



Volunteer Management Tips in a Covid 19 World

Managing volunteers safely, efficiently and effectively has always taken thought, time and understanding. If your Volunteer Program has slowed down, or been put on hold completely, we understand your frustration and that of volunteers wanting to return as soon as possible.

We hope the few ideas, tips and suggestions below may help you and your zoo or aquarium prepare, adjust and offer positive volunteer opportunities into the future as we all continue to deal with this pandemic. Please share your tips with us too.

- Safety is the top priority. Ask yourself if your organisation is in a position or has the capacity to take on more volunteers safely. If not, what are the barriers to getting people safely involved again?
- Stay up to date with government guidelines for managing volunteers safely during Covid-19 found at <https://www.gov.uk/volunteering/coronavirus-volunteering?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae> Check the information regularly as local restrictions or guidelines can change unexpectedly. NCVO also publishes free, up to date advice on their website. www.ncvo.org.uk/
- Are you really ready to return volunteers to their roles or are there areas where staff capacity for supporting volunteers, social distancing issues or other issues (including redundancy consultations) will prevent some volunteer roles returning at present? Be honest with yourself, other staff and volunteers on why volunteer roles returning may not be possible at present and take your time to get things right for all. It may be best to concentrate on returning your current volunteers and putting new volunteer recruitment on hold.

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- Make time to visit areas volunteers operate in. Are the facilities that they will need to wash hands and wipe down any shared touch points available? Being mindful of higher risk volunteers, displaying signage and information so that volunteers can recognise when not to come in can all help manage communicating important messages.
- Examine exactly what roles you have and how they are useful to your organisation. Is this role still bringing value to the organisation and to the volunteer? Do we need to make any changes so that this role still be relevant going forward in a COVID19 world? Reflecting on these questions and gathering information can be a big help in communicating how volunteers are making a difference.
- Communication. With the COVID19 restrictions changing quickly are you able to swiftly and effectively communicate to your volunteers? Is now the time to invest in volunteer management software or simply time to look more closely at the resources and procedures you have to contact volunteers at short notice.
- Effective communication can deliver the message of hope, build your organisation's brand and help to put volunteers' concerns at ease. Are you communicating with volunteers effectively during this time of uncertainty? Spreading the message of "togetherness" is needed now, more than ever
- Fundraising is likely to be a huge part of organisations going forward. This is a great time for Volunteer Managers to ask others departments what they can do to help. Talk with fundraisers in your organisation about your Volunteer Program and potential volunteer fundraising roles. Discussing how volunteers can support this area with your team and even how donors can get into volunteering to promote some win-wins.
 - As lockdown, isolation and restrictions continue designing digital volunteer opportunities and activities, possibly with the input of volunteers themselves, can help keep people involved as part of the team from the safety of their home.
- Take time to chat to other Volunteer Managers though the BIAZA email contacts group, our Facebook group or over the phone – a great resource available to all BIAZA members.