



Providing Specialist Volunteer support through Inspiring Scotland:

A How-To Guide

The third sector's passion is infectious. The private sector lens can help illuminate the bigger picture, presenting an opportunity to step out from the daily firefighting, offering a fresh perspective.

“The Specialist Volunteer Network brings a whole range of professional expertise, benefits which are central to Inspiring Scotland’s approach of delivering wrap around support to the sector.”

Celia Tennant CEO Inspiring Scotland



What is it?

Specialist Volunteering works differently. Here at Inspiring Scotland we work directly with over 700 third sector organisations, within our 15 funds, and have connections all across civic society in Scotland.

Through each of these funded programmes we bring vital financial support combined with a package of additional support which starts with our team and extends to a whole range of professional expertise delivered through our dedicated Specialist Volunteer Network. These additional benefits, which are central to Inspiring Scotland's approach, bring an array of skills, experience and knowledge to our charity partners, strengthening governance for example, through training and recruitment of board members. The sector tells us that this wrap around support is needed now more than ever.

Charities and third sector organisations come to us directly, or through their Inspiring Scotland Fund team, with requests for expert support; which would either be out of reach financially, or would divert much needed funding away from the people who need it most.

Why get involved?

Being part of the Specialist Volunteer Network (SVN) allows professionals to volunteer their specific skill sets to add maximum impact, supporting the third sector (not for profits) to develop in a sustainable way, or to parachute in when an charitable organisation faces a potential crisis. Specialist Volunteers have the benefit of accepting or declining requests based on their capacity, setting their own limits and have support from the SVN team to ensure the engagements run smoothly.

Inspiring Scotland has facilitated thousands of impactful relationships between charities and professional skilled volunteers since 2012. We've learned more than a few lessons along the way and this How-To Guide is informed by the experiences of the charities and volunteers we support.

All support requests are different but in general they follow the structure laid out in this guide.

How it works.

A How-To guide

The Specialist Volunteer Network

Charitable organisation **submits support request** to SVN team

SVN team complete the **personalised matching** process

Specialist Volunteer is identified

Introductions are made, Specialist Volunteer and charitable organisation meet

Specialist Volunteer works with charitable organisation to **deliver support**

Specialist Volunteer **completes monthly timesheets** until support is complete

Charitable organisation sends **feedback** to SVN team

This collaboration helps Specialist Volunteers learn about charitable organisations, their beneficiaries and social issues; facilitating bridging between sectors.



Charitable organisation saves vital funds

Volunteer your skills and become part of a Community of Changemakers



- **Know and define your needs.** It's important to clarify your scope of work and then stick to it! Your initial meeting with your Specialist Volunteer will cover this.
- **Be realistic about deadlines.** This project will require resources from you too, so plan ahead. Support from skilled volunteers isn't recommended for any task with an urgent due date.
- **Act like a paying client.** Prepare for this working relationship internally just like you're onboarding a paid staff member or contractor. It's the only way a project can run smoothly, and skilled volunteers want to know you're invested in this work.
- **Learning goes both ways.** You'll learn from your skilled volunteer's expertise but remember that you have a lot to teach them about your organisation, your sector, and working with charities.
- **Feedback.** You will be asked for your feedback at the completion of the engagement. We know the sector is stretched and charities are time poor but so are our Specialist Volunteers. Your feedback goes a long way.

- **Seek to understand, then to be understood.** Take time to get to know the charity and how they work before offering new ideas and advice. The SVN team are there to help this knowledge sharing.
- **Be aware of consulting time.** Even small tasks can take longer than you expect, so stick to the dates you set and be communicative about timelines.
- **Pro bono isn't the place to learn new professional skills.** Instead, stretch skills and experiences you already have. You'll find great growth opportunities from working with an organisation from a new sector and collaborating with a different team!
- **One size doesn't fit all.** Implementation is the key to success. Don't offer an over-complicated solution unless the charity truly needs it and will use it.
- **Feedback.** We will seek feedback throughout the engagement and once the request is completed we will share the feedback with you.

[Check out some of our successful interactions here.](#)

Trusteeship

For some, the rewards of Specialist Volunteering, or the relationship built with a specific charitable organisation can lead to trusteeship. For others, trusteeship may be an entry point to the SVN and the preferred option to deliver specialist support.

The sustained support of SVN trusteeship and professional skills make an enormous impact to Boards, ultimately allowing charitable organisations to increase their impact in a sustainable way.

The SVN team supports Scotland's third sector to share Board opportunities for free, on our [webpage](#).

The SVN Executive, Elaine Crichton, also offers free and bespoke **Roles and Responsibilities of a Charity Trustee training**.

If you are interested in becoming a trustee, receiving training or finding out more, then please contact the SVN team.

The essentials



Inspiring Scotland cannot offer indemnity insurance to Specialist Volunteers – this should be covered by your company or personal business protection, and we ask that you stick to your specific area of expertise.



Please engage fully with our short monthly timesheet requests, which take less than five minutes to complete. These help us monitor and evaluate our programme effectively so are hugely valuable in helping us shape our added value offering.



Please note, that to enable us to contact you for support requests, we assume your consent to Inspiring Scotland holding your data – for information on our full privacy statement and description of your rights, please see our **privacy statement**.



Code of Conduct



Inspiring Scotland's SVN has an informal Code of Conduct.

Specialist Volunteers are required to act with honesty and integrity and exercise good judgement in relationships with charitable organisations.

They should not conduct themselves in a manner which may potentially damage or undermine either the reputation of the charitable organisation or their own personal reputation.

Specialist Volunteers should not act in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves unless in cases where a cap on pro bono work was agreed at the start of the engagement.

In some cases a switch to paid (often at a charity rate) support is necessary in order to cover the advice given under professional indemnity insurance, for example complicated employment law advice around employment tribunals etc. The point at which a switch to a paid basis is necessary will be highlighted ahead of any work being completed. At the point of the support switching to a paid basis the request will be considered completed for the purposes of SVN recording.

"Specialist Volunteers will do well in 30 minutes,
something it would take us two weeks to do badly."
UK Pro-Bono Association reflections

"I think the greatest reward in being a trustee
is that I know I'm making a difference."
Elaine Crichton | Trustee at Agnes Hunter
Trust

"PEEK would not be the same
charity without the SVN's
unwavering support."
Michaela Collins | PEEK

"Working for these charities has been genuinely inspiring. The
dedication of the teams and the scope of what they deliver is
incredible. As well as sharing some of my knowledge and time, I
have learned a lot from the teams themselves. These charities are
serious businesses with excellent management so the opportunities
for a mutually beneficial relationship are plentiful."
Malcolm Dickson | Wood Mackenzie



Changemakers



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[Elaine Crichton](#) | [Tommy Seymour](#)



<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/specialist-volunteer-network/>