



Analytical Volunteer Programme: Frequently Asked Questions for voluntary organisations



The Analytical Volunteer Programme (AVP) aims to arrange short placements (up to 5 days) for analytical staff (statisticians, economists, social researchers, and operational researchers) working in government departments to provide support to voluntary sector organisations. This is an excellent opportunity for voluntary sector organisations to benefit from the analytical expertise within government, while also providing valuable development opportunities for analysts and helping to build stronger links between the government and the volunteer sector. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and Welsh Council for Voluntary action (WCVA) are working with the Government Statistical Service (GSS) to help organise the scheme.

Applications are open until Friday 26th October 2018.

The information below covers the following frequently asked questions:

- 1. Which organisations are eligible to apply?**
- 2. Do I need to have some analytical knowledge to get help?**
- 3. What sorts of things might a Government analyst do or help us with?**
- 4. What is the role of the AVP organising team?**
- 5. Will I have to pay anything?**
- 6. Will I have to provide some resource?**
- 7. Will expenses be paid?**
- 8. Will the volunteer analyst understand what my organisations does/how different voluntary sector organisations are from Government organisations/how we have to manage on a tight budget?**
- 9. Could the analyst help us understand how we can influence government policy?**
- 10. Do I have to be an NCVO or WCVA member to apply to take part in the scheme?**
- 11. If the government volunteer will be looking at our data, do we need a confidentiality agreement?**
- 12. How long will the placement be?**
- 13. Does the time have to be in one block?**
- 14. How do I know that I will get someone with the right skills/knowledge?**
- 15. Will every organisation get a volunteer?**
- 16. What will happen after I apply?**
- 17. What happens if we are not getting the help we expected/things go wrong?**
- 18. Will the analyst's work be quality assured?**
- 19. What happens if the placement overruns and exceeds 5 days?**
- 20. What happens at the end of the placement?**
- 21. If it goes well, will we be able to carry on getting volunteer help from the analyst?**

Any other questions? Then please do get in touch! Email the AVP organising team at analyticalvolunteer@gmail.com. Put "analytical volunteer programme" as the email subject.



1. Which organisations are eligible to apply?

The scheme is open to all voluntary sector organisations. In previous years the scheme has placed volunteers in organisations covering many different sectors including: health, poverty, youth services and environmental affairs.

2. Do I need to have some analytical knowledge to get help?

No, you do not need analytical knowledge but you do need a clear idea of the kind of help you need and why you feel an analyst is likely to have the right skills to help.

3. What sorts of things might a government analyst do or help us with?

There are a range of possibilities. You might have information from your day to day work that needs analysing, require advice on carrying out or analysing a survey, need help searching for data about a particular topic/area or want to assess the value for money of a project. There is a possibility that the original project may change in direction or evolve over time. This can be the result of many factors such as resources, new information and/or the advice from the volunteer etc. but must be agreed by both the volunteer and the organisation. More detailed examples are given in the appendix and case studies from last year can be found at the [GSS website](#). Please note that although the scheme has now widened to include other analysts, in previous years all volunteers were statisticians and the example tasks reflect this.

4. What is the role of the AVP organising team?

The AVP organising team is there to help arrange placements between analytical volunteers and voluntary sector organisations. What we do: reach out and contact potential organisations that may be interested in a volunteer, establish and confirm a list of placements with organisations, feedback the confirmed placements to government analysts, match willing analysts to placements based on analyst choice, skill set and experience, answer queries and attempt to resolve any issues along the way, mediate between the organisation and the volunteer before, during and after the placement as required. What we don't do: quality assure the work of volunteers, guarantee an outcome to a project/placement, hold responsibility of the work of the volunteer, provide resource for the placement.

5. Will I have to pay anything?

No, the scheme is free of charge to voluntary sector organisations. You will not have to pay anything; the analyst will be paid by their employer and will be doing this as part of the time they are allowed for voluntary activities.

6. Will I have to provide some resource?

You will need someone from your organisation to spend time explaining what you would like the volunteer analyst to do, giving them some background about the task and the organisation and being available for queries etc. It will be useful if they can have a desk to work at and access to your IT system, but it may be possible to work around this if necessary. You will get most out of the placement if someone is identified to work reasonably closely with the volunteer, and that person will benefit too.

7. Will expenses be paid?

No, we are unable to offer expenses to voluntary sector organisations but are not expecting any expenses to be incurred. We will match volunteers to suitable locations (if suitable,



volunteers may even do some or all of their work remotely) so we are not anticipating significant additional travelling expenses, but that will be a matter for their employer.

8. Will the volunteer analyst understand what my organisation does and how we have to manage on a tight budget?

The volunteer will be given some initial briefing about the sector which will address some of these questions. Part of the aim of the scheme is for the analysts to find out more about the sector first-hand and for you to learn more about how they work in their government department. You may both be surprised by the similarities as well as the differences. The sorts of people who volunteer for the scheme will often have an interest in the sector but will have different levels of knowledge and experience; some may already be involved in the sector whilst others may not be.

9. Could the analyst help us understand how we can influence government policy?

No. The volunteer is there to provide the benefit of their analytical expertise and will not be able to advise how to influence government policy.

10. Do I have to be an NCVO or WCVA member to apply to take part in the scheme?

No, you don't need to be a member of NCVO or WCVA to apply.

11. If the government volunteer will be looking at our data, do we need a confidentiality agreement?

If the volunteer has access only to aggregate data (so individual clients are not identifiable) you do not need them to sign a confidentiality agreement, although you could request it if you wish. If they will have access to identifiable data, then it is good practice to ask them to sign a confidentiality agreement. They would not, of course, pass on any information they had access to but it may help to allay any fears that your clients, volunteers or staff might have (for example, if the volunteer analyst came from the Department of Work and Pensions and was working with a charity helping people who have been sanctioned by job centres.) If necessary, we can provide a standard confidentiality agreement for you to use.

12. How long will the placement be?

You can specify how much time you need. Volunteers may contribute up to 5 days, although we anticipate some may only be able to contribute 2 or 3 days. It may be possible to arrange for more than one volunteer to be placed in the same organisation, to complete a project that can't be tackled within one volunteer's time allowance.

13. Does the time have to be in one block?

The scheme can be flexible about whether the time is in one block or spread out. Some types of work will be better suited to being completed in one block of time whilst others will be better spread out, sometimes with quite big gaps of time in-between. For example, if helping with a survey the analyst might spend 2 days a couple of weeks apart helping with design and set-up, keep in touch and advise with phone calls whilst the data is being collected and then, perhaps after 2-3 months, spend another 2 days a couple of weeks apart helping analyse and report on the survey.

14. How do I know that I will get someone with the right skills or knowledge?

The AVP team running the scheme will match up the applications from volunteer analysts and voluntary sector organisations so that you get someone as close as possible to what you have



asked for. That's why it's important to give some thought to what analytical support would be most helpful to you before completing the application form and when completing it, to clearly explain what you need and the analytical skills you require (if you know).

15. Will every organisation get a volunteer?

We will only arrange placements where there is a reasonable match between the skills on offer and the requirements of the voluntary sector organisation. The number of placements will depend on the number of analysts who volunteer, so we may not be able to help every organisation that applies.

16. What will happen after I apply?

After the closing date, we will open applications for the analysts. Following this we will match the applications from voluntary sector organisations with volunteers who have suitable skills, based on the information you provide in your application. Both parties will be notified who they have been matched with, or if a match has not been possible, by mid-December. Contact details will be provided, it is then up to you to make contact, discuss the work, arrange timings and any other logistics.

17. What happens if we are not getting the help we expected or things go wrong?

Initially, any problems should be discussed with the volunteer to ensure that you both have the same understanding about the task and what is expected to be delivered. If the volunteer doesn't feel able to deliver the task as described, discuss this with them to establish what they are able to do for you. If the matter cannot be resolved then please contact the AVP organising team.

18. Will the analyst's work be quality assured?

It is important to note that all work carried out is the analyst's own work and it is not appropriate for any of the outputs from this programme to be badged as a Government product or Government endorsed. We are unable to provide any quality assurance of the work completed as part of the scheme.

19. What happens if the placement overruns and exceeds 5 days?

At the beginning of the placement, you should outline your aims and deliverables for the project with your paired volunteer and discuss whether these can be realistically delivered within their time commitment. If, once the (maximum) five allocated days are over, there is still work outstanding there is no obligation for the volunteer analyst to complete this work, although some may agree to do so at their discretion and outside their work time.

20. What happens at the end of the placement?

You and the analyst will both be asked for feedback on the placement, what went well and not so well and what was achieved as a result. This will allow us to evaluate the scheme as a whole to help us improve it for future years.

21. If it goes well, will we be able to carry on getting volunteer help from the analyst?

We hope this will continue as an annual scheme so you and the volunteer could both apply next year and request to be matched, if that is what you both want. Sometimes with these sorts of schemes, if a bond has been established, the volunteer continues working with the organisation but in other cases there will be no further contact.



Appendix - More detailed examples of work that the volunteer may help you with.

Examples	Type of work involved			
	Data collection	Data management	Data analysis	Dissemination
You might collect information as part of your day to day work that no-one ever has time to look at in detail; the analyst could take that information and analyse it, to help you understand more about your services/beneficiaries/volunteers.			✓	
You might be thinking of making an investment and want some wider economic forecasting to inform your decision; an economist could provide this.			✓	
You might be thinking about doing a survey of your service users or members or volunteers; a statistician could help you design and conduct a survey of appropriate size and scale, and might also help you analyse it.	✓	✓	✓	
You might want to start collecting some/more information about your main activities but not know how to go about it; the analyst could help you work out what to collect and how, within the resource you have.	✓	✓		
You might collect/hold a large amount of data but are unsure how best to manage and use it; the analyst could improve the handling of the dataset through recommending how data can be recorded, stored and used more efficiently.		✓		
You might want to look for data about a particular topic or area and not know where to start; the volunteer could find out what data is available and how to access it, show you how to search yourself in future, and perhaps summarise what the data shows.	✓	✓	✓	✓
You might have information about your area and want to see how it compares to other areas across the country; the analyst could find out what data is available and how to access it, and perhaps do some comparisons for you. The Census, for example, provides information about people down to very small areas.	✓		✓	
You might be trying to choose between several project options; an economist could provide cost benefit analysis and assess value for money to support your decision.			✓	



Examples	Type of work involved			
	Data collection	Data management	Data analysis	Dissemination
You might want to demonstrate your impact/outcomes but not know where to start; the analyst could help you think about what you achieve and whether you already have any information to demonstrate and quantify those achievements.	✓	✓	✓	✓
You might have a project where you need some specialist research or analytical advice but cannot afford to buy it; the volunteer analyst could provide this 'free'.	✓	✓	✓	✓