



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 third 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 24th November 2017.

The information below covers the following frequently asked questions:

1. **Who is eligible to volunteer?**
2. **Where will I be placed?**
3. **What type of work will I be doing?**
4. **What will I get from the placement?**
5. **How long will placements last?**
6. **Will I be the only analytical volunteer in the organisation?**
7. **Will everyone get a placement?**
8. **Are the placements only in London?**
9. **How do I get permission for taking the time off work? Can I claim paid leave?**
10. **Who pays for travel and subsistence?**
11. **What happens if I can't provide the help required / things go wrong?**
12. **What happens if the placement overruns and exceeds 5 days?**
13. **What will happen after I apply?**
14. **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. This year the scheme is open to all analytical professions as well as those who do not align with a specific profession.

2. **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 charities are based and whether they have agreed to some or all remote working.



3. 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](#).

4. 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 been useful to help hone skills in understanding what a customer wants in terms of analysis as they don't always know themselves.

5. 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.

6. 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 in 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.

7. 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.

8. Are the placements only in London?

Following the success of a London pilot scheme, applications are open this autumn for analysts wishing to volunteer across England & Wales

9. 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. The information in this FAQ can be used to support business cases, if required.



10. Who pays for travel and subsistence?

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. You may speak to your line manager to establish whether your department is willing to cover any T&S costs.

11. 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. If the matter cannot be resolved through discussion with the organisation then please contact the AVP organising team - analyticalvolunteer@gmail.com.

12. 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.

13. 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. Both parties will be notified who they have been matched with and contact details will be provided. It is then up to you to make contact, discuss the work, arrange timings and any other logistics. We will contact you again 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 we will let you know.

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

That depends. We hope this will become 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.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- have a project where they need some specialist research or statistical advice but cannot afford to buy it; you could provide this 'free'.