

People & Skills Sustainability (Staff, Volunteers & Leadership) - Factsheet



What is it?

People & Skills Sustainability is a planned approach to ensuring an organisation has the right people, skills, leadership, and capacity to deliver its mission effectively now and in the future.

It focuses on staff, volunteers, trustees/ directors, and leadership, recognising that people are one of a charity's or non-profit's most critical assets and a key driver of long-term sustainability and resilience.

Why is it helpful?

Strong people and skills sustainability help charities and non-profits to:

- ✓ Reduce reliance on a small number of key individuals
- ✓ Build leadership and governance capacity
- ✓ Prevent burnout and improve wellbeing
- ✓ Plan for succession of leadership
- ✓ Retain skilled staff and volunteers
- ✓ Sustain quality and knowledge over time

Without workforce planning, organisations risk disruption, expertise loss, and reduced impact.

Core aspects of people and skills sustainability



Workforce and volunteer planning

A process for ensuring the **right number of people** with the **right skills** are in the **right roles** at the **right time** to achieve strategic objectives, aligning people management with organisational strategy.



Succession planning

Preparing for **turnover in key roles** by **identifying and developing internal talent**, ensuring continuity when leaders or critical employees leave or retire.



Skills mapping and development

Assessing current **hard and soft skills**, identifying gaps, and **developing plans to build capability**, keeping the organisation competitive and future-ready.



Wellbeing, workload and inclusive working

Ensuring workloads are realistic and **people are supported** to remain engaged and effective, while creating inclusive, flexible ways of working to attract and retain diverse talent.

Step by step guide for implementation



Step 1

Map current people and roles

List all staff, volunteers, and trustees, including:

- Key responsibilities
- Time commitment
- Critical skills and knowledge



Step 2

Identify critical roles and risks

Highlight roles where:

- Only one person holds essential knowledge
- Who could step in temporarily
- Loss would significantly affect service delivery or governance



Step 3

Assess skills gaps and future needs

Consider:

- Skills needed to deliver current services
- Skills required for future plans or growth
- Governance and leadership skills at board level



Step 4

Plan development and capacity-building

Agree actions such as:

- Training and mentoring
- Shadowing or deputy roles
- Recruitment of new trustees, staff, or volunteers
- Partnerships or shared roles with other organisations



Step 5

Introduce succession planning

For key roles, document:

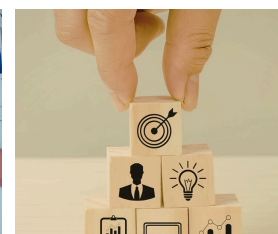
- Essential responsibilities and processes
- Recruitment or replacement would be difficult
- How handovers would be managed



Step 6

Review wellbeing and support

Check workloads, expectations, and support systems to reduce burnout and improve retention.





Key considerations and questions

Staff, volunteers or trustees/directors leaving suddenly

There will always be occasions where key individuals leave and take valuable skills, experience and knowledge from your organisation, so consideration should be given to the following areas: Growth and development; Satisfaction and engagement; Obstacles and support; and Future and vision.

Key questions

- What skills are you hoping to develop next, and how can we help you get there?
- Do you feel you have a clear path for advancement here?
- How connected do you feel to the company's mission and strategy?
- Is there anything preventing you from doing your best work?
- If you were in charge, what's one thing you'd improve immediately?

Strategic skills and development planning

Current and future skills planning is essential to align with your long-term goals and objectives. Consideration should be given to the following areas: strategic and organisational planning; role and individual evolution; and learning and development focus.

Key questions

- Where is the organisation going over the next 3-5 years, and what new markets, products, or technologies will be essential to that journey?
- Which critical skills, if missing, would make the organisation vulnerable to market changes or competitors?
- What upcoming projects or priorities will require skills that the current team does not yet have?
- What existing or "hidden" skills within the workforce could be better used to support future needs?
- Which emerging tools, technologies, or ways of working should we invest in now to remain competitive?

Roles and responsibilities

Role definitions and responsibilities are essential for a long-term changing work environment, particularly considering new technology and shifting organisational needs. Consideration should be given to the following areas: impact of technology and automation; skills development and adaptability; and career path and growth.

Key questions

- How might emerging technology (like AI and automation) disrupt this organisation or sector and affect the responsibilities of specific positions?
- What new tools or software will employees in this role need to be proficient in to stay effective in the future?
- How does the organisation foster a culture of continuous learning and development within this department?
- Where is the organisation heading over the next 5-10 years, and how will this role contribute to that long-term vision?
- What qualities are lacking in our workforce that will be essential for future leaders, and how can I develop them?



Work environment and wellbeing support

Creating the right environment that allows your staff, volunteers and trustee to feel like they are valued and appreciated. Consideration should be given to the following areas: Strategic and organisational vision; technology and tools; development and wellbeing; and flexibility and customisation.

Key questions

- ✓ How can we define our mission and purpose to resonate with the evolving values of future staff and volunteers?
- ✓ How can we better leverage volunteers' unique skills and perspectives to ensure their contribution is strategic?
- ✓ What technology infrastructure is needed to support effective collaboration, productivity, and communication across diverse or remote teams?
- ✓ How can we move away from normalising burnout and embed renewal and resilience into everyday operations?
- ✓ What recognition and reward approaches (financial and non-financial) will ensure all staff and volunteers feel genuinely valued?

