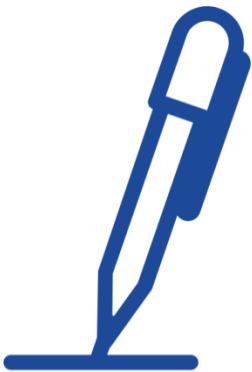


# NT1 Volunteer Model

*February 2019*



## **Improving the quality of volunteer deployment in NT1 education**

Recent years have seen the increasing deployment of volunteers in non-formal as well as formal adult education, both in programmes specifically for immigrants to the Netherlands and basic skills training geared mainly towards Dutch-speakers. How, if and when volunteers should be active in these contexts remains unclear however and is a topic of considerable debate. Is the use of volunteers worthwhile, do they contribute to the quality of the education, and can they take over some of the instructor's duties or are they deployed to better purpose on other fronts of the learning process? How should volunteers be prepared for their duties, who should supervise them, what can clients and executive organisations properly expect from volunteers and how do you know if a volunteer is suitable and sufficiently competent to help learners in the learning process?

Volunteers are being deployed to assist in programmes centred on language and digital skills as well as, to a very limited extent, arithmetic. The European VIME<sup>1</sup> project has developed an NT2 Volunteer Model to ensure an appropriate and qualitative deployment of volunteers in Dutch as a Second Language (NT2) programmes for immigrants.

### *NT1 Volunteer Model*

The NT1 Volunteer Model sets out the possible roles of volunteers in NT1 programmes, defining how they can work with instructors to add value to the quality of the programmes and to participants' learning process. NT1 here refers to Dutch as a First Language programmes designed for both native speakers of Dutch and non-native speakers who have lived in the Netherlands for a longer time and have fair to good speaking and comprehension skills but still have problems with reading and writing<sup>2</sup>.

### *For whom is the Model for NT1 volunteer deployment intended?*

The NT1 Volunteer Model (and appended PDFs) offers guidelines for the deployment of volunteers in education, and in NT1 programmes in particular, for relevant stakeholders (providers, instructors, volunteer organisations, clients, policymakers), with the aim to enhance the quality of the programmes and support provided to learners.

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<sup>1</sup> VIME is a European project carried out within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme to identify possible roles volunteers can play in the process of migrant integration and participation and the tools and training that can be used to improve their competences. The project is a collaboration between partners from the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Slovenia and Denmark. In the Netherlands, these partners are Kellebeek College, which is part of the West-Brabant regional education and training centre (ROC), the national language coaching network Het Begint met Taal and the ITTA centre for language development.

<sup>2</sup> Non-native speakers with B1-level language proficiency are usually also placed in NT1 programmes, as their speaking ability is more advanced than that of the NT2 target group. They mainly have to work on their reading and writing skills. For more information about the NT1 target group, please refer to the relevant background document.

## **Roles and activities of NT1 programme volunteers, and collaboration with instructors**

When deploying volunteers in NT1 adult education, it is assumed that the volunteer performs all of their activities under the direction of an instructor. The volunteer's role is to support the instructor in their work, effectively doing 'additional' work. The precise nature of this work and the location where it is carried out can differ according to the type of programme.

The NT1 Volunteer Model specifies two roles for volunteers, along with the activities and competences belonging to each. The Model also looks at forms in which instructors and volunteers can collaborate.

### *1. NT1 Assistant*

In this role the volunteer is active in the classroom and directly assists the instructor in the teaching process. The volunteer is deployed to allow greater differentiation or to assist individuals or groups with computer-based activities or completing exercises while the instructor explains or teaches another group working on the same learning question.

The role of NT1 Assistant is common in NT1 programmes. NT1 groups often have a very diverse makeup in terms of levels, learning questions and learning styles. In many cases, the instructor does an activity with the whole group for only a part of the lesson (such as teaching, discussing a topical text), after which participants each work on their own learning programme or assignment. A volunteer can be immensely useful in this context to answer all kinds of participant questions. They may also help individual learners with in-class assignments following the lesson, working alongside the instructor.

In some cases, volunteers may also provide this assistance outside the classroom, working with smaller groups to help them practise their skills in an open learning centre or a computer lab. This could involve linguistic activities, but also technical support for booting up a computer and navigating the programs. In one recent online learning experiment, the instructor also actively helped learners install and use Skype.

### *2. NT1 Language Coach*

The role of Language Coach (a term widely used in NT2 but relatively unknown in NT1, which still refers to 'volunteers') is based outside the classroom and at a different time and usually also a different location (e.g. a learner's home, a community centre, library or other meeting point). The language coach provides participants with additional assistance above and beyond the classroom curriculum. This can be one-on-one, or in small groups of two to four participants. The language coach helps them practise on a computer or on paper, to complete homework assignments or may lead a reading group.

Whereas an NT2 language coach usually works fairly independently, NT1 volunteers always work under the direction and/or supervision of an instructor. This means the volunteer's activities are always combined with or form part of a taught programme at a professional provider. The activities that learners work on and the materials used are never chosen by the volunteer but are the responsibility of the instructor – albeit in consultation with learners and the volunteer – and are keyed to the learning question and learning pathway agreed with learners.

The role of a reading club coach constitutes a specific role in which the volunteer is still directed by but has less personal contact with the instructor. Volunteers then guide NT1 learners who want to improve their reading skills by reading a book together. The volunteer is trained to do this by a

professional instructor. A study conducted in 2011<sup>3</sup> cites as an example reading clubs in the Twente region of the Netherlands, where volunteers received training and support from an NT1 instructor at the regional education and training centre (ROC), and also had several peer review sessions with them.

### **Activities of the NT1 Assistant and the NT1 Language Coach**

As stated above, the distinction between these roles chiefly concerns where and when the volunteer performs the activities, whether in addition to and outside class time, or in the form of assistance during lessons in the classroom. This makes it difficult to distinguish these roles in terms of the activities a volunteer carries out in the NT1 programme. Help with computer use can take place both in and outside the classroom, and so can helping individual or small groups of learners work on a specific learning activity or get extra practise.

As far as the kinds of activities volunteers may engage in, we can distinguish between the following:

- Help with digital/online learning or the use of e-learning programs.
- Help with reading skills development.
- Help with writing skills development.
- Coaching aimed at motivation, encouragement to stick with it, creating structure and instilling discipline.

Almost all of these activities could be performed by both assistants and coaches.

#### *Reading activities:*

- Boosting reading speed. For instance by reading aloud first and then having the learner read along.
- Discussing reading material (comprehension, link text to learner's existing knowledge).
- Looking up interesting reading material together, in print and electronic format (reading enjoyment).
- Help with automatic reading of words (beginning readers).
- Help with looking up the meaning of tough words, understanding words in context.
- Help exploring the wider world of reading material.

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<sup>3</sup> Hanekamp, M. & Bos, I. (2012). *Vrijwilligers in educatieve trajecten. Rollen, taken en competenties 's-Hertogenbosch, CINOP.*

*Writing activities:*

- Help with functional language exercises.
- Help with automatic writing of words (beginning writers).
- Review of spelling and grammar rules.
- Practising spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Looking for realistic and suitable writing assignments together (including creative writing, writing enjoyment).

Digital language learning activities in an open learning centre, classroom, library or at home:

- Help with automatic logging in to use e-learning programs.
- Help navigating different types of activities and actions (clicking, typing, filling in fields/forms, etc.).
- Help navigating the education provider's communication system (chatting with the instructor, forum) and other communication systems (e.g. Skype).
- Answering questions.

This list of activities is not meant to be exhaustive but reflects what has been documented in research, experience in the field and recent e-learning experiments.

## **Explanation and rationale**

### **Focus on NT1 education**

The NT1 Volunteer Model sets out how volunteers are deployed in reading and writing education for native speakers, hereafter referred to as NT1 programmes. This does not mean volunteers are used in native-speaker language programmes only. As previously mentioned, there is a large focus at the moment on digital skills training in formal adult education at regional education and training centres (ROCs) and commercial providers, but also and more notably in the non-formal adult education sector. Libraries are playing a significant role and many municipalities have allocated a portion of their education budgets to contract digital skills training services. For non-formal organisations like libraries, the design of these programmes and deployment and supervision of volunteers is still relatively uncharted territory. Whereas formal education tends to team volunteers with professional instructors, libraries deploy library volunteers and professionals. As such, digital skills training, much like arithmetic, requires a separate volunteer deployment model and is not covered by this Model. The NT1 Volunteer Model applies only to NT1 programmes focused on reading and writing skills.

### **Why have a separate model for volunteer deployment in NT1 programmes?**

Among adult learners, the ultimate objective, regardless of the target group to which they belong, is always tied to personal development goals. Finding a job, taking part in the digital world, self-reliance in personal life and navigating society, active parenting and grandparenting, and maintaining professional competences are some of the most common objectives for this group. Rarely is it simply to attain a particular level or master a skill.

The learning objectives of adult NT1 and NT2 learners are therefore fairly similar, however the road to attaining them (the basic skills that need to be developed and at what level) is different. Clearly, an individual who still has to learn how to navigate Dutch society has a different set of learning questions and learning objectives and needs a different learning pathway than a Dutch-born native speaker who for whatever reason has fundamental difficulties with reading and writing in their mother tongue but no problems expressing themselves orally, and who moreover knows how Dutch society works. The learning pathway for this target group consequently emphasises different aspects and takes a different approach from programmes for NT2 learners who have to master a new language.

### **How does this affect volunteer deployment?**

The fact that different learning pathways, with their own content and approach, have to be developed for different target groups, means the roles and activities and added value of volunteers in assisting learners must also be different.

A volunteer working with NT2 learners can play a very valuable role in offering opportunities for linguistic interaction outside class and acquainting learners with myriad facets of Dutch society. With native speakers, however, these kinds of activities would not match learners' learning objectives.

Insofar as the roles and activities of volunteers in each case are different, the competences required to assist learners and work alongside professional instructors are also different, and the training provided to volunteers must reflect this.

## **Development of the Model**

The Model was developed on behalf of Steunpunt Basisvaardigheden (Basic Skills Support Centre). The first draft was presented to the following experts:

- Thomas Bersee, basic skills consultant at ProBiblio.
- Marian Janssen, experienced NT1 instructor, developer and project leader.
- Ella Bohnenn, NT1 expert, editor of the Dutch NT1 handbook, project leader and developer.
- Esther van de Vrande, education team coordinator at Stichting Lezen & Schrijven.
- Ellen Pattenier, education consultant on knowledge and innovation at Stichting Lezen & Schrijven.

A condensed version of the revised draft was subsequently presented at a conference held on 21 March 2018 in Utrecht for NT1 instructors, soliciting their input on how the roles and activities of volunteers in NT1 education should be effectuated in practice. The 2019 NT1 conference once again gathered input for further refinement of the Model and the description of the roles of NT1 volunteers.

**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.telmeemetaal.nl](http://www.telmeemetaal.nl)

**Project partners:**



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