



The Good Guide to Hosting Volunteers

Volunteers give their time for free to help you and the people and communities you serve. If managed correctly, they can be a sustainable resource for your organisation. Volunteer projects can be the start of a long and lovely relationship between you and an army of good-hearted people who want to make a difference to your work.

These are our top tips for hosting volunteers:

1. Welcome the volunteers

Be friendly and welcoming. After all, these people are giving up a day to help your cause. Give them a quick introduction and tour of your organisation when they arrive and explain what they will be doing during the day. Point out any safety information they may need to know – fire exits, no-go areas, safety equipment that must be worn etc. Don't forget to show volunteers where they can find a toilet and drinking water if they need it.

2. Brief staff and beneficiaries

Tell your staff about the day and how many volunteers are coming. And try to get as many of your staff as can spare the time to participate in the day – this is your chance to show people the amazing work you do. If volunteers will be working alongside beneficiaries, let them know a bit about the day too. Stress that the volunteers are giving their time and skills for free and should be treated with courtesy.

3. Make a plan

Spend time preparing and planning the volunteer project – think about what you would like to achieve, the resources you will need to allocate and timelines. Good planning in advance will reduce misunderstandings and help you deliver a successful, safe and meaningful volunteer project. Appoint a project leader to supervise volunteers on the day and to be available by phone or email to volunteers a few days before to the activity to answer any questions they might have.

4. Be there for the whole day

The project leader – or person who is responsible for the volunteer project – must be on site and available for the volunteers for the entire duration of the project. Don't leave your volunteers alone, unsupervised and without any idea of what they are expected to do.

5. Thank volunteers

At the end of the day, a few words of heartfelt thanks to volunteers go a very long way. You should also post a report on www.myggsa.co.za with photos within 10 days of the project so that volunteers can get a sense of how their contribution made a difference to your organisation. This will refresh their interest.

6. Don't fundraise

Volunteer projects promote a culture of community service in South Africa, they are not an opportunity to fundraise. Volunteers do not expect to be asked for money or other goods on the day. However, if you provide an inspiring, professionally-run day and thank your volunteers properly, you will build long-term relationships that may well lead to donations in the future. Offer to put them on your mailing list and send them your news. We encourage volunteers to consider giving to the causes where they volunteer but if they feel pressured, they can be put off for good.