

Managing your volunteers

Webinar on how to motivate, manage and train volunteers

This webinar shares Cochrane's experience on working with volunteers and results from studies conducted in Cochrane's translation community on how to motivate, manage and train volunteers:

<https://training.cochrane.org/resource/motivating-managing-and-training-volunteers-case-studies-cochrane-translation-teams>

Acknowledge translators in the translation notes

You can add information about the translation to the translation notes section of all published abstracts and plain language summaries. This typically includes at least a mention of the team responsible for the translation, and in some cases, contact data. You should also use this section to include the name of the translator of a specific summary. This way, your volunteers can add links with their translations to their CV to showcase their translation work, and you also recognise their contribution, make it visible, and are transparent about how your translations are conducted.

Say thank you, and keep in touch

Working remotely as a volunteer can be quite an isolating experience – try to make your volunteers feel connected and part of your project. On a day to day basis, don't forget to thank your volunteers for their work when you're in contact with them and try to let them know when one of their translations has been published. If feasible, provide feedback, too. You could also send a summary of published translations and other news to all your translators on a regular basis, to keep in touch with them and motivate them to continue. And why not exchange pictures?

Provide references or certificates

Another way of showing recognition for the work your volunteers have contributed is to write them a letter of reference or issue them with a certificate. A letter of reference or certificate is usually written to support an application for a job, scholarship, internship, etc. If your volunteers are students, they may appreciate a reference from you when they look for a job. Alternatively, a certificate is a less detailed way of acknowledging a volunteer's contribution to Cochrane.

Templates

To help you with certificates and references we have created [templates](#) for you to adapt depending on who you are writing it for, and letter-writing conventions in your language. For translation teams who are part of an official Cochrane group, you can use your own branding and logo and sign off yourself. For others, we can create a co-signed template for you to use. Please contact Judith Deppe (jdeppe@cochrane.org) if you would like help adapting them.

Guidelines for issuing certificates

- It is up to individual teams to determine the minimum contribution volunteers should make in order to be eligible for a certificate or reference. In order to keep your effort limited, you may want to set a minimum, for example, 10 translations.
- You may want to review your volunteers' contributions every 6 or 12 months to check who can or wants to receive a certificate or reference and issue them all in one go. This might be easier than having to produce them on an ongoing or ad-hoc basis.
- Feel free to use the text from the templates, but make sure you use the correct branding for your country, if applicable.
- Provide a list of citations of all Reviews that the volunteer translated, or at least some recent examples, and links to the published translations.
- Briefly explain your position and your work within Cochrane. If Cochrane is not well known in your country, you could also provide some background information. You can use the 'About us' section on www.cochrane.org to help you write this part or link to the page containing information about your project.
- When you write a reference, ask the volunteer if there is anything they would like you to mention specifically. You don't just have to focus on language skills. For example, are they good at communicating, quick to respond, efficient? Do they have expertise in a certain area of health?
- If you are willing to, it's a good idea to provide your email address or a phone number in case the recipient of the reference or certificate would like to request additional information.

Examples from our teams

- Read this blog post about how Cochrane Malaysia is motivating volunteers through certificates, awarded on an annual basis: <http://community.cochrane.org/news/translating-health-evidence-cochrane-malaysia-motivates-translators-achievement-certificates>

Provide in-kind benefits

You may not be able to pay your volunteers in cash, but maybe you have access to other non-cash "payments" through your institution or other organisations that you could make available from time to time to longer-term contributors, for example, vouchers for books, training or events, access to institutional resources etc.

Offer University credits to students

If you are teaching at a University, you may be able to include translation activities as part of the course work and give students credits for their contribution that can count towards their study credits – this is also a way to find new volunteers. If you are not teaching yourself, maybe you can explore collaboration with medical or language departments of your local university or others.

Offer Continued Medical Education (CME) credits

If this is possible in your country, you could explore offering continuing medical education credits to health professionals who contribute translations, for example as part of a Cochrane training session that you are running.