



SPIRIT OF 2012
INVESTING IN HAPPINESS

LESSONS FROM FUNDING YOUTH SOCIAL ACTION AND VOLUNTEERING IN UK EVENTS



This is a summary of our report [Inspiring a Generation](#), which brings together our evidence and learning from over a decade of funding projects around youth social action and volunteering.

Why should you engage youth volunteers?

There are strong, interconnected reasons for encouraging young people to volunteer at events:

1. Events need volunteers: young people can provide a valuable contribution to the volunteer workforce.
2. Events benefit from diverse perspectives, including generational diversity. Involving young people as volunteers can help an event appeal to different audiences.
3. Event-based volunteering supports young people to feel more connected to their communities and has been linked to an increased sense of belonging, pride, and agency.
4. Young people benefit from event volunteering through improved wellbeing, confidence, skills, and employment opportunities.
5. It's a highly visible form of volunteering, so can improve positive perceptions about young people.
6. Volunteering at an event could start a habit for life: evidence from the #iwill Fund suggests starting volunteering in early life makes it more likely that you will be an engaged and active citizen throughout life.

What have we learned?

- Since 2013, Spirit has funded over 30,000 opportunities for young people to volunteer and take part in social action connected to events. These opportunities varied: some projects supported young people to volunteer at events, some to take part in community activity inspired by the spark of an event, and some to design and deliver events of their own.
- Each of the projects we funded took a distinct approach to engaging young people, but what connected them was an understanding of the groups they wanted to engage, and an approach driven by this understanding.
- Many actively involved young people in the design of the projects and volunteering they were a part of, whilst providing the structure and training for young people to get the most out of their involvement.
- Ultimately, organisers should strive to balance the mutual benefits of involving young people in event volunteering: emphasising the skills, confidence, and friendships that volunteering can bring, whilst clearly articulating what the event aims to achieve through their participation.

Based on learning from our funded projects, we've produced ten top tips for event organisers, funders and youth organisations who want to increase youth representation in the volunteer workforce and use events as a platform to benefit young people.

1. Build in opportunities to connect volunteering opportunities to a bigger event, anniversary, or movement.

2. Support young volunteers to build “linking” capital with institutional representatives.

3. Build partnerships between schools / youth-settings and organisations that don't normally involve young people.

4. Ensure volunteer shifts give young people the chance to interact with volunteers of different age groups, and the wider public.

5. Explicitly include perception change as an area to measure through evaluation.

6. Try to understand the profile of the young volunteers and what they want out of the volunteering opportunity.

7. Be very clear on who your recruitment is targeting and consider the starting point of young volunteers: some young people will need greater levels of support than others.

8. Support young people to gain a sense of achievement from their volunteering experience, including identifying where there is a safe space to 'fail' and where it is appropriate to intervene.

9. Celebrate young peoples' contribution to events.

10. Support the transition to the next opportunity: more volunteering, employment, further education, or independent social action.

[CLICK HERE TO READ THE FULL REPORT.](#)



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