WORLD SCOUTING

Flexible Volunteering Guide

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Flexible Volunteering Guide

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Key terms

- *Adults in Scouting* is a systematic approach for supporting adults to improve the effectiveness, commitment, and motivation of adult leadership so that better programmes are supported in the delivery by and for young people. It also enhances the organisation's overall effectiveness and efficiency.
- A *volunteer* is someone who participates in activities of their own free will, without monetary remuneration, to support Scouting in achieving its Mission.
- *Volunteering* refers to the activities that a volunteer undertakes.
- *Volunteer engagement* is a general term for any individual activity a volunteer performs, including completing a task, supporting a project, or holding a volunteer role.
- A *volunteer management system* is any system that helps volunteers improve their effectiveness, commitment, and motivation in their service to Scouting.
- *Flexible volunteering* is a volunteer management system that combines multiple ways of volunteering to meet the different motivations and barriers of a diverse volunteer base. Flexibility, in this context, refers to the degree to which a policy or way of volunteering can be adapted to different needs or circumstances.
- *Volunteering barriers* are factors that limit or prevent an individual from volunteering; *volunteering motivations* are factors that encourage participation.
- *Young leaders* are youth members who deliver the youth programme to other youth members, support other adults in their role or function, or participate in organisational structures. In this case, 'leader' refers to the role or function they perform on behalf of the organisation. Crew leaders, for example, in the Rover Scout Section, do not fall under this definition. However, if they also have a role or function as mentioned above, they could potentially be called young leaders.
- *Professional staff* are people recruited to serve Scouting in a specific role or function in a paid, and often full-time, capacity. They may or may not have taken the Scout Promise, but they are committed to the Mission and values of Scouting, and the priorities of the Scout organisation they work for. In addition to carrying out their paid role or function, professional staff may support Scouting in volunteer roles or functions that do not conflict with their professional roles or functions.

1. Introduction

1.1 What is 'flexible volunteering'?

"Flexible Volunteering" is not one single way of managing volunteers. Instead, flexible volunteering means offering a variety of ways volunteers can support the Scouting Movement through their time, energy, and skills. Scouting has always supported multiple ways of volunteering. Consider, for instance, the differences between being a Scout leader, a parent helper, or a national commissioner. Each of these volunteer roles is important to delivering a strong Scouting programme, yet each requires a different set of skills, level of commitment, and time to meet the role's expectations.

Today, maintaining a Scout programme involves more than just a Scout leader and a handful of young people. Instead, Scout organisations need specialists in safety management, programme development, volunteer support and mentorship for youth leaders, and digital technology and communications, among other specialised skills. At the same time, volunteers are facing a variety of pressures – from limited free time and inconsistent or unpredictable work schedules to financial, geographic, and interpersonal barriers – that make it harder for them to volunteer with Scout groups in traditional ways. These two factors – increasingly complex volunteer needs and changing barriers to volunteering – require creative solutions for NSOs to meet their volunteer needs with the volunteers available.

Ways of volunteering

This guide presents ten ways of volunteering, split into three categories: core, peripheral, and context-based. Each way of volunteering suits different volunteer profiles, organisational needs, and barriers. No single way of volunteering will meet all of an NSO's needs. Rather, these ways of volunteering give an NSO options to combine in a mix that best matches its particular needs.

Core ways of volunteering

These ways of volunteering promote high identification with the organisation while meeting essential operational needs through both long- and short-term engagements.

Core ways of volunteering	Description
Role-based	The volunteer is responsible for a set of tasks related to a particular role over a period of time or tenure.
Project-based	The volunteer is responsible for a particular deliverable.
Task-based	The volunteer is responsible for a single (or small set of) task.
Digital volunteering	The volunteer uses digital tools to complete tasks remotely.

There are also several popular ways to engage in shorter-term volunteering with an organisation. These ways of volunteering require less identification with the organisation and support the core ways of volunteering by meeting smaller needs, usually via shorter engagements. The table below lists these as peripheral ways of volunteering.

Peripheral ways of volunteering	Description
Micro-volunteering	The volunteer completes short (under an hour) ad hoc tasks.
One-off volunteering	The volunteer supports a single, short-term responsibility without committing to continued service.
Informal volunteering	The volunteer is not associated with a formal volunteer organisation (such as the Scouts)

When working with volunteering in Scouting, a handful of common circumstances add factors to consider when designing a flexible volunteer management system.

Youth volunteering, employee volunteering, and school-based Scouting may involve many different ways of volunteering, but they represent important contexts that affect volunteer engagement.

Context-based ways of volunteering	Description
Youth volunteering	The volunteer is a member of the youth programme who chooses to also support the programme as a young leader.
School-based Scouting	The volunteer works closely with the formal education system.
Employee volunteering	The volunteer is supported by their employer, generally through dedicated extra time for volunteer efforts.

1.2 Who this guide is for

This guide has been prepared with two key audiences in mind. It was written primarily for NSO leadership and specifically for national Adults in Scouting Coordinators (or the equivalent role at an NSO). NSO leadership across the Scouting Movement have reported widespread difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Recognising this challenge, World Scouting's 2024-2027 Triennial Plan and the Strategy for Scouting, adopted in 2024, declared "value volunteering" as a strategic priority for the Scout Movement. This guide supports that priority.

Additionally, the information in this guide is relevant for anyone who manages or supports volunteers at any (and every) level of the Scout Movement. This guide, along with the accompanying resources (see the Flexible Volunteering Executive Summary), has been written to be useful to any Scout leaders, group leadership teams, council/district/territory volunteers, or

any other volunteer organisation within the Scout Movement. Of course, different ways of volunteering will be more or less appropriate in different contexts and for different tasks. These differences will be noted throughout the guide to help identify what ways of volunteering will work best in different contexts within the Scout Movement.

1.3 Why this report?

This guide was written in support of the 2024-2027 Triennial Plan, recognising the importance of volunteers and volunteer wellbeing to the success of the Scout Movement.

Many NSOs face volunteer shortages and disruptions to traditional volunteer recruitment and retention strategies. A 2025 survey found that 75% of NSOs have insufficient or highly insufficient volunteers to maintain and grow their Scouting programmes. Consequently, 84% of NSOs reported planning to increase the flexibility of their volunteering options in the future.

This volunteer shortage is not limited to Scouting. Recent research from the United Nations shows that formal volunteering (i.e. volunteering with an organisation like the Scouts) has declined in many parts of the world, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers today face pressure on their time and financial resources and, as a result, increasingly prefer shorter-term and more flexible ways of volunteering. This guide identifies these trends and provides useful tools and recommendations to develop more flexible, fit-for-purpose, and inclusive volunteer management schemes.

1.4 Theory of change

Recent research suggests that adults still want to volunteer and still value time spent with the Scouting programme. Difficulties in recruiting and retaining adult volunteers stem from changes in how adults fit - or fail to fit - volunteering into their lives. If NSOs offer a wider range of ways for adults to support Scouting, potential volunteers will find it easier to fit volunteering into their lives.

This may mean rethinking traditional models, expectations, and systems used to manage volunteers and their tasks. Greater flexibility should lead to more volunteers willing to engage with the NSO, easing the burden on existing volunteers. Moreover, volunteers who initially engage through low-commitment ways of volunteering may, over time, become more willing to take on larger commitments and responsibilities. Thus, increasingly flexible volunteering schemes should lead to more committed volunteers. Even when a volunteer is engaged only for a shorter period, flexible volunteering schemes help ensure meaningful and impactful engagement. A growing volunteer base also allows an NSO to increase the number of young people served and the quality of the Scouting programme delivered.

2. How to use this guide

This guide is organised around three major sections. First, it presents an overview of contemporary trends affecting volunteers' motivations and the barriers to volunteering. This overview reflects data identified both within Scouting and across peer organisations around the world. NSOs that are generally finding it difficult to recruit or retain adult volunteers may find inspiration (or comfort!) in this section.

Second, the guide defines several ways of volunteering with examples and case studies showing how each way can be implemented to address different volunteer needs. NSOs that have identified where they struggle to meet their operational needs with volunteers may find solutions or inspiration for new volunteer management structures in this section.

Finally, the guide concludes with additional considerations, an extended case study of a flexible volunteering scheme, steps to implementing new ways of volunteering, and several recommended next steps for World Scouting and for NSOs.

The guide is designed to be used in any of the following ways:

- By reading this guide from beginning to end, you will explore a range of possible ways of volunteering. This may be most useful for NSOs exploring new solutions or looking to strengthen existing volunteer structures.
- If you wish to target specific volunteer needs, you can complete the Flexible Volunteering Self-Assessment, which will help identify which ways of volunteering are best suited to your particular context.
- If you already know your volunteer needs or primary barriers to volunteering, the following chart may be useful to help identify ways of volunteering that specifically address your needs. Examples of how to use the chart can be found below.

2.1 Common barriers to volunteering and ways to address them

Current barrier	What we want	Ways of volunteering that address these barriers
⏱️ Limited time	Enough volunteers or volunteer hours to meet NSO needs	• Project-based volunteering • Task-based volunteering • Micro-volunteering • One-off volunteering • Youth volunteering • Employee volunteering
💎 Financial restrictions	Funding and reimbursement schemes that allows to cover volunteer expenses	• Role-based volunteering • Project-based volunteering • digital volunteering • Employee volunteering
📣 Lack of awareness	Visibility and clear communication to the volunteer target groups	• Task-based volunteering • Micro-volunteering • digital volunteering

Current barrier	What we want	Ways of volunteering that address these barriers
		• Employee volunteering
Difficulty of long-term commitment	Volunteers to cover specific engagements over longer, consecutive periods to provide stability	• Project-based volunteering • Task-based volunteering • Micro-volunteering • One-off volunteering • Informal volunteering
Lack of specific skills	Sufficient and correct training for the respective volunteers	• Project-based volunteering • Task-based volunteering • Employee volunteering
Health or mobility issues	To match accessible volunteer engagements to volunteers with matching limitations.	• Task-based volunteering • Micro-volunteering • digital volunteering
Culture and tradition	Visibility and clear communication to the volunteer target groups. Avoid excluding symbols and practices.	• Project-based volunteering • Task-based volunteering • Micro-volunteering • One-off volunteering • Informal volunteering
Geographical	To match accessible volunteer engagements to volunteers with geographical restrictions.	• Project-based volunteering • Micro-volunteering • One-off (seasonal) volunteering • Digital volunteering.
Others	Match volunteers with specific needs to task that can be solved with those restrictions.	(All volunteering options) • Role-based volunteering • Project-based volunteering • Task-based volunteering • Micro-volunteering • One-off volunteering • Youth volunteering • digital volunteering • Informal volunteering

An example could be:

An NSO would like to engage young people who move across the country or abroad for work or study.

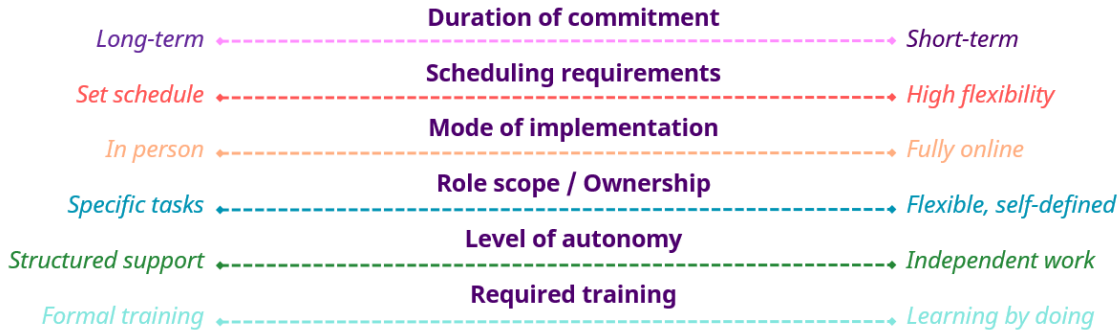
→ The main barrier to volunteering would then be geographical limitations.
→ An NSO could look into types of digital, task-based, or micro-volunteering.

An NSO struggles to recruit enough volunteers to consistently support a growing youth membership.

→ The main barrier is likely limited time.
→ An NSO could break traditional volunteer roles into smaller project- or task-based volunteering to lower the barrier of entry for new volunteers.

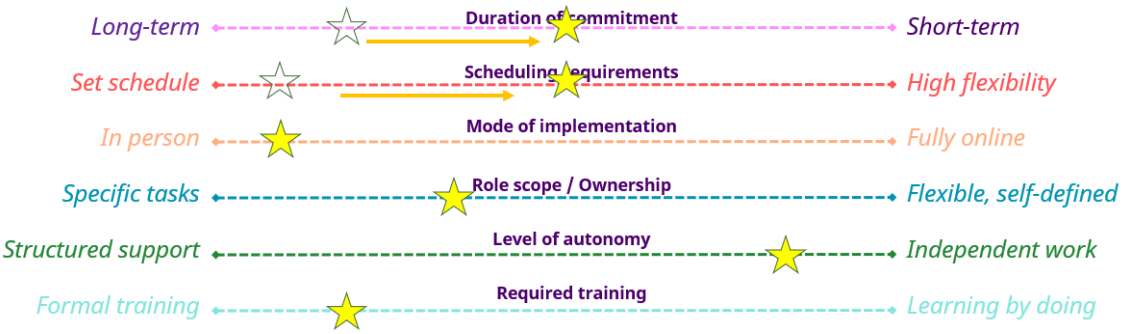
2.2 Axis of flexibility

It is helpful to think of flexibility as an axis (or set of axes) between “less flexible” and “more flexible” volunteer engagements. The axis of flexibility borrows elements from Erin Meyer's Culture Map. It is an approach to rethinking engagement by breaking it into individual elements to lower barriers to volunteering. See the image below for suggestions on how to classify a volunteering engagement. To evaluate, start by scoring the specific engagement or role on the scales. Afterwards, you can look at the axes individually to see if the scale can be slid in one direction or the other.



For example, a Scout leader. This role-based volunteer engagement is usually long-term and requires the volunteer to meet at specific times each week, possibly several times a week.

In some cases, the role of a Scout leader was split among a larger group of people, which required medium-range commitments and allowed them to commit to only a few scheduled meetings each month. It still requires commitment and continuity, but not to the same degree. Thus, we moved the markers on the two top axes but kept the remaining markers the same to ensure quality Scouting.



3. Volunteer motivations and barriers – global trends

In recent years, the volunteer environment has been changing around the world. The following section summarises major trends in volunteer motivations and barriers, followed by a table summarising the barriers. A more detailed report on volunteering trends within and outside of the Scout Movement can be found in the companion to this report: Volunteering Motivations and Barriers.

The Volunteering Motivations and Barriers Report synthesises findings from within the Scout Movement and from peer volunteer organisations globally, drawing on UN reports, regional Scouting engagement data, and NSO surveys.

3.1 Motivations

Current research shows that adults worldwide are still motivated to volunteer by their values, altruism, and sense of social purpose. These motivations are increasingly accompanied by other motivating factors, including a desire for personal development, skill acquisition, and a sense of community belonging.

The relative importance of each motivator varies across demographic factors, particularly according to a volunteer's age and stage in life. Younger volunteers, for example, have different motivations than older generations, including a stronger connection to social causes and less loyalty to specific organisations.

Engaging a diverse body of volunteers therefore requires an understanding of these different motivations. Fortunately, many of them – from community engagement to skill development – are already central to Scouting.

While the research consistently underscores the importance of altruism and social contribution, other motivations influence participation differently. Broader research highlights employability, career value, and gaining credentials as major motivations among younger groups. Research focused on Scouting confirms this trend, while placing greater emphasis on the continued importance of belonging, identity, and engagement with a cause.

These findings are not contradictory. Rather, they show that motivations vary not only across individuals but also according to how volunteering opportunities are framed and experienced. Organisations therefore need to recognise different motivations when engaging volunteers, rather than relying on a single approach.

Understanding volunteer motivations is critical when recognising, recruiting, and retaining volunteers effectively. However, while motivations influence people's decisions to volunteer, barriers to participation appear to play an even greater role in recruitment and retention. The remainder of this guide therefore focuses on barriers to volunteering and how addressing them can help tackle volunteer shortages.

3.2 Barriers

Research shows that barriers to volunteering, rather than a lack of motivation, limit most adults. A lack of time is almost universally acknowledged as a key barrier, followed by the financial costs associated with Scouting, including registration, transportation, and time away from work.

These barriers prevent motivated adults from volunteering as much as they would like and, for some adults, from volunteering at all. At the same time, limited awareness of volunteer opportunities and complex administrative processes to becoming a new volunteer can prevent potential volunteers from joining Scouting in the first place.

Inclusion and accessibility are also important challenges. Volunteers with disabilities may still face barriers that affect whether they can volunteer, and under what conditions.

Flexible and diverse ways of volunteering can help volunteers find engagements that minimise or avoid these barriers, paving the way for increased support to the Scout Movement.

Factors that cause volunteers to leave are often most significant when several barriers occur at the same time. Volunteers are more likely to withdraw where time demands are high, roles lack flexibility, the joining process is complicated, or the experience does not provide enough meaning, support, or recognition to sustain their commitment.

Effective volunteer policies therefore need to address these barriers together, rather than one by one. The challenge is not simply to remove individual obstacles, but to create an overall volunteering experience that keeps people motivated and engaged.

Common barriers to volunteering

Barrier	Considerations
⏱️ Limited time	Work, family, or personal commitments may make it difficult for people to find enough time to volunteer. In some cases, people may also feel they do not have enough time, even when flexible opportunities could be available.
💎 Financial restrictions	Some people may want to volunteer but cannot afford the costs involved. Travel or other costs may make it difficult for some people to participate.
📢 Lack of Awareness	Some people may be interested in volunteering but may not be aware of the opportunities available to them. Limited information or ineffective communication channels can limit participation.

Barrier	Considerations
Difficulty of long-term commitment	Some people may hesitate to take on long-term volunteering because they are unsure whether they can sustain it over time. This can be especially true for those who have a busy schedule or are unsure of how much time they can spare.
Lack of specific skills	People may be discouraged if they feel they lack the specific skills of knowledge required to contribute meaningfully.
Health or mobility issues	Health or limited mobility can be a barrier for some people who would like to volunteer. Some activities may require physical effort or may not be suitable for people with certain health conditions.
Culture and tradition	For some underrepresented groups, culture expectations can influence whether people feel able to volunteer. In communities without a strong tradition of volunteering, people may be less likely to see it as a familiar or accepted activity, and may receive less encouragement or support from those around them.
Geographical	Transportation can pose financial and time barriers in rural areas. as travelling to and from activities may take longer and cost more. This can make it harder to build and maintain a strong volunteer base, particularly in more remote or isolated communities.
Others	It's important to note that these are just some of the common barriers. Individual challenges can vary from person to person. Volunteer opportunities should be tailored to individual needs and circumstances.

3.3 Participatory governance

An important factor influencing both volunteering motivations and barriers is the role volunteers are empowered to play in shaping the future of their organisation. Recent research has suggested that practices that engage volunteers in leadership and strategic decision-making support volunteer retention, while highly hierarchical leadership structures can leave volunteers discouraged or excluded. Interpersonal conflicts and grievances can also cause volunteers to leave.

As new ways of volunteering are introduced, organisations should also review their decision-making structures to ensure volunteers feel welcome and have a “voice” in their team’s direction. (The Crisis in Recruiting Volunteers, 2026)

4. Core ways of volunteering

The following three sections will present the core, peripheral, and context-based ways of volunteering. Each section follows the same compact format, making it easier to compare the different options and identify those best suited to a particular situation. Each way of volunteering is marked with icons showing the barriers it can help address and includes examples of good practice from NSOs around the world.

This section focuses on core ways of volunteering in Scouting. These roles include many of the key volunteers found in most organisations, such as Scout leaders, commissioners, and national volunteers. They usually involve a stronger level of commitment and connection to the organisation and can include both longer- and shorter-term volunteering opportunities.

4.1 Role-based volunteering

Definition

Role-based volunteering (also known as long-term or traditional volunteering) involves longer-term roles with a wide variety of responsibilities. Role-based volunteering appears across the Scout Movement, from unit or group leaders to International Commissioners. These volunteers provide consistency over time, promoting best practices and role-specific expertise.

Pros

- Promotes consistency and expertise over time.
- Preserves institutional knowledge.
- Volunteers identify closely with their role, encouraging high levels of commitment to the organisation.

Cons

- Roles can be time- and energy-intensive.
- Many roles provide limited flexibility while requiring high levels of responsibility.
- Roles can involve a complicated mix of tasks and responsibilities, requiring a higher degree of training and support for volunteers.
- The time commitments and complexity of these roles may deter potential volunteers, especially new and young volunteers.

Barriers

This chart indicates typical barriers volunteers face that role-based volunteering can address.

Barrier	Considerations for role-based volunteering
 Limited time	Roles typically not well suited for those with very limited time. **Consider:** Clearly explain which parts of the role volunteers can schedule themselves and which require a fixed time commitment.
 Financial restrictions	Volunteers will often need to be reimbursed for costs relating to recurring tasks, travels, or other expenses. **Consider:** Payments can be made by the organisation to lessen the financial burden on the volunteer.
 Lack of awareness	People already involved in Scouting may understand what the role involves, while potential volunteers outside the organisation may find it harder to understand or recognise the opportunity. **Consider:** Roles may require more training to ensure the volunteer fully understands what is expected from them.
 Difficulty of long-term commitment	Role-based volunteer does not directly address this barrier. **Consider:** Offering shorter appointment periods.
 Lack of specific skills	Some roles may require several skills or areas of knowledge, but these can often be developed through training and experience. **Consider:** Training possibilities should be clearly communicated to applicants.
 Health or mobility issues	Some aspects of a role may be difficult for volunteers with health or mobility needs, particularly where regular physical presence is required. **Consider:** Use digital tools, flexible timing, and reasonable adjustments where possible, and clearly identify which activities require in-person participation.
 Culture and tradition	People from outside Scouting, or from communities where volunteering is less familiar, may find it difficult to identify with traditional Scout roles. **Consider**: Engaging with new role-based volunteers to help them feel welcome in the Scouting movement.
 Geographical	Requirements for physical presence at specific locations should be considered. **Consider:** Identify which meetings or activities can be carried out online or in a hybrid environment.
 Others	Role-based volunteering can create a strong sense of identity and belonging within the organisation, which may support social connection and longer-term engagement.

Trends

- Some NSOs rely heavily on role-based volunteering because of its consistency and volunteers' close identification with their roles within the organisation.
- Some NSOs reported that role-based volunteering can hinder innovation by promoting long-term volunteers who are less connected to young people's opinions and concerns.
- Some NSOs reported difficulties when a volunteer's skills or abilities are poorly matched to the role they fill.
- Some NSOs have implemented "co-leads" or other forms of role-sharing to increase the flexibility of role-based volunteering, for example, in case a volunteer needs to step back from their role unexpectedly.
- Many NSOs report that the long-term commitments required by role-based volunteering are a major obstacle for young volunteers facing changing work, educational, and family commitments.

Best practices

Key practice

Some NSOs have found ways to increase the flexibility of role-based volunteering by sharing roles between two or more volunteers. One group in CGNEI, one of Italy's National Scout Associations, expanded their team of group leaders to seven young people. All seven planned group activities together while rotating who was responsible for each meeting. This lowered the required commitment for each volunteer, making it easier for them to stay involved with the group. At the same time, the group continued to have regular programmes, something that no single volunteer was – at the time – able to guarantee. (See European Scout Region, Best Practices and Case Studies (PowerPoint), 2025.)

Other best practices

A newer practice is to share a role, such as group leader or project leader, between two or three co-leads. This practice is used across many NSOs and in some volunteer teams at the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM). This practice allows two volunteers with different profiles to fulfil the role's combined tasks, reducing the risk of burnout and providing more qualified volunteers for specific tasks.

In some cases, however, a role may need to be held by one person because it carries formal responsibilities or requires a clearly designated point of accountability. The workload can still be shared with one or more deputies. For example, an International Commissioner (IC) could be supported by one to three Vice-ICs. This approach can also support succession planning by giving other volunteers experience and preparing them to take on greater responsibility in the future.

L'Association des Scouts du Canada created several new policies that clearly defined key volunteer roles, from unit leaders to national administrators. These policies streamlined entry screening by role, clarified which volunteers require which entry training, and established who supports each volunteer. This has made volunteer recruitment, onboarding, and development easier for volunteer managers while providing volunteers with greater clarity and direction. (See policies L'Association des Scouts du Canada, PP305, PP306, PP307, 2025).

4.2 Project-based volunteering

Definition

Project-based volunteering is defined as completing a concrete, specific deliverable within a pre-defined timeline. Examples of project-based volunteering include planning or facilitating a camp or event, developing a new project or resource, or supporting a task force or research group. Projects may be “one-off” or repeated projects.

Pros

- Projects are often shorter-term than role-based volunteering and have a clear end date.
- Projects are sometimes simpler and/or involve less responsibility than roles.
- Project-based volunteers can focus on efficiency and innovation, for example, through “sprint teams” and purpose-driven team management.
- Project teams can often be flexible about when, where, and how they meet – whether online, in person, or in a hybrid format – making it easier for volunteers to participate.
- Delegating role-based tasks to project teams can lighten the load for role-based volunteers.

Cons

- Time-limited project teams are generally not suitable for long-term or ongoing responsibilities.
- Project teams require consistent support to align their project with their stakeholders (e.g. the group, the district, the NSO).

Barriers

This chart shows typical barriers volunteers face that project-based volunteering can address.

Barrier	Considerations
Limited time	Clear scope and timeframe can be ideal for volunteers with limited availability. **Consider:** Develop clear working methods for project teams.
Financial restrictions	Thematic projects can sometimes be externally funded. **Consider:** Establishing dedicated accounts for projects, reducing the need for volunteers to pay upfront and be reimbursed later.
Lack of Awareness	If a volunteer opportunity is based around a specific theme or topic, it can be promoted at relevant events attended by interested people. A clear scope and timeframe should be communicated. **Consider:** Recruiting volunteers from specific, interested audiences.
Difficulty of long-term commitment	Having a project end-date can mitigate fears of long-term commitments. **Consider:** Include time for evaluation in the project period, if needed.

Barrier	Considerations
Lack of specific skills	Project can support the recruitment of experts on specific topics, who may need less training. It can also attract volunteers passionate about a topic who would appreciate training as a form of recognition. **Consider:** Communicating any mandatory training in advance during recruitment. Avoid excessive training for volunteers with existing expert abilities.
Health or mobility issues	Projects can vary widely in their requirements, including physical or virtual presence, level of social engagement, language and writing skills needed, etc. **Consider:** Assess whether a volunteer's limitations are actually limitations for a specific project.
Culture and tradition	Thematic projects that relate to specific cultures or religions can be more appealing to under-represented communities or groups not familiar with Scouting. **Consider:** What specific skills or areas of knowledge do different volunteers offer?
Geographical	Requirements for physical or virtual presence vary for different projects. **Consider:** Assess which meetings or activities can be performed in a hybrid or fully digital environment.
Others	Projects can be targeted at other volunteers, such as thematic experts outside of Scouting or with alumni Scouts.

Trends

- Events provide a natural scope and timeframe for project-based volunteering.
- New volunteers are often attracted to projects that they are passionate about, even if they don't identify closely with the Scout Movement.
- The time-limited and goal-oriented nature of projects makes them easier to explain to new or hesitant volunteers.
- Short but impactful volunteer engagements are an important part of flexible volunteering schemes and should be recognised and celebrated as complementary and equally important to longer-term volunteer engagements.

Best practices/case studies

Key practice

The 33rd Arab Scout Jamboree in 2023 was planned by a multinational team led by volunteers from the Emirates Scout Association. The Jamboree Planning Team was divided into nine project-based functional areas, such as food services, programmes and activities, and media and communications. Team leads selected volunteers based on their competencies and diverse experiences. Volunteers received both general and specialised training for their role. These

project teams empowered volunteers to focus on their functional area while the Jamboree Arab Support Team provided cross-team coordination and support.

Other practices

Kandersteg International Scout Centre organises "work parties" to engage volunteers for short-term service projects to support the centre. These parties provide a fun and engaging way for volunteers to support the Centre without requiring an extended commitment.

Scouts de Argentina created project teams to update their youth programme and adult training. Historically, these updates took a long time because different volunteer teams updated the youth programme and adult training individually. By creating project-based teams that focused on and coordinated both updates, Scouts de Argentina found the process much more efficient and enabled new innovations, such as an Indaba event to gather feedback from both youth and adult members.

Much of the work done in support of the World and Regional Scout Triennial Plans is being performed by volunteers through the WOSM operational framework. The World and Regional Triennial Plan Working Groups are organised around concrete deliverables with established deadlines.

Potential volunteers are made aware of the goal and timeline of a given project before they commit to supporting the project. Volunteers are recruited from the entire region or regions involved and work mostly through digital means. Recognition is often provided through online platforms.

4.3 Task-based volunteering

Definition

Task-based volunteering is defined by the task(s) that a volunteer commits to completing, rather than a role or title. Unlike project-based volunteering, task-based volunteering can focus on tasks connected to a specific role, project, or place. They can be either recurring or time-limited and can be solved independently or in team settings. From bringing snacks to a group meeting to tracking Safe from Harm or other policy compliance, task-based volunteers commit to completing a specific task or responsibility, thereby supporting their fellow volunteers.

Pros

- Many responsibilities of role-based volunteers can be turned over to a team of task-based volunteers.
- Sharing tasks across multiple task-based volunteers lightens the load of each volunteer.
- Low-commitment tasks can be more accessible and/or less intimidating to new or hesitant volunteers than role-based volunteering.

Cons

- Spreading tasks among many volunteers requires more volunteers and increases the need for strong volunteer management and coordination.

- Task-based volunteers need directive leadership and clear policies to stay aligned with the larger team.

Barriers

This chart indicates typical barriers volunteers face and how task-based volunteering can address them.

Barrier	Considerations
Limited time	Small tasks provide low-commitment opportunities for volunteers with limited availability to stay involved in Scouting. **Consider:** What volunteer activities can be broken down into short, low-commitment tasks?
Financial restrictions	Task-based volunteering does not directly remove financial barriers, but can include low-cost engagements. **Consider:** Low-costs tasks can be identified for volunteers who may not be able to take on expenses linked to volunteering.
Lack of awareness	Specific tasks can be easier to describe to new volunteers than a role-based volunteering engagement during recruitment. **Consider:** Identifying easy tasks for new volunteers to help them learn about the group.
Difficulty of long-term commitment	Volunteers can be invited to try a one-off task before being asked to commit in the longer-term. **Consider:** Identify easy entry tasks for new volunteers.
Lack of specific skills	It can be easier to recruit volunteers with particular skills or expert knowledge for specific tasks. **Consider:** Clearly communicate any mandatory training during recruitment, and avoid unnecessary training for volunteers who already have the required skills or experience.
Health or mobility issues	Individual tasks can be identified that are accessible or can be adapted to volunteers with health or mobility limitations. **Consider:** Adapting tasks where possible to make them more accessible.
Culture and Tradition	Task-based volunteering doesn't specifically address culture and traditional barriers, but it can be used as a tool to reduce the barrier. **Consider:** Adapt tasks to local expectations and identify activities that connect with existing cultures or traditions.
Geographical	Task-based volunteering does not directly address geographical barriers.

Barrier	Considerations
	Consider: Combining task-based volunteering with digital volunteering to reduce geographic barriers.
Others	Task-based volunteering can be a practical way to introduce flexible volunteering by dividing larger roles into smaller, clearly defined tasks. **Consider:** Making it easier to split roles in an NSO's organisational structure.

Trends

- Potential volunteers find specific tasks easier to understand than abstract role descriptions.
- Splitting role-based volunteering into individual tasks makes it easier to rethink how to delegate tasks efficiently to volunteers.
- Task-based volunteering is often seen as more approachable and tangible to new volunteers or volunteers unfamiliar with Scouting.
- Task-based volunteering can be a good way to engage parents, community members, or experts who are connected to Scouting but may not want to take on a formal volunteer role.
- Tasks can be internal to an organisation, such as creating or updating websites or IT management systems, strengthening social media presence, building or renovating physical facilities, planning or performing specific specialised programme elements for Scouts.
- For very small tasks that require very little or no training or induction, see the section on micro-volunteering.

Best practices

Key practice

Some adult leaders in the US use task-based volunteering to identify potential group leaders. In one case, potential volunteers were identified among Scout parents and asked to bring snacks to the next Scout evening. This simple task gave the parent an easy opportunity to get involved with a Scout group before making a larger commitment. (See: Identify Potential Scout Leaders with the Oreo Test, 2014.)

Other practices

The Scout Association (UK) streamlined its volunteer management system to focus on task-sharing volunteer teams instead of specialist, hierarchical roles. They reorganised over 400 different roles into three categories: lead volunteer, team leader, and team member. This approach allows for the flexible allocation of tasks to team members instead of relying on individual role-based volunteers.

Many NSOs, including Scouts Australia, Scouts Aotearoa, and the Singapore Scout Association, rely on task-based volunteers to translate documents and programme resources. Task-based

volunteering enables multilingual volunteers to use their specialised language skills to expand accessibility to these resources.

Scouts Canada has been encouraging volunteer retention by inviting parents to complete small tasks, such as teaching Scouts to tie knots. They have also simplified bureaucratic and training requirements.

Adult resource committees in India have created online spreadsheets listing tasks that need to be completed, allowing adult volunteers to easily sign up for tasks that they would like to complete.

4.4 Digital volunteering

Definition

Digital or virtual volunteering can overlap with any of the previously mentioned ways of volunteering. It involves a volunteer solving or performing their task or role primarily through digital means, thus not requiring any physical presence.

Examples include:

- Online camps or events (such as JOTI-JOTA).
- Leading programme activities:
    - E.g., cooking, multiplayer games, app-based treasure hunts.
- Online training through webinars, workshops, or question modules.
- Virtual team meetings.
- Online campfires or other types of networking and information-sharing events.
- Fundraising, for example, through crowdfunding platforms.
- Data collection and management, for example, membership data.
- Information gathering and dissemination.

Pros

- Digital volunteering can increase flexibility by overcoming geographic and mobility barriers present in in-person volunteering.
- Digital volunteering can bring together diverse teams across different locations and cultures, while reducing the financial, time, and environmental costs of travel.

Cons

- Long-distance digital teams have to factor in additional logistical challenges, such as coordinating different time zones.
- Team and community building can be more challenging using digital-only communications, and can lead to an increased risk of loneliness, detachment from the organisation, and decreased volunteer loyalty or satisfaction.
- Access to digital tools, including reliable internet connections, is unequally distributed and can exclude volunteers who lack ready access to those resources.

Barriers

This chart indicates typical barriers volunteers face that digital volunteering can address.

Barriers	Considerations
 Limited time	Digital tasks can offer more flexible in when volunteers contribute, although they may still require a significant overall time commitment. **Consider:** Combining digital volunteering with task-based or project-based volunteering to keep volunteer engagements manageable.
 Financial restrictions	Virtual volunteering can reduce costs linked to travel and in-person participation, but volunteers may still face other expenses during volunteering hours, such as covering their own meals or childcare. Digital tools, such as hardware and equipment, can also create costs for volunteers or the organisation they support. **Consider:** Identify whether volunteers may need financial support to help cover essential costs.
 Lack of awareness	Digital volunteering may be less visible in local communities than in-person participation, but can be promoted easily and made visible through online channels. **Consider:** Recognise, thank, and celebrate your digital volunteers frequently, even when they are not present at an event in-person.
 Difficulty of long-term commitment	Digital volunteering does not necessarily address difficulties with long-term commitments, but it is often combined with task- or project-based volunteering. **Consider:** Combining digital volunteering with task-based or project-based volunteering to keep volunteer engagements manageable.
 Lack of specific skills	Online training makes is easier to introduce new topics and build skills. **Consider:** Make digital training tools readily available to volunteers.
 Health or mobility issues	Digital volunteering engagements can be adapted to suit a variety of health or other considerations. **Consider:** Design ways of working that use digital accessibility tools, such as text-to-speech applications.
 Culture and tradition	Digital volunteering does not directly address this barrier.
 Geographical	Digital tools often make it easier for volunteers to connect across long distances, provided participants have equal access to digital tools. **Consider:** Forming diverse teams that could not realistically meet in-person but can online.

Barriers	Considerations
Others	Digital volunteering requires access to the internet and a basic level of digital literacy. These skills can be developed with the right support. **Consider:** Provide simple introductory courses on the digital tools new volunteers must use.

Trends

- Some employers are moving towards more project-based structures, which may make working hours - and therefore free time - vary more than in the past.
- Greater mobility across cities and countries increases the need for more flexible ways to stay involved in volunteering.
- Digital literacy is becoming more common as people increasingly use digital tools at work and in daily life.
- Digital volunteering is often combined with in-person tasks as part of a hybrid approach. This greatly eases the challenges of monitoring motivation and well-being compared to fully digital volunteers.

Best practices

Key practice

JOTA-JOTI, Scouting's largest annual event, shows the potential of digital volunteering. By using an online platform, volunteers can support the event from anywhere in the world. It is planned and prepared by an international team connected through online coordination meetings and digital messaging tools, including email and Slack. Even so, local Scout groups often gather in person to participate, recognising that the value of in-person activities cannot be fully replicated online.

Other practices

VCP Scouts in Germany have developed digital "tag teams", bringing local Scouting experts together from across the country to address shared challenges. Digital volunteering has allowed these teams to collaborate efficiently and quickly develop new solutions based on knowledge from different regions.

The Polish crowdsourcing platform TuDu connects interested digital volunteers with volunteer organisations, increasing awareness of task-based and micro-volunteering opportunities in new audiences of potential volunteers.

Scouts UK encourages young adults to take on remote trustee roles to help maintain ties and support their local Scout group, even if they are away from the area for work or study.

5. Peripheral ways of volunteering

This section describes ways of volunteering that support core volunteers by taking on smaller, clearly defined tasks. These volunteers usually do not need extensive knowledge of the organisation, or a strong sense of identification with it. Instead, they focus on a specific goal or task during their involvement. These types of volunteering are usually shorter-term and more flexible.

5.1 Micro-volunteering

Definition

Micro-volunteering involves flexible tasks that a volunteer can complete in an hour or less. In micro-volunteering, small tasks are typically distributed digitally, for example, through a post in an online forum accessible to interested volunteers. Interested volunteers can accept and complete the task immediately. Examples of micro-volunteering tasks include translating a resource into another language, proofreading a document or policy, providing technical help to reduce digital literacy gaps, cleaning toilets, mowing lawns, grocery shopping, or uploading images for digital maps.

Pros

- Micro-volunteering is extremely low-commitment, making it easy for new or hesitant volunteers to support Scouting.
- Micro-volunteering helps alleviate the burden of simple or routine tasks from role-based or other core ways of volunteering.

Cons

- Micro-volunteering requires robust infrastructure to connect volunteers with micro-volunteering tasks in an easy and productive way.
- Micro-volunteering is generally not suitable for time- or energy-intensive tasks or tasks that require specific prior experience.
- Depending on the availability and interest of the volunteer audience, micro-volunteering tasks might not be completed in a timely manner.

Barriers

This chart indicates typical barriers volunteers face that micro-volunteering can address.

Barriers	Considerations
⏱️ Limited time	Micro-volunteering tasks can be completed quickly, in whatever time a volunteer has available. **Consider:** Identify micro-volunteering tasks that are useful but not time sensitive.

Barriers	Considerations
 Financial restrictions	Micro-volunteering does not directly address financial barriers but typically does not involve expenses for the volunteers. **Consider:** Keep costs low for micro-volunteering tasks.
 Lack of awareness	Micro-volunteering provides an easy entry into becoming a Scout volunteer, enabling faster recruitment of new volunteers. The simple scope of the activities is easy to communicate. **Consider:** Identify micro-volunteering tasks that don't require previous experience with the scouting movement.
 Difficulty of long-term commitment	Micro-volunteering requires no prior commitment and no long-term commitment, allowing volunteers to support when they can and to step back when needed. **Consider:** Reach out to volunteers with more ways to engage, as well as opportunities to share their experience or recognise their effort.
 Lack of specific skills	Micro-volunteering can target specific skills but generally tries to appeal to a broad audience, independent of skills or prior experience. **Consider:** Design micro-volunteering tasks to give volunteers a "taste" of scouting.
 Health or mobility issues	Micro-volunteering is often very flexible and opportunities vary in terms of physical or virtual presence, levels of social engagements, and language or writing skill requirements. **Consider:** Offer a variety of different micro-volunteering tasks, accessible to volunteers with different abilities.
 Culture and tradition	Small, single-scoped activities are usually not heavily bound to Scouting's symbolic or value-based system, making them more accessible to cultures less familiar with volunteering or Scouting. **Consider:** Create micro-volunteering tasks that don't require previous experience with scouting.
 Geographical	Micro-volunteering is often virtual or local, which can mitigate distance and other geographic barriers. Some geographic barriers may still exist depending on the type of task and other specific requirements. **Consider:** Finding tasks that can be easily accomplished by local or digital volunteers.
 Others	Micro-volunteering is easier to manage than task-based volunteering in terms of recognition and leadership, due to the simple nature of tasks and low expectations of inclusion. Difficulties may arise, however, if a new platform is needed to recruit and engage the volunteers.

Barriers	Considerations
	Consider: Using existing cross-volunteering platforms to support your NSO in Scouting, if possible.

Trends

- Volunteer organisations increasingly use micro-volunteering to offer people opportunities to contribute without a long-term commitment.
- Successful digitally based micro-volunteering programs depend on:
    - Creating engaging and simplified onboarding experiences, for example, creating a profile once instead of having to apply multiple times.
    - Keeping tasks short and interesting, encouraging people to come back to complete more tasks.
    - Measuring impact so volunteers can better understand their value and be encouraged to stay involved.
    - Creating a micro-volunteer social community, newsletter, or meetup to help volunteers interact with each other.
- Safe from Harm and/or training policies may limit the types of tasks micro-volunteers can complete without prior training or screening.

Best practices

Key practice

The Estonian Scout Association launched "Tööampsud" (Work bites), a website with a collection of different tasks that can be done from home. Tasks should be crucial for the NSA and require minimal induction effort. Each task includes a short overview with objectives, required tools, required knowledge, location, and a point of contact. It introduced an award system, giving small coloured wooden beads for tasks completed. This method helped the association re-engage young adults who had moved away for study or work.

Tasks could include translating webpages, designing flyers, supporting the development of videos on good practices, supporting a travelling exhibition on different camps and camp badges, or developing a song book.

Other Practices

Denmark's Det Danske Spejderkorps created a national campaign encouraging parents to complete an online form detailing their availability and abilities. Local Scout groups can then contact those parents about long- or short-term volunteer opportunities. The initiative also helped local groups develop lists of tasks that could be completed in under 30 minutes. When Scout leaders met parents and were told, "Just tell me if you need some help," they could immediately assign a task. The aim is for parents to arrive early when picking up their child from Scout meetings and use that extra time to complete a task, such as cleaning and tidying, gardening, or small digital infrastructure tasks.

For technical peer-to-peer support, Scouts UK created an online forum accessible to group leaders and national volunteers. Users could submit requests for help with specific tasks, which

could then be picked up by volunteer “super-users”. These volunteers were selected based on their existing skills and experience, reducing the need for additional training.

Adult resource committees in India have created online spreadsheets listing tasks that need completing. Adult volunteers can then sign up for tasks that they want to complete.

5.2 One-off volunteering

Definition

One-off volunteers are not connected to an organisation like regular volunteers, but complete a task, project, or role on a single occasion with no expectations of further commitment. Examples of one-off volunteering include helping out at a meeting or event (e.g. a festive dinner for the homeless), supporting a community service project, or providing one-off pro bono expertise or professional services.

Pros

- One-off volunteering can provide much-needed help to relieve regular volunteers.
- One-off volunteering makes it possible to arrange large-scale events that require more effort than an individual group or organisation can support.
- One-off volunteering can be ideal for engaging friends of friends or professional experts who would like to help out, or work pro bono, to support the local Scouting community.

Cons

- One-off volunteers rarely identify closely with a specific cause or organisation and often have lower levels of commitment than other volunteers.
- One-off volunteers are often unfamiliar to the larger team, and so their abilities are often underused, and they receive limited training.
- One-off volunteers may lack the training or organisation-specific certifications expected from other volunteers, especially where lengthy training and onboarding procedures can discourage one-off volunteers from volunteering for longer periods.

Barriers

This chart shows which typical barriers volunteers face one-off volunteering can address.

Barrier	Considerations
⏱️ Limited time	Timing is usually not flexible, however, single engagements keep time commitments low. **Consider:** Reach out to one-off volunteers at times when core volunteers are particularly busy and/or need extra help.
💎 Financial restrictions	One-off volunteering does not directly address this barrier.
📣 Lack of awareness	Both tasks and scopes are easy to communicate when recruiting.

Barrier	Considerations
	Consider: Use one-off volunteering to introduce adults to the scouting movement.
Difficulty of long-term commitment	Because this type of volunteering is based on a single or short-term activity, it can be a good way to involve adults who are hesitant about making longer-term commitments. **Consider:** Create a welcoming and positive experience or community that encourages volunteers to return for future volunteer opportunities.
Lack of specific skills	Specific training usually takes place onsite at the event or engagement. This should be communicated clearly. **Consider:** Identify what training is necessary for the engagement and what training is not necessary.
Health or mobility issues	Not easy to address as the tasks are usually very specific.
Culture and tradition	If the event is connected to a holiday or religious event, it may be easier to recruit volunteers that relates to that cause. **Consider:** Connect one-off volunteers with engagements that matter to them or their community.
Geographical	Engagements are often connected to a physical presence, but some digital engagements may exist. **Consider:** Use one-off volunteering to engage adults in the local community.
Others	Even with limited identification with Scouting, the simple scope of the event or engagement can often be clearly communicated to adults outside of Scouting.

Trends

One-off volunteering taps into several trends and makes it easier to commit for volunteers who:

- Lack time for continuous commitment or are hesitant about committing to longer roles.
- Do not see themselves as Scouts or do not fully identify with the Scout Movement.

Short but impactful volunteer engagements are an important part of flexible volunteering schemes and should be recognised and celebrated as both complementary and equally important to longer-term volunteer engagements.

One-off volunteering is typically not formalised, so Safe from Harm considerations might limit which tasks one-off volunteers can perform.

Best practices

During the European Region's COVID Impact Study, a data engineer from outside the Scout Movement, who had friends volunteering on the project, helped analyse the data collected.

During larger district or regional camps, local farmers near the campsites sometimes use their equipment to help move large water containers to the activity sites or donate spare produce to the Scouts. These farmers are usually not connected to Scouting but have been approached by volunteers because of their proximity to the event.

One-off volunteering most often takes place at the local level or in specific contexts. As such, strategies to recruit volunteers for this type of engagement can follow similar practices for task-based, project-based, and micro-volunteering engagements.

5.3 Informal volunteering (family and community Scouting)

Definition

Informal volunteering refers to adults who provide a service or support to a Scout group locally without being directly linked to or an official member of the Scout Movement. This form of volunteering does not involve official appointments, training, or registration.

Examples include Scouts and individuals outside the Movement working together on a community project that also benefits a Scout group in some way, or family members of Scouts who undertake tasks that support the Scouting community despite not being members of the organisation.

Pros

- Like one-off volunteering, support from these individuals reduces the workload of formal volunteers.
- Informal volunteering can create new connections and expand volunteer networks. It can also bring new people and perspectives into the organisation, while creating opportunities for them to get involved again in the future.
- Informal volunteering can be a no-commitment first step towards other forms of volunteering.
- Informal volunteers already support Scouting in many contexts, even if their support isn't officially recognised as "volunteering" because they aren't members of the Scout organisation.

Cons

- Since no formal agreements are made and no training is provided, the tasks performed depend entirely on the informal volunteers' existing abilities.
- Informal volunteering is often difficult to plan, requiring a lot of flexibility when planning activities or events.

Barriers

This chart indicates typical barriers volunteers face that informal volunteering can address.

Barrier	Considerations
 Limited time	Volunteers only offer the time they have. **Consider:** Communicate clearly with informal volunteers about what they are willing to offer and what their limits are.
 Financial restrictions	Costs may be reduced through local support. **Consider:** Arranging donated food, materials, or other in-kind contributions from local businesses or partners.
 Lack of awareness	Informal volunteering often takes place where Scouting interacts with the wider, helping local people become more familiar with Scouting and opportunities to get involved. Opportunities are not formalised. **Consider:** Share examples of community support or interactions with local news outlets.
 Difficulty of long-term commitment	Volunteers only offer the time they have. A positive experience may also encourage them to volunteer again or explore other ways to get involved. **Consider:** Invest in making a positive volunteering experience to encourage informal volunteers to come back (and bring their friends!).
 Lack of specific skills	Informal volunteering can attract people from the local community who already have skills that are useful for a particular activity or task. However, opportunities for training may be limited because involvement is often short-term or spontaneous. **Consider:** What skills can members of the local community contribute to support your group?
 Health or mobility issues	Because informal volunteering often takes place within the local community, it can be accessible to people already familiar with or present in that location. However, due to its informal nature, it may not always be possible to make adaptions in advance that cater to limitations.
 Culture and tradition	Can create opportunities for Scouting to connect with people from different communities and backgrounds through local activities.
 Geographical	Not addressed by this way of volunteering.
 Others	Can attract much needed practical help or sponsorships.

Trends

According to the UN State of World Volunteerism Report 2026, informal volunteering is by far the most common way of volunteering. As such, it has significant potential to support the Scout

Movement and help Scouting connect with local communities. Data on informal volunteering is sparse, leaving significant knowledge gaps and few identified best practices.

Best practices

Informal volunteering, by its nature, cannot be formalised through an organisation. Its use depends on the visibility and inclusivity of NSOs from the national level down to individual Scout groups.

Other practices

KFUM Spejderene in Denmark created a family Scouting programme that relies on a parent or other relative taking an active part in the Scout meeting with their 3–6-year-old child. Only the child is a member and thus considered a Scout. One or a few Scout leaders are present to guide the meeting. The presence of parents and guardians allows Scout groups to run with as few volunteer resources as possible by assigning parents basic tasks to perform during the meeting. (See European Scout Region, Best Practices and Case Studies (PowerPoint), 2025.)

6. Context-based Ways of Volunteering

Scouting is a youth organisation focused on non-formal education. Because of this, and the way Scouting exists and engages with communities across the globe, several contexts merit additional consideration. These include engagements through partnerships (i.e. employee volunteering), through the formal education system (school-based Scouting), and when youth members act in a double role as volunteers (youth volunteering).

6.1 Youth volunteering (under 18 years old)

Definition

Youth volunteering can take many different forms. In general, it refers to any volunteer engagement performed by a volunteer less than 18 years old, which is not considered part of their normal youth programme. The boundary between youth volunteering and youth programme can vary from NSO to NSO.

Youth volunteering should always be considered part of the Scout's educational journey and therefore requires extra support from adult volunteers compared to an adult doing the same task. Youth volunteering also raises particular safeguarding and accountability concerns, depending on local laws and an NSO's Safe from Harm policy. For these reasons, it is important to be clear about the boundaries between the youth programme, youth volunteer engagements, and volunteer engagements that are not suitable for young people.

Examples:

- Youth from older units act as leaders or programme providers for younger Scout units. For example, a 13-year-old Scout acting as support leader for Cub Scouts during their weekly meetings.
- Youth taking on roles in local, regional, or national boards or committees.
- Youth performing service team or programme roles at regional or national camps or jamborees.
- Examples do NOT include patrol leaders in their own unit, or other tasks considered part of the normal youth programme.

Pros

- Providing volunteer opportunities for youth can help them grow as Scouts and put into practice the training they received through the youth programme. It can also provide a more gradual transition from programme receiver to programme provider.
- Youth volunteering engagements foster a belief in volunteerism and can encourage a young person to become an adult volunteer later in life.
- Youth volunteering on committees and boards with decision-making power is an important part of youth empowerment, giving youth a stronger voice alongside adult leaders.

Cons

- Involving youth as volunteers rather than participants can take time away from their regular youth programme and split priorities in ways not conducive to the Scout programme.
- Not all volunteer tasks are appropriate, safe, legal, or educationally productive for youth volunteers.

Barriers

This chart indicates typical barriers volunteers face and how youth volunteering can address them.

Barriers	Considerations
 Limited time	While young volunteers can provide additional support to adult volunteers, they may need significantly more mentoring. **Consider:** Young people and older volunteers may be available at different times, due to school, work, family, and other commitments.
 Financial restrictions	Additional expenses related to transport, food, or participation can be a significant barrier for youth volunteers. **Consider:** Subsidising costs for youth volunteers to encourage their participation.
 Lack of Awareness	Youth volunteers are often scouting participants. Therefore, it does not directly address this barrier.
 Difficulty of long-term commitment	Youth volunteering encourages a spirit of volunteerism among young people that they may carry with them into adulthood. **Consider:** Helping youth volunteers transition into different volunteer roles when they become adults.
 Lack of specific skills	Youth volunteers often have many options to learn through the youth programme. Therefore, it does not directly address this barrier.
 Health or mobility issues	Youth volunteering does not directly address this barrier.
 Culture and tradition	Volunteering can sometimes provide a way for young people to get involved in Scouting when other forms of participation may be less accessible or familiar to them. **Consider:** Young volunteers from underrepresented communities can help build trust, act as ambassadors, and encourage other young people from their communities to get involved.
 Geographical	Youth often cannot travel far from their homes. Therefore, it does not directly address this barrier.

Others	Excessive and overly difficult volunteer commitments can be a barrier for youth to participate in the youth programme. Youth volunteering should be carefully considered to make sure it supports the young person's educational development first and foremost.

Trends

- Youth volunteering is common in many NSOs, with varying degrees of formalisation.

Best practices

Youth Scout networks provide an age-appropriate venue for young people to take part in the leadership of their NSO in many countries, including Brazil and Colombia.

Common practices exist across Europe; for example, in Scandinavia and many Balkan countries, 13- 17-year-old Scouts plan, organise, and lead the programme for younger Scout units. Legal responsibility always rests with a leader over 18, but youth volunteers handle much of the practical implementation.

6.2 School-based Scouting

Definition

School-based Scouting refers to a variety of Scout programmes in which schools play a critical role in organising and delivering Scouting. Groups consist mostly of students from the school, with the volunteers consisting primarily of teachers, school staff, and (in some cases) alumni.

School-based Scouting programmes range from partnerships between Scout groups and schools to government control and an integration of Scouting into the school curriculum.

In school-based Scouting, schools take an active role in recruiting and/or approving volunteers, scheduling activities, providing recognition for Scouts and volunteers, and/or overseeing programme delivery. This is in contrast to community-based Scouting, in which Scouting may take place within a school facility but is otherwise delivered and supported by independent community groups.

Many of the barriers, motivations, and ways of volunteering identified above also apply to school-based Scouting programmes. That said, school-based Scouting introduces a variety of additional factors to be considered, including the following:

Pros

- Resources are often guaranteed to a Scout group, including a meeting location, classrooms for conducting training sessions, and sports facilities.
- Meetings are consistent and weekly, and there is a stronger guarantee that a group will have a leader.

- Fewer obstacles exist for a student to be involved in Scouting if they simply need to change into their uniforms after class.
- Partnerships with schools provide great opportunities to recruit adult leaders from school employees who already have daily contact with and professional training to support young people.
- In places where teachers fill most Scout leader roles, recruitment can target these groups, and volunteers may already bring relevant training and knowledge.
- Teachers have specialised training to educate the age group they lead and may be subject to stricter rules (including safeguarding procedures) governing their interaction with Scouts than in community-based Scouting groups.
- Teachers are usually long-term volunteers, as their volunteer role runs alongside their formal employment. However, they can be moved in and out of group leadership depending on needs in other activities.
- Certified and trained counsellors, especially in well-being and mental health, may be available at the school and could be retrained or used directly in the Safe from Harm and well-being initiatives of local Scout groups for both Scouts and leaders.
- Being part of the school system, although often extra-curricular, creates opportunities to formally recognise the skills of volunteers.
- Students and volunteers share a schedule, allowing more flexibility during heavy academic periods.
- Scouting's growth is less sensitive to volunteer recruitment and community engagement, instead depending more on support from the formal education system.
- School-based Scouting can support strong and rapid growth and recruitment of both volunteers and young people.

Cons

- Balancing teaching responsibilities with supporting a Scout group can increase the risk of volunteer burnout. Teachers may also need to prioritise their formal responsibilities, leaving less time for Scouting.
- Government-led or compulsory Scouting programmes can create tensions with Scouting's non-formal and voluntary nature. Additional effort may be needed to ensure that the Scout Method and non-formal education remain central to the Scouting experience.
- Limited flexibility of time and space due to the Scout activities taking place at school and within certain hours defined by the school. This can be hard to combine with the working hours of adults outside the school system.
- Recruiting primarily from a school's community can reduce diversity, as participants may share similar socioeconomic backgrounds, areas of residence, and even gender for boys' or girls' school. This can also lead to limited diversity among Scout leaders.
- It can be complicated to include non-teacher volunteers in a school-based Scouting system.
- Different Scout sections might not interact with each other. While Senior Patrol Leaders can lead and run activities in Scouts and beyond, Cubs might depend more on adult leaders.
- Some schools have more resources than others, such as swimming pools, running tracks, and gymnasiums.
- Leaders might default to limiting Scout sessions to school only, excluding outdoor activities such as hikes.

Trends

- Roughly one-third of NSOs are predominantly school-based, but those programmes account for over 90% of current Scouts and 72% of current adult volunteers worldwide.
- Around 28% of adult volunteers worldwide support just 8% of Scouts in community-based programmes. This may point to differences between community-based and school-based Scouting in areas such as volunteer motivation, recruitment, retention, or the number of adults needed to support young people.
- In school-based Scouting, adult volunteers may be able, or expected, to take on responsibility for larger groups of young people. At the same time, school-based Scouting may create additional barriers for adults who are not connected to the school hosting the Scout group, including limited time, fewer opportunities to get involved, or recruitment processes that are more closely linked to the school community.
- Adults in school-based Scouting can benefit particularly from educational policy initiatives such as ministry circulars promoting Scouting, recognising Scouting service with professional development points or benefits, and time and budget allocation to support Scouting.

Best practices

Supporting adults in school-based systems depends on their development not only as professional educators but also as Scout leaders. Adult recruitment, training, retention, and recognition need to be tailored to the needs and limitations of professional educators and their often-demanding schedules.

Measures that support adult leader development in predominantly school-based systems include recognition and incentives for teacher-leaders (e.g., credit for training, promotion-based awards, or other professional recognitions), promoting and celebrating voluntary adult membership, and time-release arrangements for training and activities. Ensure training and volunteer responsibilities fit school calendars and teacher responsibilities. Modular training, structured recognition, and manageable responsibilities help ensure school-based volunteers succeed.

Some school-based NSOs reported challenges in keeping young people engaged after they graduated from the school that hosted their Scout group. One way to address this is to offer hybrid pathways that combine school-based and community-based Scouting, giving young people continued opportunities to participate after leaving school or when they move locations. Different ways of volunteering (e.g. digital, youth, project-based) could provide additional avenues to keep older youth and former youth members engaged after they leave school.

More information on school-based Scouting can be found in World Scouting's Report, *School-Based Scouting: Concept and Key Features.*

6.3 Employee volunteering

Definition

Employee volunteering relates mainly to two types of engagements:

1. Companies choosing to perform joint volunteering engagements, usually for a short period of time (e.g. for several hours over a period of 1-2 days), where all employees support a project that helps a community or NGO.

2. Countries or companies create policies that support volunteers, for example, by giving employees a set number of days off each year outside normal paid time off to spend volunteering for an approved cause.

Examples of these include companies in the UK, Australia, and the US and national policies in Switzerland and Canada.

Pros

- Providing more paid time off for existing volunteers allows them to engage in bigger volunteer tasks and maintain a good work/life/volunteer balance.
- Using joint company days can be very valuable if used within their specific area of work. For example, software companies can run hackathons/sprints to help NGOs meet existing requirements for a day.
- Employee volunteering can allow individuals to volunteer despite time and/or economic pressures to work.
- Employee volunteering can provide an easy introduction to volunteering with the Scout Movement for individuals who might not otherwise consider volunteering.
- Employee volunteering can help underscore the value and importance of volunteering for the volunteer, the volunteer organisation, and the wider public.

Cons

- Having differently trained volunteers work on a project for a short time can limit the impact of tasks that require more in-depth training or knowledge.
- Employees likely to volunteer first are often also involved in one-off volunteering, and therefore share those same limitations.

Barriers

This chart shows which typical barriers volunteers face this model of volunteering can address.

Barrier	Considerations
⏱️ Limited time	Employee volunteering provides options for time otherwise spent at work to be used in volunteering. **Consider:** Encouraging employers to offer lenient time-off policies for employees who volunteer.
💎 Financial restrictions	For joint employee volunteer days, companies will often pay any related expenses. **Consider:** Engaging companies to partner with Scouting to complete a one-off volunteer project.
📣 Lack of awareness	Creates awareness among a mixed group of volunteers who are not necessarily already seeking out volunteering possibilities. **Consider:** Using employee volunteering partnerships to introduce new adults to Scouting.

Difficulty of long-term commitment	Limited timeframe for the joint employee volunteer days. **Consider:** Design volunteer engagements to be easily accomplished in the agreed timeframe.
Lack of specific skills	Employees will typically not have sufficient time for training on the day but might provide needed skills through their professional qualifications. **Consider:** Partner with employee volunteers on projects that take advantage of their pre-existing, specialist skills.
Health or mobility issues	Employers may have pre-existing accessibility accommodations that can be used to support their employees.
Culture and tradition	Employers may already have policies to support their diverse employees at work. These policies may apply or be made to apply during employee volunteer engagements as well.
Geographical	Opportunities may be limited to specific approved locations.
Others	Employee volunteering is often done in partnerships with non-Scouting groups (e.g. private sector employers, governments, and policymakers). The applicability of this way of volunteering is tied to a group or NSO's success in establishing these partnerships.

Trends

Several countries have performed active lobby/influence work to speak for the implementation of national volunteer policies. For instance, in Switzerland, Scout volunteers and researchers successfully lobbied their government to double the amount of guaranteed vacation time for young adults in order to support Scout camps and other youth-serving volunteer work. (See: Parliament Doubles Youth Leave, 2024 (German-Language))

Best practices

- Australian government workers are given up to ten days of paid vacation to use exclusively for volunteering. Many don't end up using them. Scouts Australia is working to encourage those employees to try Scouting. Scouting in Egypt and Switzerland have similar schemes.
- Scouting Ireland has worked with the government to provide tax incentives for time spent volunteering.
- Scouting America has partnered with individual companies and corporations to "match" volunteer time with financial donations.
- Scouts in Malaysia (school-based Scouting) are working with the country's Ministry of Education to recognise Scout volunteering as continued professional development, an important metric for teachers.
- Some companies, for example, in London and Germany, partner with technology platforms that help employees find volunteering projects to support.

7. Additional factors

This section addresses additional factors that are important to consider when increasing the flexibility of a volunteer management system.

7.1 Diversity and inclusion in volunteering

Increasing the flexibility of a volunteer management system should enable more volunteers to support the Scout Movement. That said, additional barriers to participation often affect members of certain communities or individuals with certain marginalised identities. To increase volunteer diversity, these barriers must also be addressed.

World Scouting's 2024 Diversity and Inclusion Data Report measured the diversity of Scouting's membership (including young people and adult volunteers) in 88 NSOs across all five World Regions. The report studied diversity across 14 dimensions, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, nationality, geography, economic status, parental status, disability, youth in conflict with the law, education, and identity and sexual orientation. Diversity in many of those dimensions has improved, although some, such as gender and economic status, still show room for improvement. That report provides many recommendations for addressing barriers in each of the 14 identified dimensions.

One area that requires particular attention is accessibility for volunteers with disabilities. Volunteers may need different types of flexibility, support, and preparation depending on their individual needs. Because disabilities can be both visible and invisible, and can affect people in very different ways, there is no single approach that will work for everyone. More work is needed to develop practical guidance, training, and support for volunteers with different types of disabilities.

Increasing flexibility in volunteer opportunities is an important way to improve accessibility. Different volunteering options may be more or less suitable depending on a volunteer's circumstances, so offering a range of options can help more people participate.

Increasing volunteer diversity can also help create a more inclusive environment for young people. When volunteers reflect underrepresented groups and communities, they can model inclusion and help young people feel that they belong. Local volunteers also bring valuable knowledge of their own communities and can help explain the value of Scouting to people who may be less familiar with the Movement.

7.2 Partnerships

Strategic partnerships can help NSOs reach new volunteers and provide skilled volunteer support in important areas. Many existing Scouting partnerships support Scout volunteers by providing skilled training. For example, the Scouts go Solar partnership benefits the Scout programme by bringing the expertise of Greenpeace and Solafrica.

Some partnerships also enable the Scout Movement to reach new groups of potential volunteers. Partnerships with other volunteer organisations in Poland and Singapore have helped those NSOs promote volunteer opportunities to larger audiences of interested volunteers. Partnerships with community- or identity-based organisations in particular can help Scouting reach new communities.

National youth councils or organisations of volunteer associations are often a good starting point for finding like-minded partner organisations. Some national councils provide shared recruitment platforms that can help reach new groups of volunteers, offer courses to further qualify volunteers, or support volunteer management. They can also have political influence that can be leveraged, such as for purposes outlined in employee volunteering. Governmental partnerships with ministries or youth councils can provide a source of funding or open up possibilities for additional training for volunteers.

8. 43rd World Scout Conference, Egypt, 2024 - A global case study on new ways of volunteering

A flexible volunteering system should strategically incorporate multiple ways of volunteering. The planning and execution of the 43rd World Scout Conference show how multiple ways of volunteering can be managed simultaneously.

The 43rd World Scout Conference, held in Cairo, Egypt, in August 2024, brought together more than 2,000 participants representing 176 National Scout Organizations. The World Scout Conference is WOSM's governing assembly. It gathers representatives from NSOs worldwide to determine strategic priorities, elect leadership, and adopt policies that shape the future of Scouting.

A team of approximately 390 volunteers, including 350 Egyptian volunteers and 40 international volunteers, worked collaboratively to plan, support, and deliver the event. Organising an event of this scale required extensive planning, coordination, and volunteer engagement before, during, and after the conference. Rather than relying solely on traditional volunteer models, the conference mobilised a diverse volunteer ecosystem that reflected emerging global trends in volunteer participation.

8.1 Role-based leadership, project-based working teams

Team leaders needed to be role-based volunteers so they could provide consistent, long-term leadership in the years leading up to the Conference. This group of longer-term volunteers steered the Conference from start to finish, providing necessary guidance to teams of project-based volunteers who facilitated the event's planning and delivery.

Some individual roles, however, were limited to the preparation, implementation, or closure phases of the Conference, allowing some flexibility. To do this, role-based volunteers worked closely with each other to hand off their work to another volunteer at the end of their role.

Under the leadership and support of the role-based team leaders, project-based teams formed to address various preparation projects, including developing a brand identity and symbolic framework, organising venue logistics, and establishing the conference agenda. Each project team could set its own timeline, meeting schedule, and logistics, providing flexibility to meet team members' needs. This reflects a growing trend where individuals prefer project-based volunteer opportunities that fit around studies, work, and personal commitments.

8.2 Digital volunteering for flexible project teams

Virtual meetings and online project management tools allowed teams to be formed across continents, engaging volunteers from Egypt as well as from World Scouting and a number of other NSOs.

Digital meetings enabled a high degree of flexibility for volunteers in terms of meeting time and venue. Each team could decide when to meet, and progress could be made between meetings through shared digital communications and file-sharing platforms. This flexibility was crucial to forming teams of volunteers with different schedules, in different geographic areas, across generations, and with diverse previous experiences.

Digital volunteering also provided inclusive ways to expand the event's programme. Volunteers developed social media content, digital communications, online resources for participants, and real-time event coverage during the conference. A series of online pre-engagement webinars was produced to prepare conference participants for the in-person programme.

During the event, a virtual "Attendee Hub" enabled online access to many of the Conference sessions. These digital engagements expanded the reach of the Conference programme in a way that was easily accessible to a variety of volunteers and participants. Digital technology enabled volunteers to extend the Conference's reach beyond the physical venue and engage audiences worldwide.

8.3 Operationalising short-term volunteers

The Conference relied on short-term volunteers to perform essential operational roles traditionally associated with major events. Volunteers welcomed participants, coordinated logistics, managed venues, and ensured smooth daily operations. Volunteers supported all aspects of conference delivery, including:

- Registration and accreditation
- Transportation and logistics
- Protocol and VIP services
- Interpretation and language support
- Media and communications
- Digital engagement
- NSO Support
- Venue operations
- Programme facilitation
- Youth engagement activities
- Governance and conference administration
- Volunteer management

These short-term volunteers expanded the capacity of the planning phases' role-based and project teams. For example, 12 role-based volunteers led the Conference help desk, working digitally to answer participant questions, resolve issues, and provide logistical support starting in March. In July, the team expanded to include task-based volunteers to support the help desk during the Conference in August.

Engaging task-based volunteers during the delivery phase, the most intense period of the event, allowed the initial team of 12 to scale up their work to meet the event's needs. Over the course of the Conference, they resolved over 460 individual support requests. At the same time, the task-based volunteers were only asked to commit to the period of time when that increased capacity was most necessary. The other event delivery teams similarly used task-based volunteers to increase their capacity during the Conference.

The Conference also relied on volunteers' preexisting personal and professional experience to meet needs that required specialised skills. Areas such as media and stage production, translation and interpretation, event logistics management, presentation skills and panel

moderation, and information technology and communications benefited from skilled task-based volunteers who could meet those needs with little to no additional training. By applying professional competencies, these volunteers improved both efficiency and service quality.

8.4 Young volunteers

Young people played central roles throughout the Conference planning and delivery. Consistent with the Scout Movement's commitment to youth leadership, young volunteers were actively involved in planning, facilitation, participant support, communications, and decision-making processes. Creating space for young volunteers and Rover Scouts to collaborate with older volunteers across the planning and delivery phases gave young people valuable experience while also bringing fresh perspectives into the planning process. The digital, project-based teams gave young volunteers the flexibility they needed to fit their volunteering engagements into their work, school, and personal schedules. Rather than being passive beneficiaries, youth were empowered to act as partners in delivering the event.

8.5 Roles bring expertise, projects build experience

Much like the event itself, each national delegation to the conference was made up of role-based and project-based volunteers. Role-based national and international commissioners (among other roles) supported their delegations through years of experience developed in their role. This was critical to their success as they volunteered their expertise and time to:

- Review constitutional matters
- Discuss strategic priorities
- Develop resolutions
- Support decision-making processes
- Guide the future direction of global Scouting

Meanwhile, many project-based volunteers supported projects such as campaigning for an event bid, promoting an event or programme (e.g. JOTI-JOTA or Kandersteg International Scout Centre), or leading a specific project within their national delegation. These project-based volunteers benefited from the expertise brought by the role-based volunteers. They contributed to the event's success in key ways, while knowing their volunteer commitment would not last past the end of the Conference.

8.6 Impact

The combination of role-based, project-based, task-based, and digital volunteering created a wide range of opportunities for a diverse group of volunteers. This volunteer programme contributed significantly to the successful delivery of the 43rd World Scout Conference.

Key outcomes included:

- Successful support for more than 2,000 participants.
- Effective collaboration among volunteers from different countries and cultures.
- Enhanced youth participation and leadership.
- Increased use of professional and technical volunteer skills.
- Strong integration of digital and on-site volunteer engagement.
- Strengthened international cooperation within the Scout Movement.

Beyond operational success, the volunteer experience created opportunities for learning, capacity building, intercultural exchange, and personal development.

8.7 Lessons learned

The experience of the 43rd World Scout Conference holds several important lessons about the future of volunteering:

1. Large-scale events benefit from combining multiple volunteer models rather than relying on a single approach.
2. Project- and task-based volunteering significantly increases an organisation’s effectiveness.
3. Youth participation strengthens innovation and ownership.
4. International volunteering enriches cultural understanding and knowledge sharing.
5. Digital tools expand opportunities for volunteer engagement.
6. Hybrid models provide greater flexibility and accessibility.
7. Strong volunteer leadership structures are essential for managing complex events.

8.8 Conclusion

The 43rd World Scout Conference in Egypt provides a compelling example of how flexible volunteering can be successfully implemented in a global event setting.

By mobilising 350 Egyptian volunteers and 40 international volunteers across a wide range of roles and responsibilities, the Conference showcased volunteering's evolution from a traditional service model to a dynamic ecosystem that includes skills-based, digital, international, youth-led, governance, intercultural, episodic, and hybrid forms of engagement.

Throughout the planning process, role-based volunteers provided steady leadership while specific responsibilities were delegated between project-based teams and task-based volunteers. Shifting planning responsibilities to digital, project-based volunteer teams gave diverse, international teams the flexibility to form and perform. Meanwhile, task-based volunteers were critical to increasing project teams' capacity during event delivery.

As volunteering continues to evolve worldwide, the experience of the 43rd World Scout Conference offers valuable insights for organisations seeking to design inclusive, flexible, and impactful volunteer programmes that can meet future challenges.

9. Implementation

As shown in the preceding chapters, there are a variety of ways that volunteers can support the Scout Movement. Not every way of volunteering will work for every volunteer or in the context of every NSO.

Each NSO must tailor its volunteer options to the needs and barriers of its specific context. How does one do that? Best practice is to build a habit of evaluation, ideation, and implementation. An overview of this process is presented below, while a more detailed process can be found in the Self-Assessment Tool.

9.1 Evaluation, ideation, implementation

Evaluation

The first step to becoming more flexible is to evaluate the current volunteer situation. This comes down to two key questions:

1. What volunteers will be needed to meet an NSO's future goals?
2. What barriers do current and potential volunteers face today?

Any new way of volunteering should achieve two things: 1) help address the NSO's identified need, and 2) reduce barriers for the volunteers it aims to engage. The most appropriate measures of success will depend on the need identified. Possible measures include:

- The number of volunteers engaged, either overall or from a particular demographic.
- The number of volunteers retained over a specified period, either overall or from a particular demographic.
- The number of adults from a target audience who take up volunteering, either overall or from a particular demographic.
- The impact of volunteers, such as the number of Scout groups with leaders and the quality of events executed.
- Volunteers' experiences and satisfaction, measured through feedback or surveys.

Ideation

Once an NSO identifies how it would like to develop its volunteer base, it is time to develop implementation plans. Unfortunately, no path guarantees attracting or retaining volunteers. This period should be characterised by openness, curiosity, and an ability to test different ways of volunteering quickly.

Implementation

When developing an implementation plan, be prepared to experiment with new ideas and recognise that they may not always work as intended. Test new approaches on a small scale and listen closely to volunteer feedback. This can help improve the approach before introducing it

more widely, while involving existing volunteers in shaping the systems designed to support them.

Evaluating a new way of volunteering may also identify new ideas, needs, or target audiences for the NSO to consider. The process can then begin again, using these findings to inform the next cycle.

It may take time for a new way of volunteering to become established within an NSO. However, creating more flexible and accessible opportunities can make it easier for a wider range of people to volunteer.

9.2 Potential challenges

NSO leadership, current staff, or volunteers may be hesitant to implement new volunteer systems. Some potential challenges are listed below with possible solutions or mitigation strategies.

Challenge	Mitigation
NSO Leadership may be resistant to changing volunteer structures.	Explain to leaders that flexible volunteering allows the organisation to grow its volunteer capacity, which makes it both a necessary and important way to ensure the sustainability of Scouting.
Current volunteers or staff may feel changes to volunteer structures are a threat to Scouting's traditions or values.	Explain to leaders that flexible volunteering provides additional ways to volunteer that should enhance and not interfere with the traditional Scouting experience.
Current volunteers or staff may feel threatened or disoriented by the changes proposed.	Disorientation is normal during times of change. Making changes gradually and in consultation with the volunteers it will affect can reduce negative feelings. Remind volunteers that flexible volunteering does not mean their contributions will be valued less or differently than before. Rather, the changes should empower them through a stronger volunteer structure for everyone.
The changes proposed may require additional resources that are already scarce, such as time, money, training, and support.	Consider if there are ways to reduce the scale or speed that changes are made. Slower, more gradual changes may lessen the costs associated with change. Consider also how flexible volunteering may increase efficiency or reduce the number of resources required in the future. Partnering with other association, government bodies, or other NSOs might reduce the cost of implementing new structures.

9.3 Strengthening volunteer infrastructure

While flexible volunteer management systems can reduce pressure on individual volunteers, they can also create additional demands for the staff and volunteers who support them. This can

include managing different ways of volunteering, providing clear role, project, or task descriptions, and supporting recruitment, training, development, and policy compliance. These responsibilities are essential to a positive volunteering experience, but they are often added to existing leadership roles without enough consideration of the time, effort, and skill required.

When implementing new ways of volunteering, it is also important to build the infrastructure needed to sustain them. This means recruiting and supporting enough paid or unpaid adults who have the skills, time, and finances to run the volunteer management system being designed. Valuing volunteers means investing in those roles that support and empower volunteers to thrive.

9.4 Implementation with the Adults in Scouting lifecycle

When rethinking the approach to volunteering, always consider the values, tasks, and regulatory requirements for the role and your organisation. Take any limitations set by these into account and evaluate whether they are need-to-haves or nice-to-haves.

This section proposes self-assessment questions that may be relevant when implementing the Adults in Scouting lifecycle. They refer to the respective parts of the lifecycle. (https://scoutship.scout.org/handbook/adults-in-scouting-lifecycle/)

Recruitment

Assessment of needs:

- Could new ways of volunteering, such as micro-volunteering, task-based, digital, or third-party models, help address the needs you have identified?
- If you cannot recruit enough role-based volunteers, could some responsibilities within the role be carried out through another way of volunteering, such as task-based volunteering?
- When defining tasks or needs, have you considered the availability and profile of potential volunteers, including their competences and background?
- Which aspects of the task can remain flexible, such as the timeline, required competences, mode of delivery, or time needed to complete the task?

Attraction and selection:

- Do you have an accessible and easy-to-navigate platform where potential volunteers can find different types of volunteering opportunities and get involved?
- Is the task clearly described and easy for volunteers to understand and start independently?
- Does the tasks require a selection process, or can volunteers take it on a first-come, first-served basis?
- If selection is necessary, could a simpler approach be used for skill-based volunteering, for example, where volunteers already have relevant competencies like IT, design, marketing?
- Do all responsibilities within a role need to be completed by one person, or could they be divided into smaller tasks and shared among several volunteers?
- After reviewing applications, can volunteers be organised to work together effectively to fulfil the role, or is a separate recruitment process needed for specific tasks?

Integration:

- How much integration do all volunteers need? For micro-volunteering, could a simple introduction be enough?

- For short-term positions, what essential information do volunteers need to know about the organisation and its people? What additional details might be useful but not critical?
- Do volunteers know where to find more information if they need it?

Mutual agreement:

- After selecting a volunteer, have you discussed the conditions of their involvement and agreed on arrangements that work for both the NSO and the volunteer?
- If time commitments or other requirements create a barrier, could you:
  - Adapt or divide the role or task to better suit the volunteer's needs
  - Offer an alternative task that still aligns with the volunteer's motivations and availability?

For micro-volunteering:

- Could these considerations be established in advance of the recruitment process?
- Is there scope to make small adjustments based on the needs of the individual volunteer?

Appointment:

- Would a formalised appointment process add value for the short-term and non-role-based volunteers?
- Could different appointment processes be used for different types of volunteers, reflecting the time and commitment involved?

Performance

Induction:

- **All volunteers** need some form of induction, but it can be adapted to the type of volunteering and the individual's needs.
  - For experienced, or those who already have the require professional skills, an induction may be as simple as completing a short checklist. Volunteers who need additional training may require a more detailed induction.
  - For micro-volunteering, this may be a short description of the task, for example, a two-minute tutorial in an app or similar.

In service support:

- Regardless of how they volunteer, all volunteers should have a clear point of contact and a way to ask questions, including for fully digital volunteers.
- How can you ensure that appropriate mental health support is available to all volunteers regardless of how they are volunteering? Mental Health Toolkit from Scouts UK.

Training:

- Consider why training is required for each task. Is it needed because of:
  - Laws, regulations, or organisational requirements, such as Safe from Harm.
  - The volunteer's motivation, for example, where gaining training or skills is part of the offer.
  - Practical requirements needed to undertake the volunteer role?
- Are volunteer clearly informed about the training they need, and which training should be prioritised in a way that works best for them?
- Should training be mandatory, or could some elements be optional?
- What training and support do volunteers need who are new to Scouting? Can they take part in existing training? Could you split the training, so it is more flexible for people with different capacities and expectations?
- If a role has been redesigned, does the associated training also need to be reviewed? Which elements are still necessary?
- When evaluating your training programme, are you considering the needs and requirements of different volunteer models that you have trialled or implemented?

Operation:

- Continue to review how volunteering arrangements can be adapted to individual volunteers and to changes in adults' lifestyles, availability, and circumstances.

Performance management:

- Could different ways of volunteering require different timelines to complete the same task?
- Could feedback be provided when it is most useful, rather than only through scheduled reviews? Volunteers are different, so consider having both written and oral feedback opportunities.
- Could you consider aligning the time and timing of reviews? Do you need to have quick and easy performance review as well?
- For micro-volunteering, would it be more useful to review an entire project or task rather than the performance of an individual volunteer?

Decisions for the future

Renewal:

- Is there a succession plan for this role?
- Could another volunteer act as their deputy or take on a similar responsibility?
- Could that person be trained to take on more responsibilities in the future?
- If it is not possible to find another person with the same skills or availability, could the role be redesigned or divided differently?

Retirement:

- Could a volunteer who is retiring become a mentor to their successor?
- Can you remain in contact with retiring volunteers and reach out to them if a new project or tasks arises within their areas of interest?

Reassignment:

- If a volunteer's availability changes, would they be prepared to take on larger tasks or perhaps reduce to smaller ones? Could you modify the role to fit the new availability?
- As volunteers develop, how can you support them to take on new or more challenging responsibilities where this matches their interests?
- If a volunteer moves to a different location, could they continue through a hybrid or fully digital way of volunteering?
- Could the volunteer recommend someone else for this role?
- Could the volunteer propose how to adjust the role to reduce barriers for other volunteers?

For micro-volunteers:

- Have you considered offering a role with slightly more responsibility?
- If they are interested in a greater commitment, what barriers might need to be addressed to make this possible?

Recognition:

- How can we ensure that contributions to smaller tasks receive appropriate recognition?
- Are the contributions of micro-volunteers, one-time volunteers, seasonal volunteers, and event volunteers being recognised?
- For digital volunteers or those working mostly alone, could there be opportunities for in-person meetings as a form of recognition?
- Have we asked our volunteers how they feel most recognised, and can we adjust recognition methods accordingly?
- Have you considered the following forms of recognition: Meals or food at events, t-shirts or clothing, digital badges and badges, official letters or certificates with a list of skills or projects the volunteer accomplished, small gifts (e. g. pin, pen, notebook), public recognition at an event or open meeting, newsletter or similar, personal recognition from the team lead or group leader for event or camp participation.

10. Recommendations for the Scout Movement and for NSOs

This guide is one step toward better supporting our Scout volunteers. While developing this guide, several important topics emerged that require continued discussion and innovation in the coming years.

Below are recommendations to be implemented at the World and Regional levels, and by NSOs, as well as questions that require further study and discussion to determine the best path forward.

10.1 Global and regional policy recommendations

1. Flexible Safeguarding. Flexible volunteering structures raise questions about the amount of training, especially safeguarding training, required for different volunteer engagements. The World Safe from Harm Policy should be developed to ensure a high level of safeguarding while matching the needs and commitment levels of different ways of volunteering, especially employee, digital, and micro-volunteering. In particular, volunteers who do not come into contact with youth should not be required to meet the same safeguarding training standards as youth-facing volunteers. Training requirements should be sufficient without becoming bureaucratic barriers to more flexible forms of volunteering. See also: flexible training (below).
2. Flexible Adults in Scouting Lifecycle. The World Adult in Scouting Policy and Life Cycle should account for the differences inherent in different ways of volunteering. Every way of volunteering will involve recruitment, performance, and decisions for the future phases, but those phases will look very different, for example, micro-volunteering vs long-term role-based volunteer engagements. Volunteer recruitment and recognition should complement the type of performance relevant to each way of volunteering.
3. Organisational Resilience. The World Adults in Scouting Policy should recognise the importance of flexible volunteering to an NSO's organisational resilience. An NSO's needs are better met through increased engagement from their volunteers, both in terms of the number of volunteers as well as the quality and quantity of service per volunteer. NSOs increase the engagement of their volunteers when they increase the flexibility of their volunteer management systems.
4. Flexible Volunteering and Youth Programme. The Youth Programme Policy could consider the different responsibilities and tasks involved in delivering the youth programme, and how flexible ways of volunteering might meet those needs. For example, some aspects of the youth programme require long-term mentorship and responsibility best suited to role-based volunteers. Other activities may require only short-term, task-based, or project-based support.
5. Youth Volunteering. The Youth Involvement Policy and Youth Programme Policy should consider how volunteering and volunteer-like engagements form a part of youth leadership development and Scouting's youth programme. The term "youth volunteering" should be better defined and its role within the youth programme clarified. Volunteering and community service should be recognised as values fostered by the Scout programme, while clarifying that the educational priorities and the development of young people always take priority over the service a young person may provide through volunteering. In other words,

youth volunteering is first and foremost an educational method and not a replacement for other forms of adult volunteering.

6. Definitions of 'Volunteering'. The World Adults in Scouting Policy should define what is considered volunteering within the Scouting Movement, including, but not limited to, the boundary between member volunteers and informal, employee, and one-off volunteers.

10.2 NSO policy and implementation recommendations

1. Self-Assessment. NSOs should assess their volunteer needs and the flexibility of their current volunteer management systems using the attached self-assessment tool. This self-assessment will help NSOs identify ways to increase the flexibility of their volunteer offerings.
2. Volunteer Support and Innovation. NSOs should use this report as a starting point for innovating their volunteer management systems. Each NSO must decide for itself which innovations are most suitable, taking into account its volunteering needs and the barriers faced by volunteers and potential volunteers in its country. Every NSO can benefit from exploring new ideas and investing in more flexible and supportive volunteer structures.
3. Multi-Directional Theories of Change. NSOs should consider embracing both top-down (leadership-directed) and bottom-up (grassroots) changes in their volunteering systems. Top-down changes efficiently promote systemic change, while bottom-up changes encourage small-scale innovation and invite buy-in from volunteers.
4. Share Best Practices. Many NSOs are currently innovating in parallel with one another. NSOs should routinely share their best practices, new ideas, successes, and failures with one another to support the development of new volunteering practices. Regional and World networks may also facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices.

10.3 Future projects

1. Measuring Volunteering. The need for a better, empirical measurement of volunteering has been widely recognised around the world, both within and outside of the Scout Movement. Metrics should be developed that are 1) consistent across NSOs and Regions, allowing for better comparison across contexts, 2) granular enough to identify who is and is not included in different volunteering systems and ways of volunteering, and 3) regularly collected to provide an up-to-date and evolving picture of volunteering in the Scout Movement today. Furthermore, empirical metrics should be developed to better identify the impact that volunteers have on the youth and communities that they serve. Impact measurements are crucial for recognising, championing, and securing external support for the service that volunteers provide.
2. Diversity and Inclusion. Additional work needs to be done to identify barriers to and best practices for recruiting volunteers from marginalised and/or underrepresented communities. The importance of diversity in volunteering is widely recognised, but a lack of measurements of volunteer diversity makes it difficult to understand the current situation. Better measurements and focused conversations regarding diversity in volunteering are crucial to becoming a more inclusive movement.
3. Volunteering in Crisis and Extraordinary Circumstances. Many Scout volunteers serve communities facing emergencies including natural disasters, public health crises, and war.

Likewise, many volunteers are volunteering in circumstances where the economic and/or political situation poses extraordinary obstacles or threats to Scouting. Further research is needed to better understand these volunteers' experiences, the pressures they face, and the practices that can support them.

4. Scouting in Schools. This area needs more research. As identified in the report above, volunteers in these systems face additional factors that add complexity to the process of volunteering. Additional research on volunteers' experiences in different school-based Scouting systems will help identify better recommendations to support this important type of Scouting.
5. Sharing Best Practices. As the global volunteering environment changes rapidly, NSOs face similar problems and have much to learn from one another. Global and regional networks should be established and/or strengthened to facilitate dialogue regarding best practices and evolving obstacles to volunteering. Flexible, fit-for-purpose volunteer management systems can be continually improved and adjusted, best supported by flourishing peer-to-peer support networks between NSOs.
6. Flexible Training. Adult training, including safeguarding training, should be adjusted to reflect the needs and ideal competencies of different ways of volunteering and to reduce barriers to training and volunteering engagements. Just as volunteer engagements can be diversified to increase their flexibility, and thereby their accessibility, training modalities should also be diversified to increase their flexibility. This may include developing alternatives to traditional training courses, such as online training or mentorship systems.
7. Flexible Recognition. There is significant scope to explore new and more flexible ways of recognising volunteers' contributions. Several ideas, especially forms of micro-credentialing, have been frequently proposed, but relatively little actual experience has been identified. Experiments in new and alternative forms of volunteer recognition should be encouraged, and experiences - both successes and failures- should be shared across peer-to-peer networks.
8. Flexible Governance Systems. As new ways of volunteering are added to a flexible volunteer management system, consider how each contributes to participatory governance. Different ways of volunteering (e.g. role-based) may be more conducive to governance roles than others. Nevertheless, every volunteer should feel that they have a voice in the direction of their organisation. This might create the need for new, flexible forms of participatory governance appropriate to different ways of volunteering.
9. Artificial Intelligence, Digitisation, and New Ways of Volunteering. The role and potential use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to facilitate tasks and empower volunteers is promising but largely untested. AI may also become a useful tool in providing additional training or supporting volunteer competency development. In the coming years, best practices regarding AI-enhanced volunteering practices should be tested and shared across the Scout Movement.

11. Sources and methodology

This report is based on a variety of feedback and input, ranging from academic studies to open conversations with Adults in Scouting experts from each World Scouting region.

11.1 Methodology

This guide was produced by a small, project-based volunteer team of four volunteers and one staff member. The team analysed a variety of sources from both within the Scout Movement and from peer organisations across the world. The United Nations declared 2026 an International Year of Volunteering, which inspired several reports, including the 2026 UN State of World Volunteerism Report and the IAVE Global Call to Action for Volunteering. These reports identified evidence-based global trends across all five World Scouting Regions. The team also reviewed past World Scouting documents and research produced at the World and Regional levels to contextualise current research within the last ten years. This included a project on new ways of volunteering produced by the European Scout Region in 2022-2025.

The team engaged with representatives from NSOs across each Scouting region to learn about the volunteering motivations and challenges across different geographic, cultural, and social contexts. The team led in-person workshops at the European and Interamerican Scout Conferences in July and October 2025, respectively, and at the World Scout Moot Youth Forum in August 2025. The team organised online workshops in January and April 2026 for 1) the CEOs of the 15 largest NSOs and 2) Adults in Scouting coordinators across a representative group of small, mid-sized, and large NSOs in each Scout region. Participants in these workshops provided framing information on volunteering and current volunteering trends. Participants were then asked to share their experiences of volunteering motivations, barriers, and trends in their NSOs.

Additionally, online dialogue sessions with representatives of the Big 6 Youth Organizations (World Scouting, WAGGGS, YMCA, YWCA, IFRC, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award) and with representatives from various NSOs (self-selected via an open invitation) were held in Summer 2025 in collaboration with IAVE's Global Call to Action. These dialogues helped the team benchmark findings across different national contexts and within peer organisations.

Finally, a global survey of NSO leadership was conducted in January 2026 to further verify trends across the Scout Movement. A total of 44 NSOs from across each region responded, although Africa and the Interamerican Region had the most robust samples (15 and 12 responses, respectively), while the Arab Region had a non-conclusive sample (4 responses).

This report is limited by a lack of consistent, quantitative measurements across national and regional contexts. The UN SWV Report, among other recent reports, has similarly identified a need for more accurate measurement methods and greater investment in measuring volunteer engagement and impact globally.

The engagements listed above have allowed the research group to affirm that the trends identified in this report are widely felt across different national, geographic, and social contexts. It is also clear that the reality faced in each community varies according to a number of factors.

The information in this report should be considered as a starting point for a self-evaluation with the caveat that some trends or recommendations identified here may not manifest themselves in every scenario as anticipated. More information on the trends identified and the methodology behind that identification can be found in the companion report on volunteer motivations and barriers.

11.2 Sources

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