

Good Practice Guides: Building Foundations

No. 3 - Volunteer Expenses

Key Points

Volunteers should never be out of pocket because of their volunteering. For most organisations covering volunteer's expenses is the norm, for others however there is a perception that it is expensive or that funding restrictions prevent their payment. Volunteer Centres view the payment of expenses as vital in order to remove barriers to those that wish to volunteer. This guide will outline the best practice on paying volunteer expenses.

What are expenses?

Expenses for volunteers should only be paid where an expense has actually been incurred due to their volunteering. Any organisation that plans to involve volunteers in their work should seek to include volunteer expenses in their budget. Where appropriate, volunteer expenses should also be costed into funding applications. Where expenses are paid to volunteers, a suitable record should be kept along with receipts for any expense incurred.

What expenses can be paid?

Repeat the mantra - "only reimburse expenses that are actually spent". A further caution on why this has to be adhered to is that if volunteers are given additional monies that do not reflect actual costs for example flat rate amounts, you are seriously at risk of falling foul of minimum wage legislation, inadvertently establishing a contract of employment, and where volunteers are in receipt of benefits, you put these individuals at risk too.

This is what would be classed as reasonable expenses:

- Travel, to and from the place of volunteering
- Travel undertaken in the course of volunteering
- Childcare (crèche or childminding)
- Food and refreshments while volunteering
- Postage, telephone calls etc paid for by the volunteer
- Materials to do voluntary work (paper, pens, stationery etc)
- Cost of equipment or specialist clothing (goggles, gardening gloves)
- Attendance at training events/courses

Travel Expenses

The norm for most organisations is to reimburse volunteers for the cost of travel to and from their volunteering and whilst actually volunteering. Typically this will be the cost of public transport. However, there will be other forms of travel that may arise:

Taxis - It is reasonable to expect to pay for a taxi if; the volunteer has a disability that could prevent them from travelling to their volunteering, if there is not adequate transport available locally, or if there is a safety reason for example returning home late in the dark.

Cyclist - we recommend paying volunteers who cycle to their voluntary work the 20p a mile free mileage rate which is in line with Inland Revenue guidance.

Walkers - at present there is no tax free mileage rate on shoe leather, so we wouldn't see it as reasonable to pay people expenses for walking to their volunteering.

People with disabilities - we recommend paying for taxis for people with disabilities. Volunteers using taxis should not be expected to use their Taxi card in order to attend their volunteering. See www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/a-z/AZ_taxicards for more information.

Private Cars

If your volunteer uses their car as their means of transport to and from their volunteering, please follow the guidance as dictated by the Inland Revenue.

Approved Mileage Rates		
Since 2005	First 10,000 business miles in tax year	Each mile over 10,000 in tax year
Cars and Vans	45p	25p
Motor Cycles	24p	24p
Bicycles	20p	20p

Food

It is perfectly reasonable to reimburse volunteers for refreshments, however we would recommend that this be offered to volunteers that are perhaps doing four hours or more of voluntary work per day. Again the amount should cover the actual meal and be backed up by appropriate receipts.

Childcare

Please see the Good Practice Guide on Childcare Provision

More help?

If you would like more help or advice in relation to this Guide please contact STRiVE on the following details:

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