

Maximising your major event volunteering legacy

Introduction

There are many reasons why people volunteer at major sports events; it could be for a once-in-a-lifetime experience, to support their local community, or because of a love for the sport.

The time-limited and clearly defined nature of major events is appealing for many volunteers. And there is a strong link to those who already give their time to your sport, perhaps as a coach, a club committee member, or a player.

But major events can also act as a fantastic platform to attract new volunteers into your sport. As a result, it is unsurprising that major event volunteering opportunities are often over-subscribed, which compares favourably with community-level volunteering, where 70% of clubs surveyed in 2018 stated they needed more volunteers.

Feedback surveys have shown that major event volunteers have really positive experiences, with appetite to do more volunteering after the event often high. However, research conducted by Goodform on behalf of Sport England revealed

that despite high levels of interest to do more volunteering, the reality is that only a small proportion go on to give their time at a local community level.

Goodform's research identified a number of reasons why it is hard for an individual to move from a major event volunteering role to supporting sport in their local community. These included the perceived time commitment of community volunteering and lack of awareness of need, or opportunities.

However, encouragingly the research also suggests that there are steps which could be taken which could help make it easier and more attractive for people to continue their volunteering in sport after a major event. Inevitably, some of these suggestions require a degree of planning and collaboration, however, conversely several of them are quick wins and could be implemented relatively easily.



Barriers which prevent volunteers giving their time to support grassroots sport include perceptions that it is time-consuming, inflexible and require a long-term commitment

“Major events can act as a fantastic platform to attract new volunteers into your sport.”



The Opportunity

Encouragingly, major events are currently acting as a stepping-stone for some volunteers to get into grassroots sport, with nearly 10% going on to give their time at a local level following volunteering at a major event. But this represents less than a third of the 35% who said they would consider giving their time to community sport after the event.

Evidence collated across all stages of the research suggests that with increased awareness of local opportunities, and a tailoring of these opportunities to the needs of those who may be interested, there is a cohort of major event volunteers who could be encouraged to get involved in grassroots volunteering, if the right support was in place. The period following a major event is a great opportunity to move people from contemplating grassroots volunteering into getting involved, as enthusiasm is often high and they are likely to be far more receptive to messaging.

This guide has been developed to help national governing bodies (NGBs), event hosts and other organisations make it easier and more attractive for volunteers to continue their volunteering experience in sport at a community level. With the right planning and preparation, there is a real opportunity to harness the enthusiasm of major event volunteers, whilst also providing much needed support to grassroots organisations, 70% of whom report they need more volunteers.

Need more help?

The full report from the research contains insights into who volunteers at major events and why, and explores the appetite and barriers for them to continue their volunteering at a community level. The full report, as well as the Executive Summary, can be found [here](#).

If you would like to discuss your volunteering legacy opportunities or plans with Sport England, we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at volunteering@sportengland.org



35%

of major event volunteers who do not currently volunteer in grassroots sport would consider it.



Only

11%

of major event volunteers report being only interested in major event volunteering

“ ...there is a cohort of major event volunteers who could be encouraged to get involved in grassroots volunteering, if the right support was in place. ”



1 Plan Ahead

We know that getting the right information and support in place to enable major event volunteers to continue their volunteering journey takes time.

From recruiting the volunteers through to building an understanding of their motivations and engaging the right partners who can support the volunteers to continue their volunteering, careful planning is needed from the early stages of the event.

Things to think about:

GDPR – the ‘legacy’ of volunteer data should be considered from the outset. With volunteers having a preference for direct contact from the organisation where the opportunity is, or at least from the event organiser, ensure that appropriate data permissions are collected at the start of the recruitment process for event volunteers to ensure GDPR compliance for future communications. Don’t forget to include all appropriate information and opt-outs.

Ask the right questions – when recruiting your event volunteers, it is important to understand their motivations for taking part in the major event, and their potential appetite to continue their support of the sport after the event. If they are interested, what kind of opportunity would appeal to them? Be open about why you are asking.

Engage the right colleagues – make sure your club and volunteer leads are engaged in the planning of your major event volunteer legacy; they will have an interest in supporting the volunteers into opportunities post-event and there should be a joined-up, frictionless approach for volunteers from the outset.

Have a comms plan – think about how, when and what you communicate to your volunteers. Establish a positive relationship with them, where they feel appreciated and valued as a volunteer. Make it clear that your organisation or sport has a genuine interest in ensuring they have a positive volunteering experience, which, should they wish, can extend beyond the event to support their local community.

“Ensure that appropriate data permissions are collected at the start of the recruitment process.”



**2**

Collaborate

Engage local stakeholders – people are often reluctant to approach a club to offer their support as a volunteer without a mutual friend to facilitate that introduction. Similarly, clubs can be wary of accepting support from individuals from outside of the club, despite needing extra volunteers. Think about how you can help broker those relationships before, during and after the event. For instance, if you are recruiting from near your major event venue, could local clubs support your event with a couple of volunteers, enabling a soft introduction to the club? Could club representatives be present at the volunteer briefing and have information available in the volunteer rest areas at the event with information about further opportunities?

Consider using smaller, local events as a 'transition' to the grassroots. For someone without a personal connection to a particular club or even a particular sport, these may well prove to be a springboard to further involvement.

Clubs are not the only stakeholders to engage and you should think about how you can work with other organisations like local authorities, Active Partners and Volunteer Centres early on in the planning, encouraging greater collaboration to ensure that event volunteers have the opportunity to go on to support their local community through sport.

**3**

Raise Awareness...

...of need – awareness of the need for more volunteers in community sport are low. Letting your event volunteers know that they can make a real difference in their local community may encourage them to offer their time. Think about the opportunities there are through the event and communications to push the message that grassroots sport needs help too, ensuring the shortage is clearly communicated. Don't forget to let them know of the impact they could have in their local community!

...of opportunities – there is a general lack of awareness of opportunities, with more than 50% of major event volunteers unaware of what opportunities there are for them to support their local community, or where they should look for find them, and nearly one in five were not volunteering in grassroots sports because they were not asked. Think about what opportunities may exist locally and how you can easily signpost your major event volunteers to up-to-date local opportunities.

...of types of roles – many major event volunteers are deterred from giving their time to support grassroots sport due to perceptions that it is time-consuming, inflexible and requires a long-term commitment. There is also a lack of appreciation of the range of opportunities that are available in grassroots sport. Think about how the opportunities could be presented in a way which makes them attractive, flexible and appropriate to their skills and interests.

“More than 50% of major event volunteers are unaware of what opportunities there are for them to support their local community.”





4 Follow-up

Evidence suggests that presenting people with tailored opportunities directly is likely to have the greatest impact.

It's important therefore to take the time to understand as much as you can about your volunteer's motivations, interests and appetite to do more, maximising their potential engagement in further opportunities.

Ask the right questions – use the post-event volunteer survey as an opportunity to understand more about their appetite to do more volunteering; what do they want to do, where, how much time can they spare? Where enthusiasm to do more exists, make sure the support is available to enable it to be harnessed.

Share details – ensure you have the correct permissions in place to facilitate introducing your volunteers with the clubs and other local stakeholders. Provide as much information as you can about the volunteer, including the type of roles that may interest them. With nearly 60% of event volunteers wanting to hear directly from the organisation where the opportunity is based, encouraging the clubs to reach out to the volunteers is important.

Signpost – If you are unable to make personal introductions, then consider following up with the volunteers after the event with details of where they can find out more or signpost them to their local club/association and, if possible, an identified individual.

Unsuccessful event applicants – don't forget to engage with those who were unsuccessful in their application to support the event. You may be surprised to know that they are not deterred from supporting your sport, with 17% indicating that it made them *more* likely to consider volunteering in grassroots sport. For a further 69%, being unsuccessful did not have a negative effect on their likelihood to volunteer.



Percentage of major event volunteers that said this would encourage them to give more of their time after the event:



47%

Clear information on roles available and time commitment involved



45%

Being aware of the opportunities that are available



35%

A range of options in the local area



28%

Quick and clear communication from the grassroots organisation



23%

Help in identifying opportunities that match my skill set



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