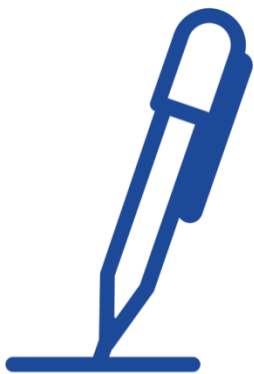# Volunteer competences and training

February 2019

Volunteer competences

When deploying volunteers in educational programmes, two types of competences are important:

− *general competences* that are required of all volunteers working in education, regardless of the organisation.
− *specific competences* that are required of volunteers working with the NT1 target group in adult education.

Described below are the desired competences for volunteers working in NT1 programmes as defined on the basis of research conducted in 2011[1], competence profiles developed in the SEA project[2] and other international projects, and the competence profile developed in the VIME project[3].

This competence profile has not as yet been tested, adjusted and/or validated. The profile is primarily designed to support organisations (providers, volunteer organisations, etc.) when recruiting and selecting volunteers and matching volunteers with the roles and activities described.

A. General competences required of education volunteers:
1. Attentiveness, patience and understanding
2. Ability to communicate with instructors and learners
3. Ability to collaborate (with instructors, other volunteers)
4. Planning and organisational ability
5. Flexibility, open-mindedness and willingness to learn
6. Reliability
7. Ability to reflect on own actions and accept feedback

B. Specific qualities required of NT1 programme volunteers:
1. Affinity with the target group
- Familiarity with characteristics of the NT1 target group
- Respectful treatment of learners as autonomous adults
- Preferably, experience providing guidance to the NT1 target group

2. Ability to cultivate an informal learning climate of mutual respect, collaboration and equality

3. Language-learning support skills:
- Feel for functional language instruction, ability to relate learning content to learners' own lives
- Ability to encourage and assist learners in their independent learning and reflection on the learning process
- Ability to help learners identify their personal motivations
- Ability to cultivate an informal learning climate rooted in respect, collaboration and equality
- Ability to emphasise guidance over instruction
- Prepared to take directions from an instructor
- Ability to work one-on-one with learners
- Ability to work in small groups with learners

---

[1] Hanekamp, M. & Bos, I. (2012). *Vrijwilligers in educatieve trajecten. Rollen, taken en competenties* 's-Hertogenbosch, CINOP.
[2] The SEA project was a European (Grundtvig) project to define competences for professionals and volunteers.

4. Affinity with online learning, including use of e-learning programs, online approaches and social media, where relevant.
- A love of learning (online/offline) and the ability to convey this
- Knowledge and practical knowhow of modules on Oefenen.nl
- Proficient in Skype (installation, use, minor troubleshooting)

Individual skills

A final prerequisite for volunteering in NT1 education is proficiency in the Dutch language, preferably at level 3F of the Reference Framework for Literacy and Numeracy (*Referentiekader taal en rekenen*).

Building blocks for developing NT1 programme volunteer training
Most important in NT1 education is fostering self-confidence in learners, which requires specific competences from instructors and from volunteers.

To develop self-confidence, learners must be assured of a safe learning environment, especially when working in groups. Unlike in NT2, it does not seem advisable to allow volunteers to work independently with NT1 learners. Instead, they should always be directed by and coordinate with an instructor.

Core elements to be emphasised when training volunteers are:
- Sustaining motivation
- Creating structure: in terms of a learning routine (e.g. at fixed times) and also a fixed schedule for guidance (reviewing/discussing work, practising, planning ahead, completing/checking homework)
- Learning to learn: organising the learning process
- Supporting progress: lots of help with practising and repetition
- Coaching role: fostering independence without taking over
- Tying in with relevant experiences/events
- Fostering positive experiences/success
- Always providing positive feedback

The NT1 Volunteer Model Toolkit was developed with support from Steunpunt Basisvaardigheden (Basic Skills Support Centre).

The **NT1 Volunteer Model Toolkit** consists of:

− NT1 Volunteer Model
− Training and competence guidelines for NT1 programme volunteers
− NT1 target group characteristics and learning objectives
− Working in NT1: definitions and rationale
− Policies for effective volunteer deployment
− Background document: *Inzet van vrijwilligers in (non-)formele volwasseneneducatie* ('Deployment of volunteers in formal and non-formal adult education')

This document will become available (in Dutch) at: www.telmeemettaal.nl

Project partners:

This translation has been realized by EPALE Netherland and has been made possible by a grant from the European Commission DG EAC.