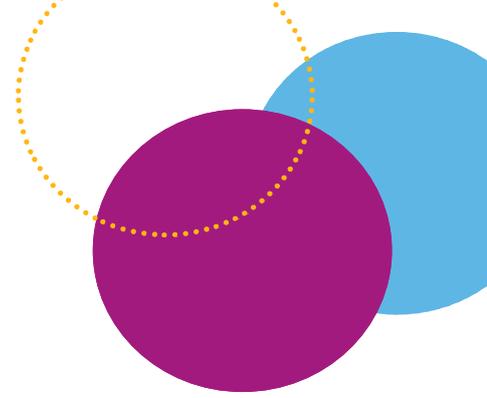


Volunteer expenses



One practical way of making sure that volunteers feel supported and valued is to make sure that they are not left out of pocket.

Not every volunteer will want or need to claim expenses, but for people who are on a fixed or low income such as benefits, a state pension or a student loan, the cost of volunteering can be a very real barrier.

Even costs such as a return bus fare can turn a kind offer to volunteer into a rather expensive hobby. Including volunteers expenses in your forward plans, budgeting and funding bids will help you to attract a wider range of volunteers who can give you the time you are looking for.

Do bear in mind that many people who have plenty of time to give may be on a fairly limited income such as young people (eg students), retired people, parents of young families, jobseekers or those working part time. By not offering to reimburse expenses, you may seriously limit your chances of finding volunteers who can help on a regular basis.

Expenses which organisations may reimburse to volunteers include:

- Travel expenses from home to and from the place of volunteering
- Travel expenses in the course of volunteering. (Either a mileage rate for volunteers who use their own car, or the actual cost of bus, rail or taxi fares)
- Meals or refreshments provided by you, or reimbursement of the actual cost of meals or refreshments taken while volunteering
- The cost of specialist clothing, materials etc. required to volunteer
- Childcare costs, or the care of adult dependants, while the carer is volunteering

Volunteers should only be reimbursed the actual cost of their expenses, with documentary evidence to back this up (e.g. a receipt, bus ticket or mileage record).

You need to be aware that if you offer a 'flat rate' payment (however small the amount), or if you pay volunteers more than the actual cost (e.g. if you 'round up' the amount you give them), or if you explicitly offer volunteers perks with a monetary value in exchange for a certain number of hours work, you may inadvertently be creating a contract of employment. This could result in problems for both the organisation and the volunteer, particularly for volunteers claiming benefits. Contact your local Volunteer Centre for guidance if you think you might be doing this.

Tip: Include a proportion of volunteer support costs, such as expenses and training, in every funding bid.