

Develop Skills and Transform Your Career Through Volunteering

Learning and development planning for UN Volunteers



Volunteering is Part Of Lifelong Learning and Professional Development

Learning is a central part of your volunteering assignment

that supports the development of develop skills and competencies. Volunteering provides unique opportunities for personal, professional, social and civic development that traditional or professional systems may not provide.

As a UN Volunteer, you will have the possibility to learn in various ways;

informally and formally in various ways through [Experience](#), [Exposure](#) and [Education](#) (EEE) during your assignment. Based on the shared responsibility for UN Volunteer learning, UNV and your host organisation will provide you with learning opportunities and support during your assignment. It is however your responsibility to take charge and plan your learning path for the future career aspirations by maximizing your learning during the assignment.

You are more than ever in the driver's seat of your own learning and development!

As creating a personal development plan can be exciting and challenging at the same time, this guide provides you with the knowledge, tools and resources needed to facilitate your learning during your UN Volunteer assignment, and to be equipped to manage your own career beyond.

While you may develop your learning action plan independently, we recommend that you first complete the simple 6 steps to write your personal development plan on your own. And thereafter, consult with your supervisor to confirm your learning action plan together.

What you discover about yourself with this guide will spark strategies, self-reflection and study that could change your whole career and set you up for real success while you're volunteering.

PART (A)

FIND YOURSELF

Create your personal development plan

PART (B)

ENGAGE YOUR SUPERVISOR

Confirm your learning action plan



Part (A)

FIND YOURSELF

Create your personal development plan

**The more self-aware you are,
the more successful you could be.**

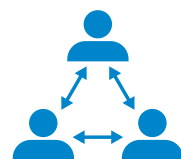
Here's why:



Your behaviours, thoughts and feelings will be easier for you to manage, and for your supervisor to understand, when you have an idea of who you are. Your wants. Your needs.



You'll set fulfilling goals that play to your strengths and values, while discovering new talents and hidden skills.



Your supervisor and future employers will respect your clarity, improving your professional relationships and productivity.

Form (A) Use this template for your **personal development plan** and the next section of the guide to fill it in.

Your name: **Date:**

01	Your personality traits	02	Your motivations	03	Your values	04	Your strengths	05	Your biases

06	Set your professional objectives	Break your objectives into smaller goals that'll help you succeed	Strengths you'll use (qualifications, skills etc.)	Learning opportunities (training, new experiences)
A	(related to current UN Volunteer assignment / host entity needs)	1. 2. 3.
B	(related to current UN Volunteer assignment / host entity needs)	1. 2. 3.
C	(related to your future career aspirations)	1. 2. 3.

01

Your personality traits

Do the Myers-Briggs test online in 10 minutes

Added to your personal development plan, your results could make you a happier and more successful volunteer by hinting which management style, tasks or work environment you may find most motivating. Your supervisor will likely find such insights helpful in working with you.

Meanwhile, you'll get a head start on thinking through your strengths and opportunities to grow, simplifying the rest of your personal development plan.

TRY
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A Take your personality test

Decide how far you agree or disagree with these simple statements. For the most accurate results, be honest about how you'd react or feel in everyday situations and try not to choose the neutral (middle) answer.

B Read your 4 key traits slowly

Summarised in your test results, these form your personality type. Write each on your personal development plan.



QUICK TIP!

Check your results in more detail to learn how you interact with the world and cope with your emotions. How you approach your work and decision-making. How confident you are in your abilities, choices, and actions. You might be surprised. This may help you choose a career that matches your personality.

02

Your motivations

Watch UN Volunteers, share theirs for inspiration

For your supervisor to assign you to work or projects that fill you with a sense of purpose, your personal development plan will help explain what drives you. Jot down what inspired you to volunteer and what motivates you to give your all each day.

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A Let **one** or **two** Blue Room Talks spark ideas

Play both videos. And listen as our speakers explain why they volunteered, for help expressing your own reasons and your successes so far in your personal development plan.

B Have a deep think about your aspirations

What do you hope to achieve by volunteering, and why? How do you hope to dedicate your career?



QUICK TIP!

Saying what motivates you could get you introduced to others, who share your passions or hopes for the future, broadening your network and bringing you more opportunities to do what makes your soul happy.

Your values

Prioritise your top 5 words or phrases

To feel more confident and authentic while volunteering, try to base your decisions on what's important to you.

Pinpoint your core values, using the exercises below, before imagining how you can start to think, behave and work in ways that epitomise these.

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A Watch this [2 minute video](#) to describe your values

Remember when you felt happiest, proudest or most satisfied, and why.

B [Assess your personal values online](#)

Choose 10 words which best reflect who you are today, not who you hope to be, and check your emails – you'll be sent a report and optional exercises to help you understand your values. Or complete our [discovery exercise](#).

C Choose 5 values you want to live more fully

Add these to your personal development plan, ready to discuss with your supervisor, and ask yourself how you can live up to your chosen ideals every day while volunteering.



QUICK TIP!

[Sorting your values online](#) can help you whittle your list down to your final five.

Your strengths

Celebrate what makes you shine

Success comes quicker when you focus on what you're good at, and your supervisor or future employer will notice you more when you can describe your strengths and achievements.

Discovering your best skills while writing your personal development plan should boost your confidence and help you stick to healthy boundaries. Without balance, a strength might become a weakness, such as if you're overly independent, your teamwork could suffer.

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A Read the skills listed in your assignment's job description

These must be your strengths, as you were chosen to volunteer with us. Find more with our [skill discovery exercise](#).

B Complete the table below to rate how far you've developed your skills

With anecdotes of your strengths and examples of skills that could be improved with practice, you'll have well-prepared talking points for your supervisor.

C Shortlist your top 5 skills for your personal development plan

[Sort your strengths online](#), if it helps. Later, your supervisor can help you find opportunities to practise these as often as possible. And perhaps they'll suggest unrealised strengths that you didn't know you have.



QUICK TIP!

Knowing what you do well is always motivating. It also helps you prepare for the parts of your assignment that will challenge you the most, giving you a chance to seek support.

Define your strengths and opportunities to fire your growth!

Skills	Your definition of this type of skill	Describe one or two times you used these skills	The outcome (what you learnt or achieved, your reward)	Rate your skills: (Low/ Average/ High)	Your definition of this type of skill	How can you learn/ improve/ apply these skills?
Communication						
Teamwork						
Planning & organisation						
Accountability						
Creativity						
Client Orientation						
Commitment to Continuous Learning						
Technological Awareness						

Add your own and see the complete list of [UN Core Values and Competencies](#) to learn more.

Skills	Your definition of this type of skill	Describe one or two times you used these skills	The outcome (what you learnt or achieved, your reward)	Rate your skills: (Low/ Average/ High)	Your definition of this type of skill	How can you learn/ improve/ apply these skills?
1. ▼						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						

Your biases

Widen your thinking

From listening more attentively to people who agree with us to judging how respectable someone is based on their appearance – all of us are naturally biased, with room to improve how we respond to new situations, information and cultures.

Understanding the types of bias, how they influence your opinions and reactions, will help you practise seeing the bigger picture. And make you a more open-minded volunteer. And a constructive teammate.

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A Read about the 10 (unconscious) biases distorting your thinking

Being aware of these by reading [this article](#) is an important first step in trying to overcome yours.

B Take the [online test](#)

Reflect on your results (how you can overcome your biases, how they impact your behaviour, actions and others you work or interact with). And add these ideas to your personal development plan.



QUICK TIP!

Think about the culture you are working in. Do certain traditions or typical behaviours feel “off” to you? Why?

Your objectives and goals

Set realistic ambitions using the SMART technique

Using everything you’ve learnt so far, about yourself and what’s in your control, dream up positive and fulfilling accomplishments that you’ll set out to achieve while volunteering. For example, rather than ‘Stop being distracted’ (negative), try to ‘Be more focussed’ (positive).

Be as precise you can, with dates, times and measurables. With the [SMART technique](#), you’re more likely to stay on track and feel motivated by your clear ideas of what success looks like to you.

- S** pecific or significant
- M** easurable or meaningful
- A** ttainable or action-orientated
- R** elevant or rewarding
- T** ime-bound or trackable

TRY
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A Choose two main goals (objectives) for your volunteer assignment and one for your future career

Ask yourself:

- What strengths (skills, knowledge, attitude) can you bring to your volunteering assignment? And your future workplace?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What will you be known for at your organisation?
- What’s your ideal job?
- What kind of team will you work with?
- What responsibilities do you or will you have?
- Will you prefer to manage a team or be consulted for your expertise?

B Break each objective into 3 manageable goals. Steppingstones to success

Consider which qualifications and skills you already have to reach your goal, and where you still need to learn, gain experience or be more aware to succeed.



QUICK TIP!

If you learn something new and want to change your goals, do. Never be afraid to challenge yourself. And remember, it’s not how good you are, it’s [how good you want to be](#).



Part (B)

ENGAGE YOUR SUPERVISOR

Confirm your learning action plan

Now that you have your personal development plan ([Form A](#)) in place, you have all necessary information to work with your host entity supervisor to finalize your learning action plan ([Form B](#)) to further your development during your UN Volunteer assignment.

Be responsible for your own continuous learning

Whether your goal is to learn a new skill or sharpen existing ones – when you're proactive, acting in your own best interests, with a defined learning action plan you will:

Bring your existing strengths and competencies to the forefront.



Identify learning resources and opportunities available to reach your goals.



Enhance your skills performance to highlight your value-added to the host entity.



Be more employable with potential to move careers.



Display professional confidence and build a reputation for being self-reliant and determined.

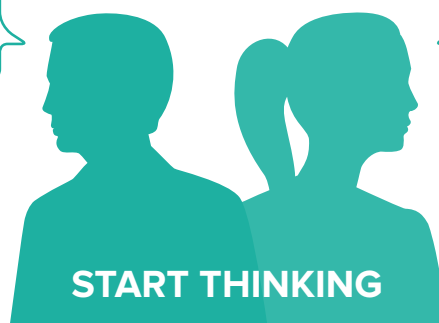
01

Fill the gaps

Copy 'Your strengths' and 'Your opportunities' from your personal development plan (Form A) to your learning action form (Form B) below.

How will my personal development help my team and organisation?

What do I need (training, experience, support, resources) to update my current skills or master new ones?



02

Tap the learning resources for UN Volunteers

As serving UN Volunteers, you have access to numerous learning opportunities. These are available to you on-demand and relatively easy to grab at no cost. E.g. free online courses, peer learning, mentoring. As a UN Volunteer, you have access to a large number of learning resource on [UNV e-Campus](#). Eligible UN Volunteers also have free of cost access to on-demand [UNV learning programmes](#). Plus, you should also have access to host entity learning platform and training, especially when you want to deepen your technical skills and professional expertise.

At the same time, consider how you can pick up lessons each day while volunteering through your day-to-day work activities, such as by sharing what you've learnt with your peers, being supervised or mentored, interacting with your counterparts and wider community, and mastering your skills by repeatedly applying them to carry out work activities.

TRY
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A Fill-out [Form B](#) and email it to your supervisor in advance.

Check on their availability to provide feedback to support your professional development.

B Discuss and complete your form

With anecdotes of your strengths and examples of skills that could be improved with practice, you'll have well-prepared talking points for your supervisor.

C Set a date for a meeting

with your supervisor who'll sign it for you.

D Follow through on your plans

and track your progress by taking notes or journaling about your experiences and learning during your UN Volunteer assignment.



QUICK TIP!

Apply your training immediately and regularly while volunteering, for your skills and newfound knowledge to develop into competencies that host entities and employers want.

Form (B) Complete this learning action plan with your supervisor.

Your name: UNV Roster no. Date:

Your organisation: Country: Your assignment dates:

Your strengths

<div>01</div> <div>What are you best at?</div> <div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div> <div>4.</div>	<div>02</div> <div>Ideas for improvement <small>(Experience, Exposure, Education, others)</small></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>03</div> <div>Opportunities to apply your skills while volunteering</div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>04</div> <div>How your organisation benefits <small>(expected outcome, success criteria)</small></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>05</div> <div>Your target date</div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
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Your opportunities

<div>01</div> <div>What skills or experiences do you wish to develop?</div> <div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div> <div>4.</div>	<div>02</div> <div>Ideas for learning <small>(Experience, Exposure, Education, others)</small></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>03</div> <div>Opportunities to apply your skills while volunteering</div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>04</div> <div>How your organisation benefits <small>(expected outcome, success criteria)</small></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>	<div>05</div> <div>Your target date</div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div> <div></div>
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Approved by (Supervisor name, surname, title):

Supervisor signature

Date:

References and Resources

16 Personalities

[Personalities test](#)

Barrett Values Centre

[Personal Values Assessment](#)

Mindtools

[Personal Goal Setting](#)

Mindtools

[What are your values?](#)

Project Implicit

[Social Attitudes](#)

UNHCR

[Map out your skills](#)

UNHCR

[Map out your values](#)

University of Minnesota

[Skill sort exercise](#)

UNV

[UN Volunteer onboarding portal](#)

UNV

[e-Campus](#)

Verywell Mind

[10 Cognitive Biases That Distort Your Thinking](#)

United Nations

[UN Core Values and Competencies](#)

YouTube

[UNV Blue Room Talks 1](#)

YouTube

[UNV Blue Room Talks 2](#)