

LAY-LEADERSHIP VOLUNTEERING GUIDE



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Introduction

There has been a decline in volunteering worldwide since the Covid pandemic. Some of the reasons for the decline are addressed at Section D, below. The world has changed since 2020 and volunteering structure needs to adapt to accommodate people's new lifestyles. In this paper, I summarise my research on lay-leadership volunteering within the Jewish community and best practices based on national research.

All communities rely on volunteers to varying degrees, and each community develops a different volunteer structure – intentionally or not. Methods for recruitment, training, sustaining, and recognition that have been effective for many years have lost their efficacy. This is due to a change in people's behaviours and attitudes towards volunteering – what they are prepared to do, how they want to do it, and when they want to be involved has narrowed. In order for communities to create a strong volunteer strategy, they must first understand the 'modern' volunteer and focus on what will work for that demographic. Once communities embrace the new strategies for volunteering, they are more likely to have volunteers who fulfil the needs of the community while fostering a positive relationship with the community.

The following document will outline suggestions for creating a strong volunteer strategy, which I hope to help communities apply.

Daniella Neifeld
Community Participation Manager

Focus Groups

Ten Best Practices

Based on interviews with representatives from six United Synagogue communities of different sizes (three large, two medium, and one small).



Change is Possible

Share the message that volunteers will effect change.

Share stories of past and current volunteers who have made an impact on the community.

Create a strategy for the community and outline the importance of personal stories within your collective story.



Cared for and Heard

A personal connection to the community is important. This can be established through relationship with the rabbinic staff or other laypeople.

Having a proactive council member hold the 'new member' portfolio can be very effective. Their role can include meeting new members and ensure they are aware of how they can be involved.

See Their Impact

Implement ways to show the volunteers the impact that they have made on their community.



Working groups and subgroups encourage collaboration which allows for social connection, easier succession, flexibility, and overall retention.

Working Groups & Subgroups



Support & Flexibility



Make as many roles fixed-term or one-offs as possible.

Make the roles implicitly social; deliberately foster connections and a sense of cohort.

Clearly outline the support each volunteer receives.

Review the demands and nature of the roles annually.

The bigger the role, the harder it is to recruit.

Consider how to limit jobs through definitions, time limits etc.

Limit the Responsibilities



Volunteer Fair



Medium-Large communities have seen success with running volunteer fairs for all of their members.

The fair is also an opportunity to understand members' unique strengths and suggest opportunities for them that may not be advertised.

Appreciation



All communities can show appreciation regardless of financial constraints

Consider members serving kiddush to the kiddush committee; a Sunday breakfast for Baaeli Tefillah; Gifts of wine or flowers

Public mentions in communications; Private thank you/card, Aliyot/mentions by the rabbinic team; Volunteer Awards; Volunteer Shabbat



Training

All communities can run training for volunteers.

Training is a social opportunity and is a way to provide skill progression which many volunteers appreciate.

Start the succession planning early.

Allow the potential successors to shadow and/or take the spotlight as often as possible

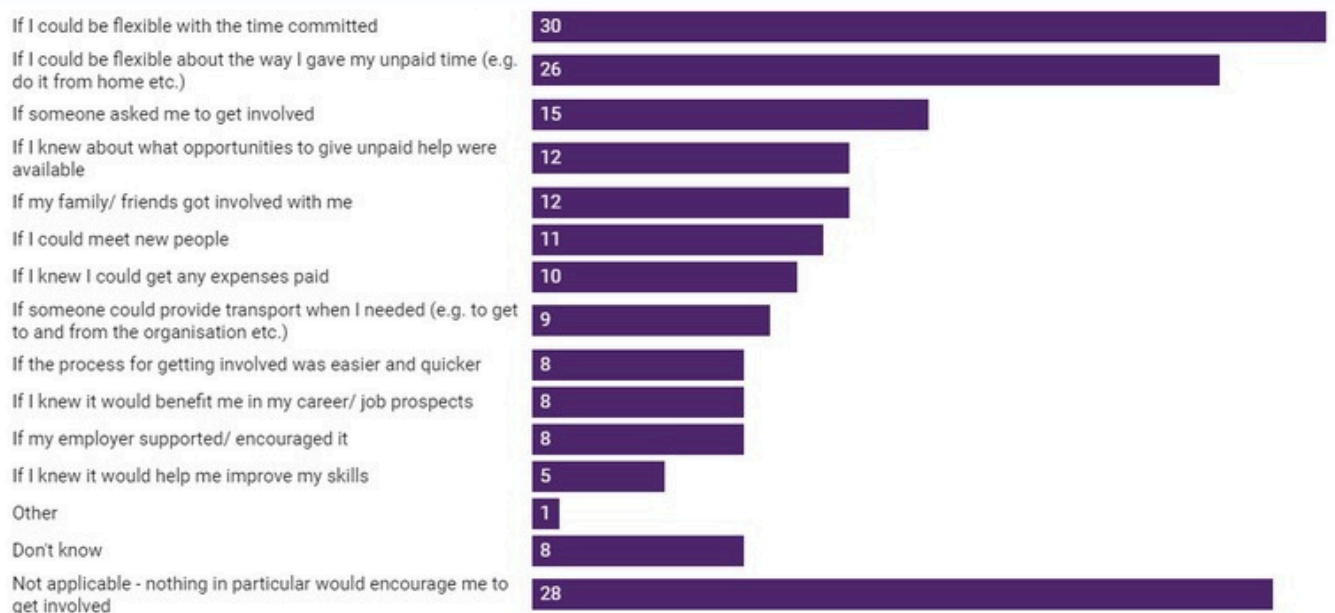
Instil Confidence



Training also boosts confidence which is important for recruitment and retainment.

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

What Would Encourage People to Volunteer (Time Well Spent 2023)



Base: GB adults who had not volunteered in the last 3 years or had never volunteered (4,512)

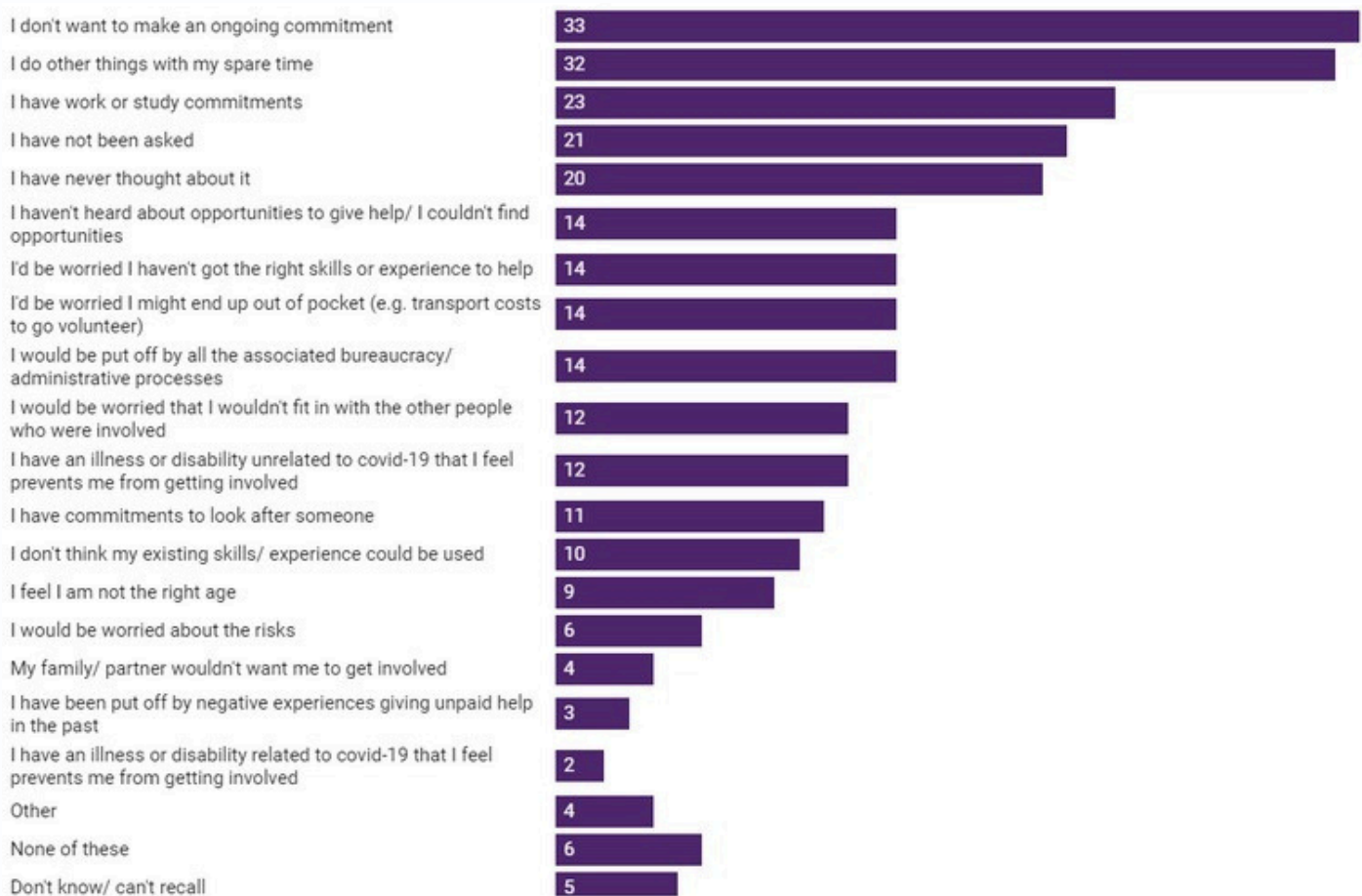
Source: Time Well Spent 2023 • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Focus of Restructure:

- Understand the Strategy
- Introduce a Volunteer Coordinator
- Create Flexibility
- Recruitment
- Retainment
- Succession

Volunteering Realities in 2024

Reasons for Not Volunteering (Time Well Spent 2023)



Takeaways from poll:

- Highest reason: I don't want to make an ongoing commitment - How can we make the commitment more realistic for them and less daunting.
- 2nd highest reason: I do other things with my spare time - How do we share the value of community and volunteering so that it is prioritised.
- 4th highest reason is that they have not been asked - Why haven't they been asked? Who is best suited to ask them? What would be the best thing to ask them to do?

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Understand the Strategy -

Answer the following questions to create an effective volunteer strategy

WHY?

Why do we use volunteers?

- Necessity?
- Ethos?

For most communities, it is a combination of the two.

With this in mind, it is important to remember:

1. Volunteers are not paid staff
2. The success of the volunteer rests on a positive volunteering experience.

HOW?

How can volunteers help a community achieve its strategic ambitions?

1. Communities first need to understand their overall strategy to understand what they want their members to experience and where they see themselves in 5, 10, 20 years.
2. Once a strategy is set, it is easier to identify how volunteers will help achieve it.

WHERE?

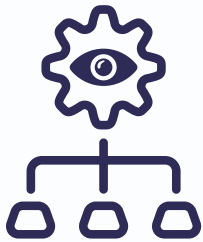
Where will the community need volunteer support now and in the future?

1. Create a broad range of roles
2. Make roles flexible
3. Include a description of what the volunteer's experience will look like and what steps you will take to create a positive environment for them.

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Introduce a Volunteer Coordinator

A volunteer coordinator can either be a paid position or volunteer position. It can be done by one person or be split into multiple roles (for example: volunteer recruitment coordinator, volunteer retainment coordinator, volunteer appreciation coordinator (etc). The purpose of the role is to ensure that the volunteer experience is a positive one by keeping the volunteers organised and enabling them to have a point-person to go to when necessary. An example of the responsibilities of a Volunteer Coordinator are as follows:



Oversee volunteer recruitment



DBS Applications



Provide Information



Run Timetables



Oversee Pastoral/Social Care of Volunteers



Point-person for Volunteer Feedback



Point-person for changes in role



Manage volunteer recognition and rewards



Manage volunteer training

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Create Flexibility

Based on their extensive research into the declining trend of volunteering, the NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations) strongly advises for charities to restructure the volunteering role to be flexible.

Suggestions for flexibility:

Develop a varied selection of volunteer roles to suit a range of lifestyles and skill sets.

Think creatively about how the volunteer can use their talent to best effect within your organisation.

Provide home-based or remote volunteering opportunities.

Split the opportunities that already exist into smaller roles to divide amongst more volunteers.

Offer the volunteer the opportunity to role share.

Develop roles which can be undertaken in the school holidays or outside of usual hours to enable young people and those in education to volunteer.

Offer family volunteering opportunities to enable parents to volunteer.

Create one-off opportunities to enable volunteers with little spare time or those who are put off from the commitment of volunteering to participate.

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Recruitment



The key to successful recruitment is personalised recruitment.

One must know who to approach, understand why that person would be interested in that position, and convey why they would be successful at it.

The communities who have been successful in this area have followed this method in a variety of ways:

Council member being responsible for new members. They meet with new members, gain an understanding of their strengths and encourage them to volunteer in those areas.

Creating working groups for every area of shul life. Council members and Honorary Officers are recruited from those working groups.

Holding a Volunteer Fair outlining all the volunteer options or New Members Evening with volunteers talking with members and pointing them towards the right role based on their personalities, skills and interest.

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Recruitment - Advertising

See Appendix 3 for examples of ineffective advertising

There will be times when we want to advertise the volunteering opportunities more broadly. It is important to ensure that the right people step-up for the position. There is evidence that a shift in marketing is necessary in 2024.



Audience

What is important to the ideal person?

What motivates them?

When would be the appropriate time for them to volunteer? (i.e. if you are ideally looking for youth to volunteer, find out when in the week they are most available).

What type of setting would be most fitting for them? (Social, loud, structured, creative, and so on).

What is going to appeal to the audience?

Primary Motivators – Why volunteer for the community?

Construct a way to tell the story of what the community accomplishes and why they would want to be a part of it.

Secondary Motivators – Why volunteer at all? Construct a way to tell the audience what they would get out of volunteering for the community (social environment, good for CV...) (See chart on next page).



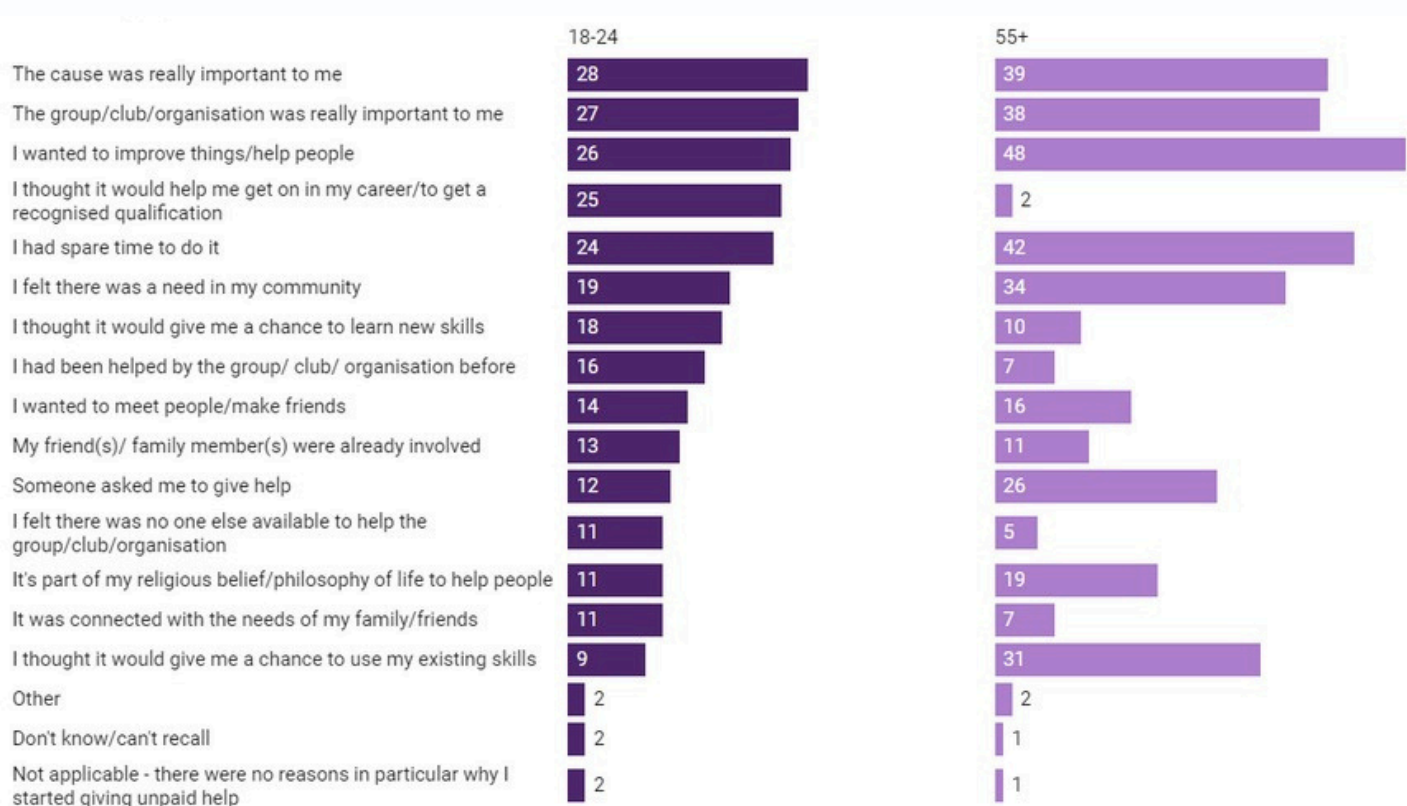
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Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Recruitment - Advertising

See Appendix 4 for examples of motivation by generation

Motivations for volunteering with the organisation by age (Time Well Spent 2023)



Base: GB adults aged 18-24 (200) and 55+ (475) who volunteered formally in the last 12 months

Source: Time Well Spent 2023 • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Retention



Meet Their Motivation

1. Is the role sociable?
2. Is there space to make it more sociable outside of the volunteering hours (pizza night, pub quiz, outing...)
3. Do they see the impact that they are making?

Make it as easy as possible to volunteer

1. What are the bureaucratic processes to becoming a volunteer? Which steps are necessary and which steps can be cut or dealt with by a member of staff?
2. Do they have all the information that is necessary for them to fulfil their role appropriately (please see appendix for Volunteer Role Description)?



Value volunteer's contribution and time

1. Avoid asking volunteers to do unnecessary tasks for the sake of it
2. Handle complaints fast and with fairness
3. Allow development: seek to fulfil volunteers' long-term goals as you would fulfil those of an employee

Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Retainmentment



Set up methods for receiving feedback

1. Questionnaires
2. Interviews
3. Create small think-tank groups to discuss the things you would like feedback on (this can work in the pre-existing working groups as well)
4. Be open to informal feedback

Peer Support

1. Working groups
2. Sub-groups within a committee so everyone must work together



Appreciation

1. Authentic and consistent verbal and/or written appreciation goes a long way
2. Be mindful to include all relevant volunteer roles when publicly sharing appreciation
3. Consider the motivation of the volunteer groups and show appreciation appropriately.



Restructuring Volunteering for 2024

Succession

Although retainment is important, it is equally important to have a succession plan. Without mindful succession planning, volunteers can experience burn-out, communities can go too long without new energy or ideas, and sometimes, the volunteer is no longer suitable for the role.

Succession Starts on Day One

1. For long-term roles, the volunteer needs to start thinking about their successor from the day that they begin in the role.
2. If possible, encourage the potential successors to get involved as a deputy or shadow or other leadership position.
3. Provide them with the confidence that they can do the role and ensure they are exposed to opportunities to gain relevant skills.
4. Ensure there is a support system in place. This may mean splitting the role so that they can share it with someone else or restructuring the council to be more active in everyday community life, taking the burden off the executive.

Merge the Old with the New

Bring in new volunteers to work with the veteran volunteers. This gives the veterans a chance to see that there are volunteers willing and able to take on the responsibility and allows the new volunteers to learn from the experiences of the veteran volunteers.

Fixed-Term

1. Create a fixed term for the roles. New research suggests that volunteers prefer this so that they do not feel they are committing an indefinite amount of time to a role. It also helps with ensuring people don't stay in the role too long.
2. Fixed Term enables the volunteers to leave the role with dignity and recognition as there is a formal end-date. Take advantage and have a proper appreciation ceremony for them, allow them to share their experience in the community newsletter and so on.

Executive Summary

Every community relies on volunteers.

The volunteer experience is crucial for volunteer success.

When planning the volunteer experience, one should consider:

1. Overall Strategy
2. Recruitment
3. Retainment
4. Succession

Positive volunteer experiences are due to:

1. Volunteer Coordinator(s)
2. Understanding and catering to volunteers' motivations
3. Flexibility
4. Providing opportunity for feedback and growth
5. Recognition
6. Appreciation
7. Dignified succession plan

Volunteers tend to succeed when in a working-group or similar set-up. The working group allows the volunteers to naturally be social during volunteer hours as well as providing a built-in support system.

Volunteer management can be challenging but, with these suggestions, it can yield great results.

Appendix One

Volunteer Role Descriptions

Include:

1. Title of Role
2. Aims and expectations of Role
3. Outline of the role's tasks and responsibilities, including likely hours and what is not expected
4. Role boundaries and any activities volunteers need to avoid
5. Who to talk to about changes to the role
6. If you will pay expenses and for what
7. Performance targets or measures
8. Support aspirations
9. Potential colleagues
10. Phone number for advice and questions

Maybe include:

1. Name of the person the volunteer reports to
2. Why it's an exciting opportunity
3. How the role fits with the community's work
4. Expectations of behaviour and dress
5. Essential and desirable skills and qualifications
6. Required person specification
7. How to find out about other opportunities
8. Applicable regulations (e.g. hygiene, health & safety, DBS checks, etc.)

Appendix Two

Volunteer Structure Checklist

1. Create a Volunteer Strategy

- a. What is the community's strategy, including its Vision, Mission and Values, and how will volunteers contribute?
- b. What opportunities and risks will the community face in the next 3-5 years?
How will these affect volunteering?
- c. How will the community set tasks and activities for volunteers?
- d. How does each role contribute to the fulfilment of the Community Vision and Mission?
- e. How will success be measured?
- f. Who will make sure these tasks are meaningful?
- g. What skills or attributes will volunteers need?
- h. How will the community share volunteer opportunities?
 - i. How will volunteering activity be inclusive?
 - j. How will the community recruit, train, and support volunteers?
 - k. How will the community value and develop volunteers?
 - l. What processes and policies will the community need to support volunteering?
- m. How will the community seek feedback and use volunteer's experiences to improve things?
- n. What other resources or systems will the community need to make volunteering successful?
- o. Who will make the decisions about volunteering and the policies that affect it.

2. Resources

- a. Budget for volunteer involvement (expenses, training, equipment, recognition)
- b. Paid staff roles to support volunteer management if this is what was decided in the strategy.

Appendix Three

Google Search for “We need volunteers poster”



Executed 3 April 2024

These posters ‘centre’ the needs of the organisations, relegating the volunteer to being a filler of vacuums, a generic human resource for the organisational machine.



Appendix Four

Motivation by Generation

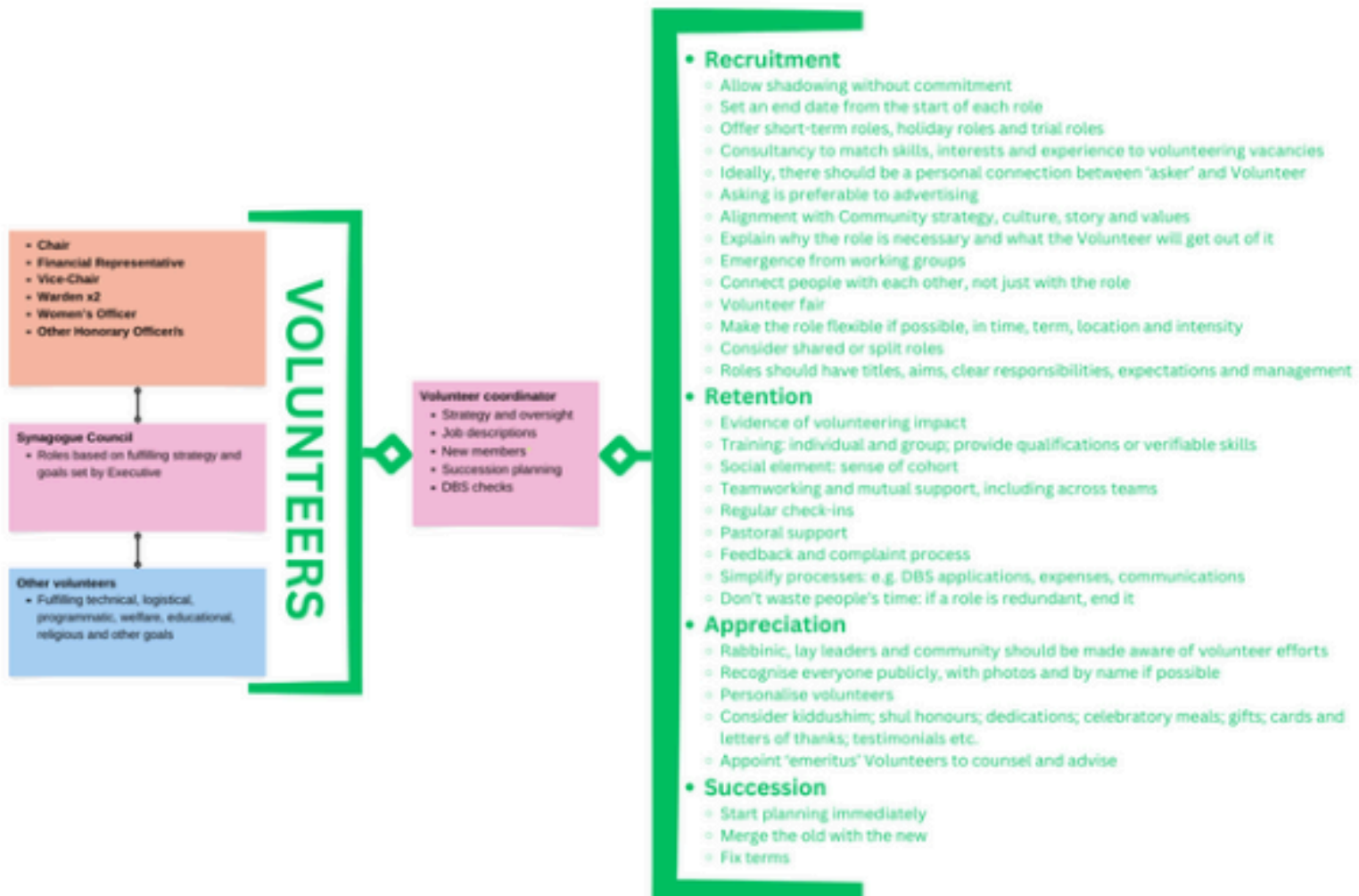
	Baby Boomers (1940-1960)	Generation X (1961-1980)	Xennials (1976-1985)	Generation Y (1981-2000)	YZennials (1996-2005)	Generation Z (2001-2015)
Motivators	Value & respect experience Mentoring opportunities Being Consulted on Rewards Freedom to Pursue Hobbies	Individually based recognition Flexibility & work-life balance Autonomy	Varied experiences Challenging opportunities Flexible work arrangements Career guidance	Meaningful work Fun work environments Tell it like it is Flextime Timely feedback	Involvement in social-causes Value creativity Authenticity Transparency Frequent feedback	Work aligns with life-purpose Coaching Reverse mentoring opportunities Continuous feedback
Influence of Technology & Signature Product	Early IT Adopters TV 	Digital Immigrants PC, PowerPoint 	Digital Entrepreneurs (childhood without computers or internet, came of age during the dot com bubble) Tablets/ Smartphone 	Digital Natives First Forms of Social Media (Facebook, YouTube) Online Dating Google Glasses 	Technoholics Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp) Cloud-based Computing App Generation Tefle-Generation 	Technology Saturated Generation Ubiquitous technology Virtual Reality Wearable Technology Self-Driving Cars 3D Printing 
Preferred Medium of Communication	Face-to-Face 	Face-to-Face Preferred Phone/Emails Ok 	Email 	Email or Text 	Online, Text or Social Media 	FaceTime on Handheld Devices, Social Media 
Preferred Frequency of Feedback	Scheduled 	Scheduled 	Weekly 	On Demand 	Continuous 	Instantaneous 
Attitude towards Teamwork	Learnt to work early on in teams at home and at school 	Prefer Individual work 	Comfortable switching between individual work and teamwork 	Harnessing collective power 	Prefer Collaborative work environments 	Prefer Collaborative work environments 

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Appendix Five

Volunteer Matrix

See 'Introduce a Volunteer Coordinator' in Section Four



THANK YOU

FOR VOLUNTEERING



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