

Volunteers bring energy, skills, and passion to help organisations achieve their mission. But before inviting people to give their time, organisations need to ensure they are volunteer-ready.

This means having the right systems, thinking, and resources in place to support volunteers safely, fairly, and sustainably.

Before Engaging Volunteers

Volunteering is a two-way relationship. Before engaging volunteers, ask why you want them, how their involvement aligns with your mission, and whether staff have the time and capacity to support them. Ensure volunteers add value rather than replace staff, and consider the benefits and challenges of their involvement.

Cost and Resources

While volunteers freely give their time, there are still costs involved. Training, induction, resources, supervision, reimbursements and recognition all require investment.

Planning and budgeting for these costs helps ensure volunteers feel valued and their involvement is sustainable.

Policies & Key Documents

Organisations should have clear policies and documents to support volunteers.

Policies

- Health and Safety Policy
- Complaints & Resolution Policy
- Volunteer Policy

Documents

- Volunteer Application Form
- Code of Conduct
- Volunteer Agreement
- Role Descriptions
- Handbook/Procedures

Legal Responsibilities

You must ensure you meet your legal requirements:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 2015: Volunteers are workers and must be kept safe with proper training and supervision.
- ACC: Volunteers are covered if physically injured
- Human Rights Act: Recruitment and involvement must be fair and inclusive.
- Privacy Act 2020: Volunteer information must be collected, stored, and used appropriately.

Volunteer Recruitment

Think about how you will recruit volunteers — not just where and how you will promote roles, but also the recruitment process itself.

Consider who will be responsible for recruiting, whether police vetting or Ministry of Justice checks are required, and whether you will ask for references.

Volunteer Roles & Coordination

Volunteers should have clear roles, boundaries, and agreed time commitments. Consider how many volunteers you will need, what shifts or schedules will be required, and how their work fits into your operations.

Staff should be assigned to coordinate and support them, and plans for training, induction, and resources ensure volunteers can work safely and confidently.

Building a Positive Volunteer Culture

A positive culture ensures volunteers feel safe, welcomed, and motivated. It is also important that staff are fully on board, confident that volunteers support their work rather than threaten their roles.