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Volunteering Infrastructure: European Examples and Quality Accreditation

Overview on Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation (VCQA) in England

VCQA is conditional to use the brand Volunteer Centre. Volunteer centres have to deliver on and monitor the outcome connected to six functions:

1. Brokerage
2. Marketing
3. Good practice development
4. Developing volunteer opportunities
5. Policy response and campaigning
6. Strategic development of volunteering

This can also happen in a partnership consortium. VCQA builds on internal quality management and is conducted as a self-assessment evaluated by an independent assessment team. The process takes about 12 month. Costs consist of the Volunteering England membership fee plus own costs to carry out the process.

Central elements of the accreditation process

- Self-assessment report consisting of a portfolio of evidence
- One regional support workshop, 1-2-1 session, website
- Independent assessment report as feedback for the volunteer centre
- Certification with the VCQA label

Steps in the accreditation process

Registration ⇨ internal analysis ⇨ delivery of portfolio ⇨ assessment by independent team ⇨ standardisation of results ⇨ certification ⇨ dissemination ⇨ re-application after three years

Tools for support

- Accreditation handbook
- Volunteering England's VCQA Website
- Guides on research and functions, registration forms, submission score sheet etc.
- Internal management tool (e.g. PQASSO)
- Workshop, 1-2-1 session , email, telephone
- Good evidence examples

Structure of self-assessment portfolio

The portfolio presents evidence connected to all six VC functions. Each function is described by particular activities that are required to produce defined outcomes. These are specified into so-called refined activities. The handbook describes in detail what kind of evidence the applicant has to deliver. These are grouped into 21 essential evidence outputs.

Benefits

- Strengthening and continuous improvement of own organisation
- Improvement of services for users
- Credibility of own organisation
- Better opportunities to receive funding
- Networking with other volunteer organisations