



Vital Volunteers - Recruiting new Trustees

Trustees are essential to the well being and effectiveness of the voluntary and community sector. In voluntary and community organisations throughout the country, whether it is a small group of volunteers working locally or a large complex national charity with paid staff, there is a small group of people who are responsible for the organisation. These are the trustees.

Trustees have key responsibility for an organisation. They are in law the guardians of its purpose and are expected to direct the strategy (working with staff where they exist); they have financial oversight, are responsible for resources and are expected to ensure the organisation stays within the law.

In Suffolk alone, there are some 15,950 trustees and finding and keeping trustees is a vital task for all voluntary and community organisations. With over a million trustee places in England and Wales plus potentially another million management committee members of non-registered community organisations, it is also a demanding task.

The following process will help you to plan for the recruitment of new Trustees.

1. Anticipating the need for new Trustees: not all vacancies arise when a Trustee has to retire unexpectedly. The need to recruit following decisions to increase the size of the Board and “routine” changes, such as when a Trustee has completed the maximum length of service can be planned some time ahead. Plan the process using a time-line.
2. Double-check your governing document: what you can and cannot do. See how many Trustees are allowed and whether the governing document prescribes how they are appointed. Understand the eligibility criteria for Trustees.
3. Decide what sort of experience Trustees should offer: starting with a blank sheet of paper on which you note everything that you would like the Board as a whole to be able to offer the charity. Then carry out a “skills audit” of the existing Board to identify what is missing and prioritise the gaps, noting what is essential and what is desirable.
4. Prepare an information pack for potential Trustees: describe the role of the Trustee, tell them about the charity (information leaflets, annual report and accounts), detail what will be expected of them (attendance at meetings, events etc.) as well as what they can expect of the charity (minimum and maximum terms of appointment, payment of expenses)
5. Decide on the recruitment process: if there is no current, agreed selection process, interested people who fit the skills should be invited to meet with the Trustees and the best ones selected. If it is clear from the start that there will be a selection process, no-one will be offended.

6. Let people know what you are doing: Trustees, committee members, staff, volunteers, members, supporters, donors etc may know some-one who would fit the bill. Newsletters (the SAVO publication "Vollies and those of the Local Infrastructure Partnerships – their details on the Members Page of this website) can be a useful (and free) way of letting people know about the vacancies.
7. Consider advertising: a basic advertisement in your local paper is not too expensive but the market is competitive and success is not guaranteed.
8. Approach your local Volunteer Centre: this can be particularly relevant for a small or local charity whose activities tend to be confined to a particular area (details of Volunteer Centres in Suffolk can be found on the Members Page of this website)
9. Appoint a small panel: to meet people who appear to fit the bill and to decide on whom to propose to the Trustee Board. The senior member of staff (if applicable) should be included in this process.
10. Complete the formalities: Trustee declaration of eligibility and memorandum of understanding; who to inform, what documents need to be changed.
11. Arrange the induction of your new Trustee/s: there should be a programme for induction which should be carried out by the Chair (and senior member of staff). Induction should include a pack containing key organisational documents and the opportunity to meet staff and volunteers.

For the sake of simplicity the word 'Trustee' has been used throughout this briefing. Organisations sometimes use "board/council/committee members or similar titles such as 'directors'.

NCVO produce "The Good Practice in Trustee Recruitment "Toolkit which sets out practical advice for seeking the best people to govern a community or voluntary organisation. This toolkit can be downloaded from their website:

www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications

