



Analytical Volunteer Programme: Frequently Asked Questions for government analysts



The Analytical Volunteer Programme (AVP) aims to arrange short placements (up to 5 days) for analytical staff (statisticians, economists, social researchers, operational researchers, data scientists) 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 from 2nd November until 23rd November 2018.

The information below covers the following frequently asked questions:

1. **Who is eligible to volunteer?**
2. **What will happen after I apply?**
3. **Where will I be placed?**
4. **What type of work will I be doing?**
5. **What will I get from the placement?**
6. **How long will placements last?**
7. **Will I be the only analytical volunteer in the organisation?**
8. **Will everyone get a placement?**
9. **Are the placements only in London?**
10. **How do I get permission for taking the time off work? Can I claim paid leave?**
11. **Who pays for travel and subsistence?**
12. **What is the role of the AVP organising team?**
13. **What happens if I can't provide the help required / things go wrong?**
14. **What happens if the placement overruns and exceeds 5 days?**
15. **What happens if the placement falls through?**
16. **If it goes well, will I be able to carry on helping the organisation?**

Any other questions? Then please do get in touch! Email us at analyticalvolunteer@gmail.com.

1. **Who is eligible to volunteer?**

The scheme is open to anyone working in UK government who is confident that they have analytical skills they could apply to help voluntary sector organisations. You should discuss this placement scheme with your line manager before applying. The scheme is open to all analytical professions as well as those who do not align with a specific profession.

2. **What will happen after I apply?**

After the closing date, we will match the applications from voluntary sector organisations with volunteers who have suitable skills, based on the information you provide in your application. Where



possible volunteers will be matched with one of their preferences. We will notify you when you have been matched with an organisation and ask you to confirm you will be taking up the placement.

At this point if you have been matched with a placement that was not listed as one of your preferences and feel the placement assigned is unsuitable we will try to rearrange an alternative match if there are any placements unfilled. Otherwise, when confirmation is received we will put you in touch with the organisation then it is up to you to make further contact, discuss the work, arrange timings and any other logistics. We will contact you again to see how you are getting on and then after the placement to get feedback which may help us to improve the scheme in future years.

If we are unable to match you to a suitable project in the first instance we will let you know. If other placements subsequently become available that are suitable for you we will endeavour to pair you with an organisation.

3. Where will I be placed?

The scheme is open to all voluntary sector organisations. Some of the placements will require you to work at the location of the organisation, while others placements can be undertaken remotely. This would need to be agreed with the organisation but the spreadsheet of available placements provides an idea of where the organisation are based and whether they have agreed to some or all remote working.

4. What type of work will I be doing?

The aim is that you will provide analytical consultancy to solve a problem or contribute to a project in a voluntary sector organisation. Previous year's placements covered evaluation methodologies – how they measure success; bringing together evidence around a subject; providing survey support; and data management/making the most of data they collect. For more detailed information, have a look at the [case studies](#).

5. What will I get from the placement?

We hope that the placements will provide excellent development opportunities. Feedback from volunteers who participated in previous year's schemes has highlighted the following benefits:

- The experience helped develop new skills, such as project management, consultancy, time management, IT and data management, data analysis and data presentation/dissemination.
- It helped people develop an understanding of the voluntary sector, the pressures they face and how they use statistical products.
- It made a clear difference to the voluntary sector organisations and volunteers felt valued for the support they provided.
- Professionally, it's helped hone skills in understanding what a customer wants in terms of analysis as they don't always know themselves.

6. How long will placements last?

You can specify how much time you are able to contribute, from half a day up to five days. The time doesn't have to be taken in one chunk – for some projects it may be more practical to provide some initial support for a day or two, then some further help after a few weeks.

For example, if helping with a survey you 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.



7. Will I be the only analytical volunteer in the organisation?

Although some projects may require more than one volunteer, it is more likely that you will work on your own with the organisation. This is a great opportunity to develop your skills, talking to people to specify the problem and determining how you can contribute to reach an outcome in the time available.

8. Will everyone get a placement?

The number of placements will depend on the number of voluntary sector organisations that apply, so we can't guarantee a placement for everyone. We will only arrange placements where the skills on offer match the requirements of the project / support required by the voluntary organisation.

9. Are the placements only in London?

Organisations across the UK are invited to apply to the scheme and placements could be anywhere in the country. In the past many placements opportunities have come from organisations based in London but we have also had many placements on offer outside London, particularly in Wales and the South of England.

10. How do I get permission for taking the time off work? Can I claim paid leave?

You should discuss the placement scheme with your line manager before applying. Most departments allow employees between three and five days paid leave each year to participate in volunteering activities, as part of the department's corporate social responsibility policy. We expect this placement scheme to provide excellent development opportunities and hope it will be supported by line managers and Heads of Profession.

11. Who pays for travel and subsistence?

In many cases your department may be willing to cover any T&S costs. However, as this is essentially a voluntary exercise the expectation is that individuals cover their own travel and subsistence costs. The voluntary sector organisations will not be asked to cover any costs. It's a good idea to discuss this with your line manager before applying.

12. 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.

13. What happens if I can't provide the help required / things go wrong?

Initially, any problems should be discussed with the organisation to ensure that you both have the same understanding about the task and what is expected to be delivered. If you don't feel able to deliver the task as described, discuss this with your contact in the organisation to establish whether you can



deliver any alternative work. In some rare instances the scope of the work required by the organisation might unforeseeably change and it's possible this may result in you not being able to deliver the work required. If this happens or you have a matter that cannot be resolved through discussion with the organisation then please contact the AVP organising team - analyticalvolunteer@gmail.com.

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

At the beginning of the placement, you should discuss the project aims and deliverables with your paired organisation. If you do not think these cannot be realistically delivered within your agreed time commitment you should raise this with the organisation and discuss what is achievable. If, once the (maximum) five allocated days are over, there is still work outstanding there is no obligation for you to complete the work, although you may choose to do so at your own discretion and in your own time.

15. What happens if the placement falls through?

In some instances circumstances within organisations change and they may no longer require or be able to take on a volunteer analyst. If this happens let us know and if we have any unfilled placements available that are suitable for you we will endeavour to match you with an alternative organisation.

16. If it goes well, will I be able to carry on helping the organisation?

This is an annual scheme so you and the organisation could both apply next year and request to be matched, if that is what you both want. If you wish to carry on providing voluntary support to the organisation outside this scheme, you could discuss with your line manager whether any provision can be made for that, or do so in your own time.

Appendix - More detailed examples of work that you may help the voluntary sector organisation with.

Examples	Type of work involved			
	Data collection	Data management	Data analysis	Dissemination
The voluntary sector organisation might collect information as part of their day to day work that no-one ever has time to look at in detail; you could take that information and analyse it, to help the organisation understand more about their services, beneficiaries or volunteers.			✓	✓
The voluntary sector organisation might be thinking about doing a survey of their service users or members or volunteers; you could help design and conduct a survey of	✓		✓	



appropriate size and scale, and might also help analyse it.				
The voluntary sector organisation might want to start collecting some/more information about their main activities but not know how to go about it; you could help them work out what to collect and how, within the resource they have.	✓	✓		
The voluntary sector organisation might collect/hold a large amount of data but not know how best to manage the dataset; you could improve the handling of the dataset through recommending how data can be recorded, stored and used more efficiently.		✓	✓	✓
The voluntary sector organisation might want to look for data about a particular topic or area and not know where to start; you could help find out what data is available and how to access it, show the organisation how to search for themselves in future, and perhaps summarise what the data shows.	✓		✓	✓
The voluntary sector organisation might have information about their area and want to see how it compares to other areas across the country; you could find out what data is available and how to access it, and perhaps do some comparisons for them.	✓		✓	✓
The voluntary sector organisation might want to demonstrate their impact / outcomes but not know where to start; you could help them think about what they achieve and whether they already have any		✓	✓	✓



information to demonstrate and quantify those achievements.				
The voluntary sector organisation might have a project where they need some specialist research or statistical advice but cannot afford to pay for it; you could provide this.	✓	✓	✓	✓