

PRO BONO ECONOMICS



Sport England

Pro Bono Economics' work on targets and measures in association with Marina Rodes-Sanchez

April 2019



About Pro Bono Economics

Pro Bono Economics harnesses the tools and insights from economics to help charities, social enterprises and their funders first understand and then improve the impact and value of their work.

We do this by using good data, analysis and judgement, working with skilled volunteer economists who we match with charities to provide insight and advice. We then disseminate all the results of our work to extend knowledge of this area and improve practice.

Established by Andrew Haldane and Martin Brookes in 2009, our Board of Trustees is currently chaired by Lord Gus O'Donnell, with trustees including Clare Lombardelli and Sir Dave Ramsden, and patrons such as Bronwyn Curtis OBE, Lord John Eatwell, Dame Kate Barker and Lord Jim O'Neill. We are a small team based in London.



Introduction

Pro Bono Economics began working with Sport England in early 2018, having connected with the organisation as a result of our [work in sport and wellbeing](#).

In light of Sport England's ambitious strategy to increase the numbers of people in England who are regularly active by 500,000, which includes specific diversity targets, the organisation recognised the need to support volunteers in partner organisations to deliver these outcomes. The implications of programmes seeking to address the following issues were considered:

1. Increase volunteering both in aggregate and from within different (target) groups
2. Improve the benefits to volunteers and increase retention rates.
3. Identify new settings and partner organisations to deliver sport and physical activities.
4. Address the unmet demand for volunteering for one off major events.

Pro Bono Economics carried out qualitative research with a number of prominent organisations in the volunteering space, with the aim of identifying successful approaches, standard practices and knowledge gaps related to the above issues. The subsequent research report was presented to Sport England, and we then assisted the organisation through feedback on their interpretation of the work and outputs.

Overview of our research

Our study comprised the following stages:

- Project Initiation – Pro Bono Economics reviewed Sport England’s current volunteering programme plans and other relevant materials. We agreed the key areas to be covered in our survey and agreed 10 volunteering programmes for inclusion with the Sport England Team.
- Analysis – Pro Bono Economics carried out a desk based review and telephone and/or face to face consultations with representatives from each of the volunteering programmes in the study to understand their measurement approaches to framing targets, establishing KPIs, promoting participation and overcoming barriers.
- Presentation of initial findings – we summarised the outcomes of our analysis in our draft report which we presented for discussion and review by the Sport England Workforce Committee. This set out our findings in relation to examples of ‘best practice’ and ‘lessons learnt’ from survey respondents, and the implications for the Sport England Volunteering Programme
- Review of Sport England’s outputs through a series of calls and attendance at their Workforce Committee meeting to discuss approaches. This subsequently formed part of Sport England’s own internal targets and success measure setting.

Scope and focus of our research

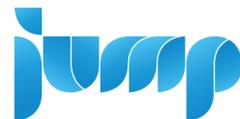
As mentioned, we contacted a number of organisations delivering volunteering programmes in the UK, including Helpforce, Cities of Service, the Centre for Ageing Better, Sport & Recreation Alliance, NCVO, Step up to Serve, Senior Corps and Jump. We are extremely grateful to these organisations for their insight and would like to thank them for their participation.

We discussed four main areas with each of the organisations included in our survey:

1. Definition of volunteering used, and the benefits of volunteer engagement;
2. Parameters in which they operate their volunteering programme (e.g. size of programme, ratio of volunteers to participants);
3. New Programme set up, management resources, success factors and constraints; and,
4. Target setting, impacts and measurement protocols.

We also spoke with Hillingdon Slipstreamers, a volunteer run and led youth cycling club, to gain insight into the workings of a grassroots organisation.

In the remainder of this report we set out the general implications from our research in terms of “lessons learnt” from other non-sporting organisations that might be relevant to the Sport England Team in their future planning and implementation of Sport England volunteering programmes.



General implications for volunteering

We identified three broad categories of volunteer across the organisations interviewed:

- Standard – a volunteer typically gives time and expertise to help others - directly and indirectly - free of charge in both formal and informal settings;
- Social Cause – whereby a volunteer supports a movement - through time and other commitments – to change societal outcomes; and,
- Leisure – volunteer involvement is driven by both a commitment to better outcomes and also explicit individual benefit from their participation.

Four different sources of benefit from volunteer engagement were highlighted by respondents:

- Individual volunteer impact: through engaging with a cause and delivering beneficial outcomes;
- Beneficiary and organisational impact: capturing the effects of volunteer support on ultimate beneficiaries as well as the capacity, operating costs and sustainability of the volunteer organisation.
- Community impact: bottom-up community development, addressing local issues
- Organisation impact: maximise the capacity of the organisation, reduces costs and improves sustainability.

Operating parameters

To assess the average number of volunteers involved in supporting local or regional projects, consultees were asked to indicate the typical project size and ratio of volunteers to beneficiaries. While no commonality emerged in terms of average project size (i.e. numbers of volunteers required to sustain any given programme), ratios (where indicated) were similar, ranging from 1 volunteer to 7-11.5 participants/beneficiaries.

In many cases the critical aspect identified for sustainable operation was clarity of volunteer roles – with written outlines/descriptions being essential to matching beneficiary needs with volunteer skills/expectations and a potential baseline against which to measure and celebrate progress.

The diversity of volunteer backgrounds is recognised as an issue, but defined in different ways (e.g. should volunteers “mirror” beneficiaries, or should volunteers be benchmarked against the community (however geographically defined) or should there be explicit engagement of specific underrepresented groups) with the additional risk that setting explicit targets might be counterproductive in terms of (not) attracting volunteers.

Two fruitful approaches to diversity were highlighted: either empowerment of volunteers and beneficiaries through (joint) coalescence around a community/social issue, and/or investment in “bottom up” approaches to community engagement to identify key needs before developing (top down) “solutions”.

New volunteering programmes

We found a significant degree of consistency across respondents in terms of the elapsed timescales required to set up new volunteer programmes across their organisation or the organisations they fund:

- Management Set-Up time: prior to initiating a new programme there is typically a minimum of 3 months elapsed time required to put in place staff resources and targeting approaches;
- Recruitment: of volunteers will depend on the above but also processing, reaching an appropriate scale to launch a programme and piloting new activities/volunteer involvement. This typically involves a one year elapsed period.

Not all organisations have considered the relationship between management resources in terms of the cost per volunteer or the cost per beneficiary. Where ratios were provided these were posed in different ways: e.g. 2 managers per 500 active volunteers, £86 per volunteer per annum and delivery costs of £25,000 per 50 families involved.

Target setting and impact and measurement approaches

Interestingly very few of the organisations we spoke with had an agreed target for their volunteering work. There was some variation in responses to the impact and measurement question, with recognition in certain cases that more work was required to determine the impacts of programmes in relation to beneficiaries and volunteers. Where impact measurement occurred three areas are critical:

Baselining: whether in terms of the “before and after” position of beneficiaries or the engagement of volunteers and other stakeholders in setting out potential impacts;

Regular reporting of outcomes and impacts : whether quarterly or more typically yearly to inform progress and monitor the relationships between activities and impacts;

Feedback to volunteers: of their impacts is identified as one critical approach to ensuring their retention and recognising (thanking them) for the benefits of their involvement.

There was recognition of the importance of monitoring and measurement to programme management, volunteer engagement and retention, but no common approach to measurement.

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