

cultural volunteer ©

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WELCOME!

This is the first issue of cultural volunteer (**cv**) – a free e-news and information service for arts management professionals. **cv** comes to you from Lynn Blackadder, of Arts People and Projects arts management consultancy www.lynnblackadder.com and will be published six times a year. You can choose to read **cv** in email or as a Word attachment. I hope you enjoy **cv**, but if you don't wish to receive future issues, please return this email typing 'unsubscribe' in the subject line. Please feel free to forward the newsletter to others.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

In this first issue **cv introduces you to cultural volunteering**, highlights **potential sources for funding** your volunteer programme, and focuses on the new **Imperial War Museum North's innovative volunteer programme** 'Shape your future'.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ **cv** ...

cv is for arts management professionals who currently involve volunteers in their organisations, and for those who don't.

cv aims to raise awareness of the resource cultural volunteers present, and how to utilise it effectively.

cv actively campaigns for the recognition and progression of volunteers working in arts organisations.

cv can help you to better understand the nature of volunteering and how it relates to your organisation.

cv will regularly bring to your attention useful information, resources, and commentary on volunteering in the cultural sector. Experts on volunteer management will feature, and we will explore topics raised by you in future issues.

FEATURE: Lynn Blackadder on CULTURAL VOLUNTEERING

The facts

Volunteers have traditionally supported, and often underpinned, cultural, heritage and community arts organisations. Roughly one quarter of independent museums are entirely volunteer run. Fifty-three per cent of Scotland's museum staff are unpaid. Institutions such as the British Museum and the V&A have long-standing relationships with Friends organisations which are active on site. Many of you reading this article will have volunteered before, and most likely to get experience of working in an arts organisation, thereby improving your chances of getting a job. Some of you will still volunteer as a trustee, or mentor.

Culture change

We know that people volunteer in cultural organisations for a variety of reasons, and there is a move away from the image of the culture vulture with independent income and time to spare (though this trusty band is still ever-present). Increasingly, people are jumping on the good citizenship bandwagon and volunteering sporadically to give their time and expertise to the benefit of others, as well as themselves. Organisations such as Arts & Business have been successful in placing professionals as trustees and managerial mentors in arts venues. Cultural institutions too are proactively looking at how they can use volunteering to better involve visitors and participants who might not otherwise engage in the services they provide.

The management hurdles

With different funders, operational structures, and outreach agendas, it is not surprising that the way volunteers are managed in arts organisations varies significantly. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that this is as much to do with organisational culture, as it is with inconsistencies in resourcing, management styles, and audience development strategies – although of course it can be a combination of factors. In many organisations, volunteering presents a real paradox. Although many arts professionals have themselves started their career as a volunteer, just as many do not see the value of involving volunteers. They see them as time-consuming, unreliable, and potential management headaches. There is a stigma attached to volunteering from a senior management perspective where there is naive, but understandable concern about standards of service and protecting the public. Resources are often felt too precious to squander on volunteer management – even if they are seen as beneficial, and staff are pressurised into ad hoc volunteer management without training or reward. Against this anti-volunteering backdrop, volunteering success stories rarely emerge – and tend instead to be obscured by bad news about poor standards, unreliability, and increased administrative burdens.

Seizing opportunities

Managers and HR professionals need to recognise the potential for their organisations of this increasingly available resource. Given the high proportion of employees who do start their working lives via this route, it seems at the very least common sense to attempt to capitalise on this flexible, committed and often well-educated and trained resource. Those not necessarily wishing to pursue a paid career in the arts are also a key resource for arts managers, and can very effectively supplement key staff roles. In these times of funding and operational reviews, it is not surprising that staff can feel threatened by volunteers who, if they turn out to be reliable, and efficient, might take their jobs. But, involving volunteers successfully – and by this I mean creating and communicating a clear policy and structure for involving volunteers – will inevitably benefit everyone in the end.

In practice

Some illustrative examples are:

- Staff development: entry-level security or warding staff often have little or no opportunity to develop management skills in their jobs. Working with volunteers can give them additional skills in supervision and management, and improve job satisfaction.
- Many roles in Museums are logistically ‘fixed’: an information receptionist can point a visitor in the right direction, but is often desk-bound. Volunteers can act as roving guides – flexible visitor resources that enhance the visitor experience.
- Community outreach: volunteers from, and therefore able to empathise with local communities, can help organisations better reach specific target groups by being ambassadors for both.
- The Museum Association’s ‘Diversify’ project which aims to encourage people from minority-ethnic backgrounds to take up a career in museums and galleries is encouraging organisations to invent schemes to prepare individuals for museum careers. Such schemes could involve people volunteering.

Sector backing

Resource is recognising the importance of volunteers to the profession. It has just published a report by the Institute for Volunteering Research, and you can find it at <http://www.resource.gov.uk/action/leadership/00lead.asp#volunteers>. Resource commissioned the report because it wants to address the gap in knowledge about volunteers who 'play a vital role in our sector', but about whom there is little knowledge. The report presents a demographic profile of volunteers in museums, archives and libraries in England, and Resource hopes that the report and its recommendations will enable it to formulate a strategic view of volunteering across the sector to recognise their contribution and assist it in future policy decisions. More from **cv** on this in the next issue.

FUNDING

One of the main barriers to involving volunteers successfully is a lack of resources – human and financial. More often than not, those managing volunteers do so in addition to an already demanding (and not always complementary) job. And ever-decreasing budgets mean that volunteering expenses – such as travel and subsistence – are rarely paid, resulting in only those who have personal income being able to volunteer. Volunteer programmes require substantial investment to make them work, and thankfully there are an increasing number of funders wishing specifically to support volunteer programmes. Funding organisations have different criteria such as development, regeneration, social inclusion, employability, and skills development. Depending on your organisational needs and programme aspirations, you will have to make sure your aims meet the funding criteria. Here are just a few to explore:

Community Fund: distributes money raised by the National Lottery to support charities and voluntary and community groups throughout the UK and to UK agencies working abroad. Their main aim is to help meet the needs of those at greatest disadvantage in society and to improve the quality of life in the community. The Community Fund's new £30 million Strategic Grants programme was launched in September 2002. Details of how to apply are on the web site www.community-fund.org.uk.

Lloyds TSB Foundation: their mission is to support and work in partnership with charitable organisations which help people, especially those who are disadvantaged or disabled, to play a fuller role in communities throughout England and Wales. Funding goes mainly to charities working in two fields: social and community needs and education and training. Similar Funds are available in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. See www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk for application details.

Baring Foundation: specific grants programmes concerned with voluntary sector development, the arts and international work. Present annual budget for grant making is just over £3 million. Log on to www.baringfoundation.org.uk for more information.

Nationwide Foundation: makes charitable grants to UK-based organisations whose aim is to improve the quality of life and the range of opportunities for those in need. Through its grants the society seeks to promote social inclusion and achieve real and sustainable benefit to communities. It supports Volunteering Programmes throughout the UK and Rural Regeneration. The majority of grants are between £500 and £10,000 for work spanning up to three years, although applications are accepted for grants of up to £30,000 with prior approval (and some have been successful!). Applications can be submitted at any time, but are reviewed quarterly. For more information, log on to www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk.

European Social Fund: ESF offers a variety of funding streams under themes such as employability and equal opportunities. ESF fund 45% of your total project costs, provided you

can match-fund the remaining 55%. Funding covers a minimum of 12 months, depending on the stream. Check out their web site for more details www.esfnews.org.uk.

Learning and Skills Council: the LSCs have been appointed to distribute certain ESF funds under a new co-financing scheme. Log on to www.lsc.gov.uk for more details of this, and their other funding schemes.

SPOTLIGHT ON ... IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM NORTH, MANCHESTER

'Shape your future' is an innovative volunteer programme that is helping local residents overcome barriers to learning and employment. Arts People and Projects helped IWM North set up, fundraise, and oversee the implementation of the scheme which has recently secured a further £180,000 to take the initial 12-month project forward for a further 17 months. The programme aims to involve around 200 members of the local community, and currently has over 50 volunteers working in front of house positions to gather work experience to qualify for NVQ2 in Cultural Heritage. The partnership project is supported by Salford College and Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, and funded by the European Social Fund, the Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council, and the Nationwide Foundation. The project was featured recently in the Guardian newspaper. Follow this link to read more <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4447881,00.html>.

FREE VOLUNTEER POLICY DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

The West Midlands Regional Museums Council has published a very useful toolkit which you can download at <http://www.wm-museums.co.uk/pub/>.

FEEDBACK

cv is keen to respond to your interests and needs. If you would like to forward your news and views, comment on content, or suggest a topic for discussion, please email lynn_blackadder@msn.com.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of **cv** will include a feature from Stuart Williams, Volunteer Liaison Officer at the Egypt Centre, Museum of Egyptian Antiquities at the University of Wales, Swansea. Stuart will be talking about his volunteer programme for children – the 'Nubies' – a scheme for 10-15 year olds.