers are contributing the most hours, and what impact online volunteers are having at your organization.

3. Recognition

Upon completion of an assignment, IMMEDIATELY thank the volunteer via email! Then, as soon as possible, you should also assess the volunteer performance. You will find a evaluation link in your Manage Volunteers page, which offers space for a short comment about the work done by the volunteer. You should send this to the Online Volunteer after completion of the assignment. If you would like the volunteer to continue with an assignment, this will be your time to ask. Information sent via this electronic form is copied to the UN Volunteers program, and allows us to track the progress and accomplishments of Online Volunteers as well.

In your [administration area](#), you will also find a certificate to fill out and send to your Online Volunteer upon completion of a successful assignment. Volunteers can print this certificate out and include it with their CV, or, display it in their home or office.

But recognition isn't just a reward -- it's also about staying in contact with volunteers and making them feel a part of your organization as well.

Online volunteers should receive updates about your organization, events your organization is hosting, honors you have received, newspaper articles that mention your organization, and so forth. Develop a web page that honors volunteers (this is a great task for an online volunteer!). Even just asking volunteers for input about something is a form of recognition -- it says, "I value your opinion."

Consider starting your own email newsletter for online supporters (another great task for an online volunteer!). This is another way you can highlight volunteer contributions and keep in touch with Online Volunteers.

If you make Online Volunteers a real part of your organization, you will all benefit!

4. Keep UNV informed!

To manage and improve our Online Volunteering service, we need information about your experiences. In your administration section, you will find a short report form that will allow you to give us your feedback about each assignment. Volunteers will be asked to fill out a report as well.

You will also have the chance to [publish your experiences](#) on our web site.

Feedback from hosting organizations is VITAL for the UN Volunteers program, to help us improve our Online Volunteering service, and to demonstrate to both potential users and potential funders that this is a worthwhile service.

5. More tips on managing online volunteers.

If you need more detailed tips for managing online volunteers, visit the [Virtual Volunteering Project web site](#). This free online resource provides comprehensive and very detailed information about working with online volunteers, including tips for handling very specific types of Online Volunteers.