MEASURING AND COMMUNICATING THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING
– HANDBOOK FOR SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS –

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This handbook comes as an answer to an identified need of various European social institutions that involve volunteers in their work, to undertake volunteering impact assessments and to communicate the assessment results in their communities as a way to better capitalize the value of volunteer work. Within the SoVol project 6 countries worked together to elaborate a set of tools in order to help social institutions to launch volunteer programmes. This resource is a part of a set.

Developing volunteer programmes within social institutions requires both a substantial initial resource investment as well as an on-going investment, putting pressure on the programs to accomplish something valuable for the communities they are functioning in.

Having a structured impact assessment strategy for the volunteer programmes makes it easier for representatives of social institutions to have a clear and quantifiable image regarding the volunteers’ valuable contribution. Through a systematic impact assessment any social institution could directly link volunteering to institutional economic efficiency improvement and thus higher level of institutional goal achievement.

Finding the tools to create this link is highly important so that more and more social institutions understand the benefits of working with volunteers, as well as for social institutions that have volunteer programmes to continue investing and developing them.

More and more international organizations recognize the important contribution of volunteer work. In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution on recommendations on support for volunteering, defined volunteering as “an important component of any strategy aimed at (...) poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster (...) overcoming social exclusion and discrimination”. Ten years later, the year 2011 has been declared the European Year of Volunteering by the European Commission, in an effort to “raise awareness of the value and importance of volunteering” (Council of the European Union, 2009).

The main objective of this handbook is to provide concrete support for measuring and communicating the impact of volunteering within social institutions.

The instrument focuses on specific phases such as planning, assessing, demonstrating and informing the community on the difference that their institution is generating based on the volunteers’ contribution. The publication can be used by any organisation, regardless of its size, that involves volunteers in the effort to deliver its objectives. This is why, while the main aim is to rise the capacity of social institutions in this field, the manual is just as relevant for any type of volunteer involving organization.
A. THE STRUCTURE OF THIS MANUAL

In the introductory chapter we will try to reveal the relevance of developing an impact assessment process and the benefits of setting up a system for measuring and communicating the achieved impact. We will go on then to defining some key concepts that we are going to work with.

The first section is dedicated to measuring the impact of volunteering. We will explore the four steps that can support us in this undertaking. We will learn to establish our aim, develop the design, collect the data and then analyse it.

After gathering the hard data, we will go on to seeing how we can make use of our assessment results in Section 2. Why is it important to communicate these results? Who is our target group? What should we keep in mind while communicating and what are the best ways to do it? – These are the questions we are trying to answer in this section.

Finally, Section 3 deals with some final recommendations and challenges that can be expected while planning and implementing an impact measurement and communication process.

B. WHY IS IMPACT ASSESSMENT IMPORTANT?

The transparency of an organization, institution or business is becoming more and more an indicator of the quality of the services and it is of high importance for the beneficiaries, the potential volunteers and the community. Funding authorities, donors and other relevant stakeholders are putting more and more pressure on social institutions to increase transparency of their work and results, through a solid documentation and rigorous proof of the contribution that they, as an organization, are generating within the society. In this context, just publicly declaring the mission and vision of the organization, together with future plans, becomes insufficient. The new context requires clear proof that the work of an organization and its projects are actually contributing to the desired expected change. Even more, the stakeholders that are investing money in the organizations’ projects are directly interested in understanding how efficiently these resources have been used and in which way they have contributed to the society change. Proof of impact can be sought at various levels, based on methodologies adapted to the complexity of the change we want to evidence.

More and more social institutions decide to involve volunteers in their programs and activities and sometimes even develop services for their beneficiaries, fully provided by volunteers, as a complementary action that would increase the efficiency of the organization into achieving its’ goal and objectives.

Implementing a volunteering impact assessment in your institution aims to highlight the changes/consequences (on different groups) undertaken by your institution,
that alter the way in which people live, work, play, relate to one another, organize their needs and generally cope as members of the society.

This handbook comes to support social institutions’ employees to plan and implement such assessments that can contribute to assessing the general impact of the institution and its programs.

C. THE MAIN ARGUMENTS FOR CONDUCTING AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM TO MEASURE THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERS’ WORK

1. Size up the economic value of your volunteer programmes
2. Demonstrate the impact of volunteer programmes to funders
3. Provide evidence that can be used in funding applications
4. Point out the effects that volunteering has on different levels (on volunteers, beneficiaries, institution and community in general)
5. Increase the visibility of your institutions by promoting the assessment findings
6. Improve the volunteering management practices in the institutions, as well as the concrete volunteer activities.
7. Provide evidence to get more support and funding for implementing volunteer programmes, from management in your institutions.
8. Motivate existing volunteers and staff
9. Attract new possible service users
10. Find out the real value of your volunteer programme.

Planning the measuring or monitoring process is vital. Depending on what you want to find out, you will decide on the most effective tools to use and the best approach. For example, if you want to know the increase in satisfaction of your beneficiaries or staff determined by your volunteer programme, you might want to have interviews with them, or apply questionnaires before the volunteers start working and again, one year later.

Having a plan right from the start ensures you have all the data you need and only the data you need in the end, so that you don’t need extra time later to sort out what is relevant for you. For example, in order to find out the economic value generated by your volunteer programme you will need to know how many hours the volunteers have been involved and what type of activities they did. The exact time each volunteer offered is irrelevant, as is their sex or ethnicity – data that, in this case, you don’t need to collect.

Knowing from the start what to measure also helps in choosing the tools you are
going to use, that are also most appropriate for your institution. Depending on your beneficia ries’ condition, conducting interviews might be very successful or almost impossible. In case they are not able to express their level of satisfaction in speech, you might need to ask the people most involved in their care. You might need to interview the staff or the friends and families, or ask the volunteers to observe and take periodical notes on certain relevant behaviour the beneficiary exhibits.

The following pages are designed to help you develop the plan that is most suited to your needs. The handbook is structured into two sections, one focused on impact measurement and the second on communication of the impact of volunteering in social institutions.

The first section is divided in three main chapters approaching the rationale and content of the measuring process, specific tools for collecting data and ways to report findings. The section contains theoretical aspects that will create the frame for the handbook users to better understand the methods and instruments presented. This part will also contain a clear differentiation between concepts such as - results/output, effects/outcomes and impact in relation to volunteering activities.

The second section will consist of two chapters focused on communicating the impact of volunteering within the organization and outside of the organization; finding the best ways to share the findings of the assessment with interested actors and stakeholders.

D. EXPLANATION OF THE CONCEPTS

Social Institution – For the purpose of our project and within this publication, by social institution we understand a legal entity which is performing social welfare activities and/or programmes aimed at providing social assistance to vulnerable persons, as well as persons in unfavorable personal or family circumstances.

Input - The resources an organization devotes to a particular program, resources can be financial, but also the time of staff or volunteers.

Output - What does your programme produce? For instance, a training programme provides graduates. Outputs are measurable and readily determined.

Outcome - An outcome is an effect your programme produces on the people or issues you serve or address. An outcome is a change that occurred because of your program. It is measurable and time limited, although it may take a while to determine its full effect.
Impact – the effect of the project/programme on its wider environment, and its contribution to the wider sector objectives summarised in the project's/programme's overall objective, and on the achievement of the overarching European/national/local policy objectives (Burdge, Vanclay 1996).

Social return of investment - SROI is a principle-based method for measuring extra-financial value in relation to resources invested. It can be used by any entity to evaluate impact on stakeholders, identify ways to improve performance, and enhance the performance of investments.

Volunteering / Voluntary activity – while the official definition varies from country to country according to their legislation, through volunteering we are referring to a structured activity based on free will, done without financial compensation, and always carried out for the benefit of a third person (not family member or close friends) or group within the frame of an organization.

Volunteer – a person who voluntarily in his/her free time and without financial compensation performs services or activities for civic, charitable or humanitarian reasons in an organisation.

Volunteer programme – an ongoing set of activities/services of an organisation in which volunteers play a significant role and aimed at improvement and achievement of the mission of an organisation.

Economic value of volunteering

Economic value is created by taking a resource or set of inputs, providing additional processes that increase the value of those inputs, and thereby generate something that has greater market value at the next level of the value chain. The economic value of volunteering is the difference between the value of the input in the volunteer programme, and the value of the volunteering services offered.

Social value of volunteering

Social Value is created when resources, inputs, processes or policies are combined to generate improvements in the lives of individuals or society as a whole. It is in this arena that most non-profits justify their existence, and unfortunately it is at this level that one has the most difficulty measuring the true value created. Examples of Social Value creation may include such “products” as cultural arts performances, the pleasure of enjoying a hike in the woods or the benefit of living in a more just society (Emerson, Wachowicz, Chun, 2000).

**Monitoring** is the process for collecting the facts and figures related to your volunteer programme. This will include such things as
- Numbers of volunteers
- Demographic information, e.g. age and ethnicity
- Frequency and duration of the volunteer activity
- The type of work that volunteers do
- The number of beneficiaries served

**Evaluation** is the process of using the information you have collected to answer questions about how well the volunteer programme is doing, to identify any gaps and improvements you can make and to demonstrate your outcomes, e.g. the difference that involving volunteers makes or the added value that involving volunteers brings. It will involve analysis of monitoring information and any feedback, case studies, volunteer experiences that have been collected. Monitoring information describe what has happened. Evaluation is one step further –it means making a value judgment based on this descriptive information – is the impact good enough? Is it worth the resources we put into the programme? To what extent is the impact experienced as a result of the programme and the intervention of the volunteers?

Concepts such as **input, output, outcome** and **impact** should not be used interchangeably. Understanding the differences between each of them when deciding to implement an efficient impact assessment process becomes very important. It is relevant to have a clear understanding on all of these concepts both independently, but also in relation to each other, when referring to volunteering activities.

**INPUT**, defines all the resources an organization devotes to a particular program. Resources can be financial, but also the time of staff or volunteers. As an example, referring to a volunteer programme implemented by a social institution input could represent - number of staff members involved, number of hours spent on volunteer management aspects (recruitment, selection, training, monitoring, etc.), money spent on implementing volunteer programme activities, equipment and materials used, etc.

When discussing about **OUTPUT**, we will refer to direct elements produced or generated by the volunteer programme. Products and services provided through the volunteer programme. Outputs are measurable and clearly determined accomplishments of
your activity, e.g., number of activities in the program, number of beneficiaries (services users) involved in the activities, number of volunteers involved in activities for beneficiaries, number of volunteering hours/time unit, etc.

**OUTCOME** refers to the benefits the programme has generated in a defined period of time, usually during or right after the program activities. Continuing the example mentioned above, outcome can refer to the number of long term committed volunteers, number of satisfied beneficiaries, number of new beneficiaries in a specific program, etc.

**IMPACT** describes the changes induced by the programme on its wider environment on a longer period of time. It could describe the visibility increase of social institution in the local community, the improvement of the beneficiary service within the programmes addressed to them, etc.

Understanding the expected impact and having a clear image of the difference that we, as a social institution, want to generate is not always easy but it is mandatory, in order to be able to have a controlled and a predictable process that in time will consolidate our role in the local community.
SECTION 1: MEASURING THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

Thinking about measuring the impact and starting to plan the process can be daunting and seem too difficult compared to the benefits it brings, but the good news is it has been done before and we can use other institution's or organization's experience and reach our objectives easier.

General studies on the impact of volunteering have identified a series of stakeholders and dimensions that volunteer programmes are generating impact on.

**Stakeholders**
- Volunteers (effects and impact on personal level)
- Volunteer involving organizations (effects and impact at institutional level)
- Direct beneficiaries/social services users
- The wider community, e.g.: family members, friends of beneficiaries, local NGOs, etc.

**Dimensions**
- Human capital - people’s knowledge, skills and health
- Economic capital - benefits or costs with a financial value
- Social capital - more cooperative relationships between people
- Cultural capital - sense of individual identity and understanding other’s identity

In the table below there are examples on how each of the above mentioned stakeholders can be impacted in each of the dimensions. The impact varies from institution to institution and from situation to situation. Still, by filling in the table with your institution in mind, you will have an overview of the impact of your volunteer programme and will be able to decide which aspects you need to measure and communicate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Human capital (peoples knowledge, skills, attitudes, health)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased personal development (self-esteem, empathy, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased transferable competences (especially in relation to social services)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improved health and wellbeing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased employability chances (in the social sector but not only).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>improved organizational working procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>greater income for the institution</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>job creation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improvement of human interaction relationship within the institution</td>
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<td></td>
<td>increase of the institutions' visibility</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Social Capital (more cooperative relationships between people)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>expansion of the personal social network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhanced sense of trust in others (individuals and community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased social competences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased transferable skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>improved health and wellbeing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>increased access to training for which they would otherwise have to pay</td>
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<td></td>
<td>increased employment prospects and future earning power</td>
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<th>Cultural Capital (sense of own identity and understanding of others’ identity)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>better understanding of one’s own identity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>greater appreciation of others’ cultures and interests</td>
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<td></td>
<td>change of vision towards society and the active role of each citizen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>change of vision towards society and the active role of each citizen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Human capital (people's knowledge, skills, attitudes, health)</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>increased personal development (self-esteem, empathy, optimism)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased skills and abilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>improved physical and mental health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>greater sense of well-being among beneficiaries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased number of beneficiaries aware of volunteering oppor-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>increased number of beneficiaries that become volunteers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>improved skills and more productive workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased personal development</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>increased level of awareness of the local community regarding local problems</td>
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THE STEPS OF AN IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

As we have seen in the examples above, the impact of a volunteer programme can be extremely widespread. While it would be most scientific and valuable to be able to measure it precisely and exhaustively, in reality we do not have the necessary resources (time, means) to do this, but we also don’t actually need to.

In order to focus our process and ensure attainable and relevant results of the impact assessment, we propose to follow four highly connected steps (model adapted from VOLUM Federation Guide) 4:

1. **Establishing the aim of the assessment process** - trying to answer „Why is your organization interested in implementing an impact assessment process and what are the results going to be used for?”

2. **Developing the design of the assessment process** - establishing the methods, techniques, and tools and the way they will be used, identifying the sources of information, the way to access it and the resources needed. The results of this phase should be a concrete plan on how to collect and analyse data.

3. **Collecting the data** - gathering relevant data and information according to the previously established plan and making sure to avoid collecting errors.

4. **Data analysis and conclusions** - putting together all the collected data, making connections between different data items and interpreting and extracting relevant information. Usually this phase is materialized through a report.

For example if our aim is to ascertain the economic value of our volunteering programme, we will need to add up the number of volunteering hours and the type of activity they are involved in. We will need to **design the process** before the volunteers arrive, to make sure we can gather all the data. We will choose the methods: the mentor, the volunteer, both of them or someone else could have the responsibility to count the hours of each type of activity; the tools: a paper journal or an online tool. Once the programme starts, we will make sure we are **collecting this data**. The people responsible for this need to know what they are doing, how and why. After one year, or any chosen period of time, we can **analyse the data and draw conclusions**. There is a simple mathematical equation to determine the economic value that we will present later on when talking about data analysis and the VIVA Model (page 23).

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1. ESTABLISHING THE AIM

Clearly defining the aim of the impact assessment process is an important step that connects the entire process to the general institutional strategy on improving quality and efficiency of the provided services, through volunteer involvement.

Having a clear reason for why you as an institution want to assess the difference that volunteers make is important for defining and planning all the upcoming steps and connecting them logically to make sure you achieve your aim. The defined aim will affect the kind of approach you take as well as the way you are making use of the results at the end.

Some of the most common reasons to start a comprehensive volunteering impact assessment are:
- to have clear sources to provide evidence to funders on different aspects of your services
- to identify the socio-economic value of your volunteering programme
- to identify the added value of volunteering in relation to the quality of the services provided by the institution
- to identify the level of achievement of specific objectives of various programmes and activities
- to identify the level of visibility in the community your institution reached through its volunteers.
- to find out what is working well and what can be improved within the implemented volunteer programme.

In other words, in order to develop the process design that best fits your institutions’ impact assessment needs you need the answers for the following two questions:

What do you want to show?

It can be one of the reasons listed above or a different one that caters to the needs of your institution. Defining it clearly and specifically, gives you already relevant information about the type of data that needs to be collected, manner in which you should collect it, target groups that have the data, aspects that are determining the most appropriate tools for it. Also based on the aim of the assessment you will be able to calibrate the level of complexity of the entire process.

For whom are you doing the assessment?

Establishing from the beginning who is the assessment done for helps you define the general approach of data collection (more focused on quantitative aspects if it is destined to donors and board members, or on qualitative aspects if it is directed towards volunteers, service beneficiaries and members of the community) and will have a big impact on the way you present the results in the end.

5 based on the Volunteering Impact Assessment Kit - Institute for Volunteering Research 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What you show</th>
<th>Target audience</th>
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| Involving volunteers -> increased variety of services -> increased standard of care in the institution -> good publicity, good renown. | **Funders** - are more motivated to continue to support the institution.  
**Staff** - is more motivated and loyal to the institution  
**Community** – trusts your institution and gets involved in the services you offer. |
| Involving volunteers -> developed competencies for themselves -> finding jobs -> higher life standards for the volunteers | **Volunteers** – are more motivated and more receptive to the volunteer programme  
**Community** – becomes the source of your future volunteers |

As you can see in the examples above, one aspect of your impact can affect various stakeholders, in various ways. In order to create the change you wish for in their behaviour you have to make sure they receive and understand your message. The audience you will address the assessment to, will determine the scale of the process, the relevant tools, quantity of data and ways to present the findings.

2. DEVELOPING THE DESIGN

What is the relevant data you need?

When opting for a specific process design, we need to decide between various types of assessments. Depending on the type of data on which the assessment process is being based, and the way in which this data is being collected we can distinguish between:

1. **Quantitative assessment** - deals with numerical data that can be statistically analysed. It usually answers the questions: Where? How often? How Many? When? Some examples might be: How many beneficiaries have participated in activities that involved volunteers? How often do we involve volunteers in our services? Where (in what and how many departments/locations) are our volunteers involved? etc.
2. **Qualitative assessment** - deals with information that cannot be quantified, such as text and spoken words. It covers views, attitudes and experiences and it is analysed by drawing out key themes.

Examples of qualitative data could be extracted from the answers of these questions: What are the differences experienced by the beneficiaries who are in contact with the volunteers? How are the volunteers affecting the public perception of the institution? etc.

Data collection can be a long term process aimed to put together all the needed information (quantitative and qualitative) for an impact assessment process. Depending on the time you can allocate to collecting data and the number of items you wish to collect; both types of assessments can be used.

When we want to measure the impact of volunteering, it is recommended to combine both quantitative and qualitative measures in order to ensure a complete image of the assessed situation.

For example, if you wish to assess the change in your beneficiaries experience in your institution caused by the volunteer programme, you might need to ask questions such as: How many of our beneficiaries have had contact with the volunteers? How much time have they been in contact? What has their experience with the volunteers been? How did it change their experience? In this example, you will have to prepare for both quantitative and qualitative assessments.

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**Who has the information you need?**

If you want to point out the difference that volunteers make in the quality of life of your beneficiaries/service users, you will most probably need to ask them and their close family members, and not the volunteers or staff. If you want to understand how the volunteer programme is improving the efficiency of your staff members, you will collect your data from your colleagues or employees.

In case you are a big institution dealing with many staff members, volunteers and beneficiaries, it might not always be possible to include all representatives from a specific category in your data collection and therefore you might need to include a ‘sample’. This means selecting a proportion of the approached group that is in some way representative for the entire category.

When choosing a sample from a specific group category you should try to recreate the statistical features of the category you are working with, on a smaller scale. Before doing the sampling you should identify the features that are relevant for the assessment results (gender, socio-economic status, level of education, etc.). In other words if you have 60% female volunteers in your program, you should have the same percentage in the sample as well.
Who will collect the data and what are the resources involved?

As all volunteer impact assessments require some investment, for a shorter or longer period of time, you should always take into consideration the resources that you have available for the entire process:
- **Time** - what is the allocated time for implementing the assessment, are there any limitations (deadlines, events, etc.)?
- **Staff members** - which staff members can be involved in the process and what are the skills that they can offer?
- **Money** - what are the costs for the assessment (printings, working hours for staff members, travel costs for participants, etc.) and the budget limitations?
- **Facilities and equipment** - what are the specific resources that you might need (recorder, microphone, etc.)?

For institutions that are implementing for the first time an impact assessment of the volunteer programme, that do not have much experience in the field, it will be more feasible to focus the process on a limited amount of actors and levels of analysis. Most commonly institutions start with assessing the impact of volunteering within their own organization (as it is the most accessible one), and only later on are expanding it, to the volunteers, beneficiaries and afterwards the community in general.

What are the appropriate methods for a specific group?

Depending on the data that you aim to collect within your assessment process, you will need to address to one or more target groups. Different methods and tools are more appropriate to different groups (volunteers, beneficiaries, staff members, etc.) and different situations (big or small groups, various age groups, etc.).

To support you in choosing the methods that best fit your institution’s needs, you will find various examples of methods and tools used in the next chapter.

Regardless of what we choose to measure/assess (outputs, outcomes or impact), this can be done only by first establishing a clear process design and afterwards collecting and analysing different types of data in a systematic way.

In order to design an adapted approach to measuring volunteer work within your institution, it is important to have in mind a set of criteria that will help you tailor the design according to its aim and institutional profile. As stated by the International Labour Organization - in the „Manual of measurement of volunteer work“[^6], the most important criteria to have in mind are:

a. **Comparability** – make sure you are capturing the same phenomenon/aspects, in the same way, in different moments. E.g. Volunteering hours in all activities, as opposed to volunteering hours in some activities and levels of satisfaction in others.
b. **Feasibility** - make sure that all the measures of the process can take place in a specific place and at a specific time. Focus your efforts on what is possible.
c. **Cost-effectiveness** - make sure that the resources you invest in the assessment are proportionate to the results you achieve. When determining satisfaction, a short game or form might be enough so you will not choose to use an extensive interview with each participant in order to measure it.
d. **Efficiency** - maximise your results and minimize the resource investment of all types. You might be able to use one method or tool to reach more than one desired result.
e. **Reliability** - ensuring that the process is capable of yielding reliable results. In order for the results to be valuable, you need to make sure the process is transparent and can be trusted. Even at a closer look, there should be no questions whether your final assessment reflects the reality.

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**3. DATA COLLECTION**

The third step, after establishing a suitable design of your impact assessment process, is to proceed in collecting the relevant data. To make the instruments easier to identify and navigate, we have separated them in three categories: Quantitative Instruments, Quantitative and Qualitative Mix Instruments and Qualitative Instruments.

Before seeing some examples of tools, we need to stress that whatever the final choice, committing to a monitoring plan requires continuous and rigorous data collection, throughout the whole life of the programme. However, by choosing to invest your efforts even towards minimum results, you can reach conclusions that can be used by the volunteer manager or the financial manager in showing the transparency so valuable to the donors.

**Quantitative Instruments**

1. **Monitoring volunteering hours’ sheet**

   It is a simple instrument, easy to work with, that gives a specific image regarding the number of hours that each volunteer has put into a specific volunteering activity/volunteer programme. The instrument can be printed on a piece of paper that each
volunteer receives regularly, a notebook in the institution, or can be incorporated in an online spread sheet. It can contain strictly the number of volunteered hours or also details about the activities done in those hours. Adding extra details gives a more specific image on effort put by the volunteers in each category of activity that they are doing (planning, preparing, implementing, evaluating, etc.)

The data for the instrument is collected by the volunteer him/herself, and it is checked and approved by the volunteer manager after a determined period of time (daily, weekly, monthly) depending on the characteristics of the activity.

The instrument is useful for:
- having a clear overview on the volunteers’ involvement
- making adjustments in the volunteers’ work load
- measuring the number of hours needed for a specific activity
- evaluating the economic value of volunteering

The limits of the instrument:
- limited control on the accuracy of the collected data in case of a flexible schedule of the volunteers, especially when the volunteers’ activity does not always involve the presence of a staff member.

Using this instrument requires minimal costs and ensures a more quantifiable image of the volunteers’ involvement.

Examples of monitoring volunteering hours sheet:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the volunteer: ........................................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time of arrival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the most basic tool that still provides important data in the end: the total sum of hours one volunteer served in your institution, and the times of the day the volunteers are mostly involved. This is easily filled in by the volunteer.

If you need more information, you may add more columns in the table, for example another one with the department the volunteer was involved in or the type of task he has performed. This way, periodically, you can have an assessment that looks like this: “Maria has offered us 27 hours in the last month; she has worked in 3 different departments and performed 11 kinds of tasks. She is the only one out of 8 volunteers who prefers to come in the morning.”

You can find the template of Individual Monitoring tool here.

Below you have another example, a little different in design that offers information about all volunteers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the institution: ........................................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of the volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Offering almost the same information but in a more centralized manner, this second option is just an example of how you can customize tables to your own needs. By having all volunteers in one place you can easily extract more general information about your volunteer programme, such as “Our volunteers are involved in 5 different departments (Dep 1 through 5), performing 8 major types of tasks (T1 through 8)”. Of course, you can add more columns depending on the data you need and you can transfer the tool in a digital spreadsheet (like Microsoft Excel) that can help you automatically sum up numbers or filter information various criteria such as volunteer, department or task.

You can find the template of Collective Monitoring tool here.

2. The volunteers’ general schedule

Usually the general schedule is a planning tool. However, if your volunteer programme has a stable schedule and in most cases manages to keep it, this tool can be used in monitoring as well. If this is the case, you can also include other data collecting, like the number of hours each volunteer served, the departments in which volunteers have been involved, the average time a volunteer offers to your institution, the preferred time of the day for volunteering. Of course, in order to get accurate data, you have to be careful to adjust whenever things don’t go as planned.

The more variations there are to the initial schedule, the more your need to monitor and input the real data, this is why if your schedule is more flexible, it will simply be a planning tool and will not be suitable as a monitoring tool.

The instrument is useful for:
- planning the activity as well as monitoring it
- collecting various data through one single tool – according to what you wish to find out and how you customize the tool.
- getting a better picture about the availability of your volunteers.
- evaluating the efficiency of a volunteer programme (number of hours invested by the institution in setting up and running the volunteer programme versus number of hours of provided services for the beneficiaries, by the volunteers).

Limits of the instrument:
- collecting the need data can be difficult in case of a volunteer programme that involves many volunteers with a flexible schedule.
- using this instrument requires rigorous checking that the schedule has been respected.

Example of the general schedule:
Here, the planning tool can also offer the data you need. For example, Maria was involved in 4 mornings this week, reaching a total of 16 hours, and she performed tasks 1, 4, 3, 5, and 7.

This schedule can also be customized according to your activity and monitoring aim. Maybe the volunteers are involved only in 2 days a week and you can make one schedule for a whole month. Maybe you are more interested in the beneficiaries they work with than the tasks they execute, so you will replace task with beneficiary.

Here, in deciding how to design our tool is where it is the most important to remember our aim. What do we want to show? However, it is equally important to take into consideration how your institution functions.

Preference of volunteers can also be used to determine changes in the structure of the monitoring instrument we use, especially from long term volunteers who may sometimes see things from a very different perspective than the staff of the institution does.

You can find the template of Weekly Volunteer Schedule here.

3. Economic return of volunteering investment

This is an instrument that helps institutions to measures the economic value of volunteering activities. Being able to provide proof of the economic benefits of volunteering becomes more and more important for institutions that receive grants and donations. This tool provides a simple method for calculating the economical return for the money invested within a volunteer programme/initiative, in other words, how much value did the volunteer work generate for each euro/dollar invested in the volunteering programme. The tool is based on a formula for evaluating the economic value of volunteering, called VIVA, developed by Katherine Gaskin in 1996.

For determining the economic value of volunteering, you first need to assess the value of the inputs you allocate to the volunteer programme. What are the costs you would not make if it were not for the volunteers in your institution? You would not have paid staff to manage the volunteers, you would not use some materials and tools, facilities, etc. You need to gather the value of all these inputs.

Then you evaluate the outputs, from an economical perspective. One big question that arises is how to evaluate them? Volunteer work is not paid work, but it has an economic value. In order to provide the same services without involving volunteers, the social institution would have to hire other people. The VIVA Model proposes to equate the volunteer work with the corresponding paid staff position, this way allowing you to attach an easily understandable number to the value of the activity realized with volunteers. Of course, we are only talking here about the economic value, because we know that the benefits of involving volunteers could not be only reduced to one number.

Once you have these two numbers, the difference between the value of the outputs and the value of the inputs will represent the economic return of your investment.

In the Annex chapter, you will find the ready-made tool that you can use and adapt to your own social institution.

**The instrument is useful for:**
- determining the economic value of volunteering within your institution;
- identifying the financial costs and benefits of your volunteer programme;
- displaying full transparency on the budget of the volunteer programme;
- providing concrete information on economic value of volunteering, that can be used as a co-financing source in projects, or as proof of economic efficiency of various programmes presented to donors or policy-makers.

**Limits of the instrument:**
- it determinates just the economic impact of volunteer programmes, without analysing any aspects regarding (human, social and cultural impact).
- more than other tools, it requires a continuous and rigorous data collection (time invested by the volunteers, expenses done with the volunteer programme) that can require work done by several staff members (volunteer manager, financial manager, program coordinator, etc.)

You can find the template of [Total Investment Sheet](#) here.

### Mix of quantitative and qualitative

1. **Volunteer reports**
   
   It is a more complex monitoring tool, that can contain both quantitative data (number of volunteering hours for a specific activity, number of beneficiaries that a volunteer has interacted with in a specific period of time, number of activities in which a volunteer has been involved, etc.) but also qualitative data related to the volunteers’ involvement within the volunteer programme (level of satisfaction with regards to the schedule, activities, group, dynamic, competences developed by the volunteers, team communication, etc.).

   The instrument can be easily personalized depending on specific characteristics of the volunteer programme/volunteering activities. It can be used in a printed version or online, depending on the particularities of the volunteers group, but the online version is a lot easier to centralize.

   The data for the instrument is collected by the volunteers themselves, and it is checked and approved by the volunteer manager after a determined period of time (daily, weekly, monthly) depending on the characteristics of the activity.
The instrument is useful for:
- providing a complex individual set of volunteers personal results and perspectives, on the volunteer programme;
- giving an inside on the satisfaction level of the volunteer in regards to the volunteer programme;
- providing information on aspects that can be improved/adapted within the volunteer programme.

Limits of the instrument:
- double checking the information provided by the volunteers in their reports can be time consuming;
- centralizing the information collected through the volunteering reports, from all the volunteers involved and generating an interpretation of it, so make sure you plan the time needed;
- processing the information provided by volunteers and integrating the feedback demands constant work done by a staff member.

According to the aim you have established, the qualitative questions you include in the report can address:

- **the volunteer's personal experience**: What is your favourite volunteer activity and why? What do you find the most challenging? What have you learned since...? How do you feel about the beneficiaries?
- **the activities / volunteer programme**: What do you think works best in our activities / volunteer programme, and why? What would you change, and why?
- **the collaboration of the team**: How is your relationship with the staff? How would you describe the collaboration with other volunteers?

2. Questionnaires (for volunteers, staff members, beneficiaries)

This tool is used for evaluating processes in order to be able to constantly adapt them to the expectations and needs of the volunteers, staff members and beneficiaries involved in them. The tool generally contains a series of background questions that will generate the profile of the respondent. Beside this data, it can contain both quantitative data (level of satisfaction/relevance, regarding a specific aspect, expressed in numbers) and qualitative data (descriptions of personal challenges, achievements, etc.).

The instrument is developed and personalized depending on specific characteristics of the process that is to be evaluated. It is used once or twice (as an intermediate and/or final evaluation tool) during a certain process (a volunteer programme, specific event, etc.) or it can also be used as a “before” and “after” scan of a certain situation.

The instrument is useful for:
- providing a complex individual perspective on a specific process
- giving an inside on the satisfaction level of volunteers, staff members and beneficiaries, on different aspects of a process
- providing concrete information on aspects that can be improved/adapted within a specific process
- giving personal perspective on the results and impact (both at personal and at group level) of a specific process.

Limits of the instrument:
- when developing a complex questionnaire, to cover all aspects of a specific process, just filling it in, can be time consuming
- centralizing and processing the information collected through the questionnaires requires time.

Efficiently using this instrument requires making sure that the questionnaires are filled in by all members of a specific category (volunteers, staff members, beneficiaries, etc.), so that the centralized document contains a general overview of a process that different categories have been involved in.

Qualitative

1. One on one interviews

The interview consists of a series of questions you can address to your volunteers, staff members, beneficiaries or their family members in order to gather deeper qualitative information regarding their attitudes, beliefs and processes they are going through. In one on one interview you have the liberty to choose between having a set of questions or a list of topics you want to tackle and ask follow-up questions until you are satisfied you have reached and understood their answer.

This instrument allows you to reach the most personal level of data you can gather in evaluating aspects of the impact such as: happiness levels of the people involved, personal development that occurred because of the volunteer programme, needs that the actors have or have satisfied during a certain period of time, etc.

The instrument is useful for:
- exploring people’s attitudes, beliefs, experiences;
- following up on answers that need to be clarified;
- identifying unexpected or unplanned outcomes of your volunteer programme.

The limits of the instrument:
- it takes a lot of time to plan, execute and analyse the results;
- the data collected might be more than you need, slowing down its analysis;
- you can only reach a limited number of people
- you might not receive the most sincere answers from people who prefer anonymity.

The efficiency of this method relies entirely on the interviewer’s abilities to develop a relationship based on trust with the person who is being interviewed, to actively listen to all the answers and to conduct the whole process towards the desired result.
2. Focus groups

It is a form of qualitative research consisting of interviews addressed to a group of people at the same time. The participants are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a service, concept, idea, programme, etc. The questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members. During this process, the researcher either takes notes or records the vital points he or she is getting from the group. Researchers should select members of the focus group carefully for effective and reliable, informed responses.

The instrument is useful for:
- getting information on the same topic from different people (staff members, volunteers, beneficiaries, etc.) – the group dynamics may produce interesting results;
- stimulating people who are less likely to answer a written question or be completely honest in a one on one interview;
- it can be a nice way for people to get to know each other or even facilitate team building.

The limits of the instrument:
- the discussions may drift “off topic” without efficient moderation, or due to personal issues existing among the members of the group
- the number of topics in question will be limited as more people will be involved in answering the proposed questions.

The efficiency of a focus group is very dependent on the facilitator’s skills to create a space in which people are willing to share their ideas and feelings, to moderate the discussions without creating tension in the group and keenly observe and record the answers the group generates.

The success is also determined by the type of participants there are involved in the group. In case you know the people you need for the assessment have issues expressing themselves publicly or in front of each other, the focus group is not the instrument you should choose.

3. Diaries

A diary is a great tool for collecting in depth views and reflections of the individuals. You could choose to ask your volunteers to reflect on their experiences over a certain amount of time or in a specific activity, in order to better understand their perspective, or as part of reporting their tasks.

The diary might take any possible recorded form: a letter, a blog post, a video or audio recording. In order to make sure they reach the topics you are interested in, you can help guide their reflections with a few questions like: how do I feel when I say goodbye to the beneficiaries, when did I use something I learned by being a participant in this volunteer programme, how did the programme changed my habits?

As part of their reporting, the volunteers can be guided to describe their insights in working with the beneficiaries, their progress in some activities, changes in their own
behaviour or gaining new competencies. The answers provide proof on the impact of the volunteer programme in your volunteer’s lives.

**The instrument is useful for:**
- getting detailed information regarding personal experiences and views;
- allows a certain flexibility in reporting that can create interesting findings;
- a more creative and lively approach to the topic;
- can provide creative ways for you to report your assessment.

**The limits of the instrument:**
- it relies completely on the individual’s ability to express themselves in a clear, complete, honest manner;
- the recording might be heavily distorted by the thought that someone will read or listen to the reflections at a later time;
- the processing and analysis of the data can become time consuming.

A diary is recognised as a personal item in which you record your deepest and most secret experiences and thoughts. This general conception makes it very valuable as an assessment tool, while at the same time making it just as risky. The key is to make sure everyone knows from the beginning what their recording is used for and how, how much of what they record will be made public, and that they are willing to share their views in this way. Forcing a personal recording will most probably yield superficial, insincere, if not aggressive responses (Institute for Volunteering Research - Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit 2015). As long as all precautions are respected, diaries kept by the beneficiaries would be a creative way to involve them in assessing the impact of the volunteer activity.

4. Most significant change - MSC

This is a tool that involves systematic collection and interpretation of stories referring to significant changes generated by a specific intervention. Compared to other evaluation instruments, MSC provides a purely qualitative approach to impact assessment. The tool was developed by Rick Davies in 1994.

The tool works with a series of stories collected from different actors involved in a specific process/programme and the assessment develops in 10 steps: Starting and raising interest, Defining the domains of change, Defining the reporting period, Collecting significant change stories, Selecting the most significant of these stories, Feeding back the results of the selection process, Verification of stories, Quantification, Secondary analysis and meta-monitoring, Revising the system.

For more details on the MSC method, please refer to “The ‘Most Significant Change’ (MSC) Technique - A Guide to Its Use”, by Rick Davies and Jess Dart - [https://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf](https://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf)
The instrument is useful for:
- highlighting real components of impact by showing concrete changes that a certain activity has generated in someone's life;
- showing a complex image on the mechanisms that generate change and not only a simplified numerical image of it;
- identifying unplanned impact that a certain programme/activity has generated;
- identifying various dimensions of impact that complex programmes and activities have on their beneficiaries at different levels.

Limits of the instrument:
- the process contains a high dosage of subjectivism (depending on individual perceptions and influences);
- there is a natural tendency to avoid sharing negative stories, which can bias the results of the assessment;
- general conclusions can't be generated as the approach is very personal;
- it can be time consuming.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

All the data that has been collected within the previous stage of the process, needs to be put together and analysed in order to extract the relevant information and conclusions out of it.

In contrast to outcome monitoring, which examines whether targets have been achieved, impact evaluation is structured to answer the question: how would aspects such as participants' well-being have changed if the intervention had not been undertaken?

This involves counterfactual analysis, that is, “a comparison between what actually happened and what would have happened in the absence of the intervention.” Impact evaluations seek to answer cause-and-effect questions. In other words, they look for the changes in a situation that are directly attributable to a programme.

Still being able to generate such comparisons requires a deep data analysis of all the collected information.

As mentioned before, collected data can be expressed in numbers (quantitative) or words (qualitative). Each type of data requires a slightly different approach to analysis.

For quantitative data
Analysing it, requires collecting all the answers (from all volunteers) for a specific item (ex: number of beneficiaries you have interacted with, types of volunteering activities undertaken within a week, etc.) and adding up the total. In case of a question with several categories of possible answers, such as the second example, when adding
up the results, each of the different options in each category will be added separately (ex: 5 volunteers were involved in planning activities, 7 in implementing activities with the beneficiaries, 7 in evaluating the activities). You can then produce a table, list or graph of number/percentages of people questioned that gave each answer. One can also calculate the minimum and maximum values or the average, and also identify the most frequent value of a certain item.

Collecting information can be done manually, by introducing each item form each respondent of your survey/questionnaire/report/, or by using a computer software (which will save you some time, especially when dealing with many items), that will also generate your findings automatically. The most accessible software used is Excel.

**For qualitative data**

Analysing qualitative data requires a different set of resources. While for qualitative data we need technical skills and procedure, some say analysing quantitative data is closer to an art form. The collected data, in the shape of words and stories, needs to be closely and openly understood and examined.

**The biggest challenges presented by qualitative rather than quantitative data are:**
- keeping the focus on meaning rather than quantities
- studying the details of each report or situation without having predetermined categories
- focus on the context of each situation rather than seeking the general rules
- keeping the objectivity of the analyst

**There are 2 big steps in analysing qualitative data:**
1. You have to break down the information in relevant parts, consistent with your aim and then
2. Reconstruct it in a shape suited for your target audience.

Having the aim of your assessment in mind, you will gather all the findings related to it. If, for example your aim is to prove the value of the volunteer programme to your management or stakeholders, you will have to gather all the information regarding the changes that occurred in your service delivery since you started involving volunteers. Following this topic in all the data you have, you could be able to show outcomes or impact in the work of your institution's staff, in your relationship with the beneficiaries and their families or in the way the community at large perceives your institution. At the same time, you might have to ignore a lot of irrelevant information.

We do not recommend ignoring all the information that is not directly connected to your aim, since many methods of qualitative data collection require people expressing themselves freely and providing their own perspective. You can never tell where the next great improvement idea for your volunteer programme comes from.

After gathering the relevant pieces of information you will need to shape them in order to most efficiently deliver them to your audience. This second part of the process will be covered in the following section.
### 5. THE MONITORING PLAN – TEMPLATE AND EXAMPLES

#### Ex. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establish the aim</th>
<th>For whom is it important?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prove the economic value of the volunteering programme</td>
<td>Management team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Financial Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Donors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Develop the design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What data do you want to collect?</th>
<th>Who has the information?</th>
<th>Who will collect it?</th>
<th>What method will you use?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative</strong></td>
<td>volunteers / volunteer guides</td>
<td>volunteers / volunteer manager</td>
<td>volunteer's hour sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteering hours / types of activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of resources directed to the volunteering</td>
<td>volunteer manager / financial department</td>
<td>volunteer manager / financial</td>
<td>the budget of activities / the financial report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Qualitative** -

#### Ex. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establish the aim</th>
<th>For whom is it important?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show that the volunteers develop valuable skills and new attitudes.</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Develop the design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What data do you want to collect?</th>
<th>Who has the information?</th>
<th>Who will collect it?</th>
<th>What method will you use?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantitative</strong></td>
<td>volunteers or volunteer guides</td>
<td>volunteers or volunteer guides</td>
<td>volunteer’s hour sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteering hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The volunteer’s self-evaluation</td>
<td>volunteers or volunteer guides</td>
<td>volunteers or volunteer guides</td>
<td>the volunteer’s diary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The evaluation of the guide</td>
<td>volunteers or volunteer guides</td>
<td>volunteers or volunteer guides</td>
<td>the supervision report / periodic evaluation report made by the mentor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the first part of the tool (A. Establishing the Aim) you have to answer the two questions. What is your purpose, what do you want to show, and who do you want to show it to? You have three examples above. You might want to show all of them, only some, or you might have different aims altogether. In the second part of the table (B. Developing the design) you move to the next step, following the same three examples, they take you through the data you need, the people who can give it, the people who will gather it and the monitoring method you prefer.

You can find the template of Monitoring Plan here.

By using this tool you practically create the skeleton of your monitoring process and you have an overview that can help you discover from the beginning any errors. For example, you might have proposed a quantitative tool for qualitative data. Or you might have asked for data that no one has. But if you do it step by step for every aim you set for yourself and check again at the end, the tool should be both useful and easy to use. We recommend going back to these first steps in the handbook when filling your first monitoring plan.

Once these first to steps are carefully defined and planned, you can go on to the collection of data and analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establish the aim</th>
<th>Develop the design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you want to do?</td>
<td>What data do you want to collect?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For whom is it important?</td>
<td>Who has the information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Who will collect it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Show increase in the level of care due to more people supporting the beneficiaries.</strong></td>
<td>What method will you use?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>number of beneficiaries in contact with the volunteers</td>
<td>Satisfaction of the beneficiaries before and after involving volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the volunteer manager</td>
<td>The beneficiaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteer manager</td>
<td>volunteer manager / a volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteer’s registry</td>
<td>Questionnaires before involving volunteers and after a suitable period of time (that you deem representative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION 2: MAKING USE OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS

A. COMMUNICATING THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERING

Communicating the impact of the volunteer programme of the institution/organization is an essential part of any public relations (PR) and communication strategy in general and volunteering strategy in particular. If your message does not reach your target, the aim of your monitoring process will not be reached. Donors, financing bodies, decision and policy makers, future and actual volunteers, the staff and the community in general need to be informed about the impact that the institution is generating through its volunteer programme and the way in which they are creating the context for members of the community to get involved and contribute, through volunteering, to making the desired difference. Being able to efficiently communicate the impact assessment results, represents a key element in keeping relevant stakeholders close to your cause and in this way consolidate the future of your cooperation.

If in the first chapter we have focused on the way to gather and prove the information you want to show, in this chapter we will deal with the package of this information and its delivery to the desired recipient.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Communicating the results of a volunteering impact assessment, gives the opportunity to various interested actors/stakeholders to have a better understanding of the changes that your institution is making in the local community. Having this understanding is one of the most important aspects when it comes to increasing the level of motivation among all of them to get involved or support the actions of your institution in different ways.

Communicating the results does not require complicated procedures and high professionalized PR department; it can be done in simple ways by anyone involved in the general impact assessment process. Doing it is important for:

- **Showing donors / financing bodies and decision makers how cost effective the institutions’ services are**, due also to the volunteers’ contribution which is vital, as everyone wants to generate much impact with little resources. Donors want to see concrete and big results of the money that they have put in.
- **Increasing the visibility of the institution in the community** can lead to an increase in the number of beneficiaries turning to your institution.
- **Motivating and retaining volunteers**, is more than worth the effort it takes to convince them to renew their commitment by showing them the impact that they have contributed achieving, as long-term volunteers offer the highest return for the investment made (in terms of training and professional development), are va-
uable recruiters of new volunteers, and are more likely to become future donors than non-volunteers’ members of the community.

- **Increasing visibility of the volunteer programme results and impact** in the local community increases the chances for more people to understand the work of the organization/institution, become aware of its impact on the direct beneficiaries and therefore become more willing to get involved by donating money or becoming volunteers.

- **Motivation of staff members in supporting the volunteers’ involvement** can increase due to a better understanding of the contribution that they bring to the organization/institution services – and through their involvement in the evaluation and fine-tuning of the volunteer programme.

There is a big variety of ways to communicate the findings of your assessment. Choosing one or the other should be determined by the following criteria: aim of the communication, target group, type of data presented, resource availability (human, financial, time), and context of the communication.

Based on these elements you can choose to generate:
- internal reports
- leaflets/info-graphs for different stakeholders
- summary on webpages, blogs and social media
- press releases
- annual reports
- promotional videos
- presentation at different events.

### 1. WHO IS THE TARGET OF THE COMMUNICATION OF THE PROCESS OUTCOMES?

When thinking about the target groups that might be interested in your assessment report, there are two main categories you can divide your audience in. Those who are directly involved, and already have a direct connection to your programme and institution and those you would like to attract, to start the foundation of a relationship with. The content of your message will differ accordingly:

**Communicating the impact of volunteering within the organization:**
- the management of the institution
- the staff
- the volunteers
- the beneficiaries

These are groups that are directly involved in the programme and have their daily activity deeply influenced by it on different levels. The management will be interested in the cost/benefits ratio, including here the material and human resources involved
in the volunteer programme, as well as the levels of quality of services offered, quality of life of the beneficiaries, satisfaction levels of the employees, and so on. Volunteers will be interested to see how their work is impacting the lives of the beneficiaries, and the staff they work with. On the other hand, you might be able to use the assessment report as an educational tool, to provide any of the groups with the big picture, showing them the results they can achieve by working together.

Communicating the results of your assessment to the people you have involved in the process will also motivate them to be part of it again in the future.

**Communicating the impact of volunteering outside the organization:**

- families and friends of the beneficiaries
- potential future beneficiaries
- partners
- funders/donors
- local community

When you are communicating with groups outside your institution, you do this because you want them to get engaged in your efforts in one way or another. Here too, you need to think about the target group and what is relevant for them. The families of the beneficiaries are interested in the benefits their loved ones have from your volunteer programme, the donors are looking into your organizational capacity and efficient budget management, or in the visibility your activities have gained through the involvement of volunteers. The local community is often where your volunteers are coming from, so their interest may vary from personal to neighbourly.

According to the findings of the researches carried out within the SoVol project the following areas were identified in 6 different countries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target of communication</th>
<th>Tool for communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Management</td>
<td>Reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>Staff meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries and their relatives</td>
<td>Supervision meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local community</td>
<td>Yearly events of the institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organisations connected to volunteers</td>
<td>Yearly reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other volunteer managers</td>
<td>Web pages and social networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil society organisations</td>
<td>Local media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Central Statistical Office</td>
<td>Word of mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Hall</td>
<td>Leaflets</td>
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<tr>
<td>City council</td>
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2. ASPECTS TO HAVE IN MIND WHEN COMMUNICATING YOUR FINDINGS

The way you are developing the content and structuring your assessment findings into a communication and PR material is crucial for its reach within the targeted group aimed. Having in mind some key aspects of communication strategy can determine whether your material reaches its target. Five aspects to have in mind when developing your communication materials are:

- **Be relevant** - try to be aware on what is trendy among your followers, because if something is in trend, it has the highest chances to be significant to a big proportion of your audience.

- **Know your audience** - is an essential aspect for a successful communication approach, as different audiences reclaim different approaches and content. Donors and financing bodies generally want data, statistics, complex interpretations and quantifiable results while as volunteers and members of the local community want stories and facts presented in a narrative engaging way, without any technical aspects.

- **Include visuals** - human brain is wired for images; we process images a lot faster than text and we are more likely to share a post that includes a photo, increasing its reach. Free tools like Canva ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)) or Piktochart ([www.piktochart.com](http://www.piktochart.com)) are very easy to use since they are created specifically to create beautiful designs without needing prior skills or knowledge.

- **Make it easy** - we are more and more challenged by time limitations in each moment of our lives, therefore transmitting simple messages is vital for ensuring their real reach.

- **Use a call-to-action** - often people need an impulse to make a step, giving them an example on how they can contribute to your cause and inviting them to do it can give your audience a specific example on how they can also take action and be part of the generated change.
3. WAYS TO COMMUNICATE FINDINGS

There are many different ways of communicating the impact of your institutions’ volunteer programme, to different interested actors in the community. Developing a multi-tiered communication strategy, is more likely to appeal to the widest possible range of stakeholders, due to their different interests (donors and financing bodies are generally interested in numbers and financial efficiency of a service, where as volunteers and members of the community in general, are more sensitive to personal stories and testimonials). Depending on the target group of your communication measures, you can use different ways or proportions, to communicate the findings of your assessment process.

COMMUNICATING VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME IMPACT THROUGH FACTS

Use your website, targeted emails, newsletters and social media accounts to share charts, graphs and reports that quantify your organizations impact. Offer fact based reports that answer the following questions that different stakeholders could have about your volunteer programme results:

• How many volunteers have you involved?
• How many volunteering hours did they put in?
• How many beneficiaries were served during a specific time frame or during an event?
• How many new services for the community have been put up in a certain period of time?
• What organizational goals have been met or surpassed with the volunteers’ contribution?
• How costs efficient are the services provided to the community?
• What percentage of the budget is allocated to the volunteering programme monthly/yearly?

COMMUNICATING THE IMPACT OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME THROUGH STORIES

Another important way of communicating the impact to your relevant stakeholders is to share stories, photos, and videos that illustrate how, through your volunteer programme, you are changing the world for the better. Don’t simply tell people that your organization is making a difference, show them how.
Share the triumphs of volunteers and beneficiaries alike. Keep in mind that people tend to respond more to specific, concrete examples rather than generalizations. Use your website, blog, newsletters and social media accounts to spread these stories.

- invite volunteers to write guest blogs or testimonials that share their stories
- share videos of successful events
- share photographs of volunteers making a difference
- share testimonials from your beneficiaries and their families

Asking a volunteer to share a personal story on the impact they have made is also a way of thanking that individual and of recognizing their achievements. The stories that they share will inspire others, and perhaps attract new recruits to your mission. Emotions can be a powerful motivating force. Continually communicating impact to volunteers through sharing positive stories about your organization will help you develop a stable base of satisfied volunteers. Research shows that satisfied volunteers are more likely to make a long-term commitment.

**CHANNELS FOR COMMUNICATION**

There are now an overwhelming number of channels to help you reach your target audience. The good news is that the best way to get the message through to the target inside your institution – staff, volunteers, beneficiaries, is the way you usually communicate other messages as well. Your target audience is already used to getting messages from your institution this way. You can post inside your institution simple posters and info graphics with the findings that are relevant for the people walking your halls. The number of volunteers your institution works with, the increase of the satisfaction of the beneficiaries, the new activities available for your beneficiaries because of volunteers. This is information that could increase the motivation of staff, the volunteers and even potential new beneficiaries visiting your facilities.

Some of the most popular tools are:
- news / announcement board inside your institution
- periodic activity report
- regular staff meetings
- year-end evaluations / regular performance reviews

Reaching your target groups outside of the organization can be more challenging as you don’t always have a direct communication channel, therefore it is great to try to develop an active channel, through which you can constantly keep different categories of stakeholders informed about your activity and results. How many projects you have implemented in the last period, what are the most important results, how many people have benefited, how did the community change, etc.?
Most used channels are:
- online newsletter
- blog
- vlog
- updates on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- media articles
- outdoor advertising (posters, banners, etc.)
B. INTEGRATING THE OUTCOMES IN FUTURE PROGRAMMES

The results of your assessment are also a great basis for the development and improvement of your work. From the data you have collected and analysed, you will be able to gather valuable insight to support you on at least two different levels:

1. To improve your volunteer programme
   
   You are more likely to be able to improve the quality and efficiency of your programme if you understand what you want to achieve through it and more than that, if you take concrete steps to assess to what degree your programme is meeting those ambitions you have set and learn from what you find out through assessment. A focus on impact can help you base changes to your programmes and services on robust evidence of what works and what needs to be improved.

   Collecting data regarding the number of hours that volunteers are dedicating to a programme in parallel with data regarding the number of hours invested by the staff of the organization to coordinate the volunteers and keep the programme functional, can provide you with a simple quantitative measure of the time invested in relation with the time earned within a certain programme.

   It is very important that you commit to learning from the results of your assessment and use your lessons in the future, to support decisions with regards to the volunteering programs, to support planning and implementing future strategies, etc. In this way you will be able, as an institution, to constantly improve your programmes and services and so, generate more impact among your beneficiaries and within your community. You should be aware that the initial time investment in setting up a volunteer programme may be quite significant, but this time investment will diminish over time, once the internal rules and procedures for volunteer involvement mainstream across the institution.

   Identifying in time aspects that can be improved within your volunteering programme and taking action to change these aspects can reinforce both the commitment of the staff members, as well as the commitment of the volunteers as they can all notice your interest for improvement.

2. To improve your assessment process
   
   Going through the whole assessment process, from design to reaching your set aim is a valuable source of information about the process itself. You can see what worked well and what needs to be improved, which where the actions that generated relevant and useful data for your institution and which actions used too many resources compared to the benefits produced.

   It is important to understand that impact assessments are important to be carried out on a regular basis, as they represent an important tool that helps you constantly develop your programmes and services and communicate results and changes you have generated in the community. Integrating this activity in your constant routines requires
focus on relevant data and ensuring a high level of efficiency within the entire process. To be able to increase the efficiency of this process, you have to try to answer to a set of questions (Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit):
- were the tools you have used appropriate for the type of data you wanted to collect?
- would you involve other target groups in your assessment?
- would you allocate more or less time and resources to a specific stage of the assessment?
- would you communicate the findings in a different way?

With these answers, you can constantly adjust the assessment process and focus it on the most relevant aspects for your institution and so the entire assessment will be more easily integrated as an important ongoing process of your institution.
SECTION 3: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. PARADOX AND DILEMMAS

Planning and measuring impact can be very challenging due to the following:
- The impact that is about to be generated cannot be fully known in advance.
- The desired impact cannot be specifically described.
- Persons actively involved in social services can have different opinions on what is
  the achieved impact after a specific intervention.
- The beneficiaries of social services are part of families, groups of friends, neigh-
  bourhoods, working groups and various other communities and therefore are
  under direct influence of various aspects that can have multiple effects.
- Some services are provided for a short term period but the expected impact is on
  long term.

All these aspects make a direct cause-effect correlation difficult and require adap-
- ted and individualised approaches for each assessment.

B. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

For the whole process of designing and implementing a volunteering impact as-
- sessment to be meaningful, you have to constantly be preoccupied to tailor it, as well
  as you can, to the profile of your institution and to interests and expectations of the
  stakeholders you are interacting with. More than that you have to be willing and ready
  to act on your findings and learn the lessons that come out of the process.

Being responsibly engaged in this process will give you a constant and somewhat
- objective overview of the balance between the resources invested within a volunteering
  programme and the changes that the program is generating in the community and will
  make it easier for you as an institution to understand whether or to what extent the
  volunteering programme is contributing to your efforts toward fulfilling your mission.
USEFUL HANDOUTS

1. Individual Monitoring Tool
   https://sovol.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/total-volunteer-investment-sheet.xls
2. Collective Monitoring Tool
3. Weekly Volunteering Schedule
   https://sovol.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/weekly-volunteer-schedule.pdf
4. Total Volunteering Investment Sheet
   https://sovol.files.wordpress.com/2019/03/total-volunteer-investment-sheet.xls
5. Monitoring Plan Template
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The project “CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE SOCIAL SECTOR through the Development of Volunteer Programs at Social Institutions in the CEE Region” Acronym: SoVol is implemented by Önkéntes Központ Alapítvány, Volunteering Hungary - Centre of Social Innovation (www.onkentes.hu, www.oka.hu) in partnership with the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations Slovakia, (www.dobrovolnickecentra.sk), the Association for Civil Society Development SMART in Croatia, (www.volonterski-centar-ri.org), Volunteer Centre, Warsaw in Poland (www.wolontariat.org.pl), Pro Vobis - National Resource Center for Volunteerism in Romania, (www.provobis.ro) and Movisie - the Netherlands centre for social development, (www.movisie.nl) from September 1st 2016 until August 31th 2019, and funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Program, under the contract number: 16/1/KA204/22920