

Youth Volunteering Guidelines

A co-designed and collaborative process.



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Foreword

The contribution that our young people make to our communities, country and society is incredible and we want to see even more young people given the opportunity to volunteer.

That's why these guidelines are so important. They aim to help the third sector, community groups and partners in the public and private sector offer practical and effective volunteering opportunities to our young people.

We already know that young people's engagement in volunteering is similar to the average for all adults. The most recent Scottish Household Survey statistics showed that 48% of 16-24 year olds volunteered in some form in 2018 and 26% of 16-24 year olds engaged in formal volunteering in 2019. Both figures were similar for adults, however in terms of formal volunteering that number fell from a high of 33% in 2010. This shows that while there is much to celebrate, there is far more we can do to encourage our young people to experience all that volunteering can bring to them and their communities.

Volunteering has never been more necessary or needed. It has been critical to the country's resilience and response to COVID-19, and more generally it is crucial to help us make Scotland a fairer and more prosperous country with equality of opportunity for all. 'Volunteering for All', our National Volunteering Framework, sets out our shared vision for volunteering and defines the key outcomes for volunteering in Scotland over the next ten years. To help ensure the ambitions in our Framework are translated into action, we are committed to developing a delivery plan. Moreover, we set out in the 2020/21 Programme for Government a commitment to develop a Young Person's Guarantee. Importantly, this includes engagement in formal volunteering as part of its ambition, demonstrating the importance we attach to enabling young people to volunteer.

Foreword

In developing these guidelines, we were clear that they needed to be shaped and honed by the real experts – the young people themselves. The Youth Volunteering Innovation Project (Youth VIP) was formed as part of the development of ‘Volunteering or All’ by Project Scotland and Young Scot. This group of young volunteers, from a variety of backgrounds, have brought their stories and experience to bear to ensure these guidelines are authentic and reflective of the needs of the sector.

These guidelines do not sit alone but are part of a wider Scottish Government response to the Youth VIP. The Youth VIP made 13 recommendations, which were agreed in principle by the Scottish Government. The guidelines and the associated training fulfil recommendations 1 and 2. Going forward, I want to ensure that every young person gets the best chance to undertake volunteering, whether it’s for their own enjoyment, personal development or as part of their journey to the workplace.

To do that, we must ensure that volunteering opportunities are of quality, planned, supported and evaluated with the particular needs of the young person in mind. These guidelines are also designed to help increase understanding, confidence and provide reassurance about taking on and supporting a young person in their volunteering journey where there may be some concerns.

As a generation that have been particularly impacted by the restrictions brought about by the pandemic, I would encourage every organisation in Scotland to think afresh about the volunteering opportunities that they can provide to our young people. We want the experience to be positive for the volunteer and the volunteer supporter and will continue to work hard with partners to ensure the right supports and infrastructure are in place.

Our young people are talented, inspiring, and Scotland has so much it can gain from enabling that contribution to flourish - we can only do that if we all work together to make it happen.

Aileen Campbell MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

The guidelines

An overview

Recruit

- ➔ Be clear
- ➔ Be open
- ➔ Be inclusive
- ➔ Be relevant

Retain

- ➔ Experience = participation
- ➔ Recognise achievement
- ➔ Be volunteer-ready
- ➔ Build communities of support

Develop

- ➔ Meaningful representation
- ➔ Shaping future opportunities
- ➔ Support transition internally and externally



Recruiting young volunteers

How you recruit your volunteers will have a huge impact on the success of your volunteering activities. This is the first 'sell' and the first chance for young people to decide to opt in and give it a try. Keep your communication clear, concise and consistent.

Information should be prioritised and delivered in the simplest way possible to ensure easy access for all audiences. It is vital to be clear about the value and purpose of volunteering and, where possible, to keep opportunities flexible.

Finally and perhaps most importantly, the volunteer experience throughout the recruitment process can define someone's decision to volunteer at all. Only ask for essential information at this stage and keep communication smooth and inclusive. This is the volunteer's initial contact with the organisation and it's important to make it a good one. Keep it swift, simple and delivered with a smile!

➡ Be clear and open: What will young people gain?

Be upfront with young people about the role. Communicate what will be expected of them and what type of hard and soft skills they can expect to learn. Value the insight and experience young people bring and highlight what development opportunities are available.

➡ Be inclusive: Is this opportunity accessible to all audiences?

Accessibility comes in many forms. In the recruitment phase make sure your sign up process is simple, short, flexible and mobile-friendly. When in post, ask young people what they need to fully participate and listen to their needs. Draw on additional support from external agencies as required. Appendix 2 suggests some organisations that might be helpful.

➡ Be relevant: Do your recruitment materials attract your target audience?

Ask young people to review your recruitment process and give feedback. Recruit where young people spend time (online & offline) and start the process with a conversation. Involve existing young people in the process. Having a young volunteer present in the recruitment/selection is a strong and positive signal to potential new recruits that you are a young person friendly organisation.

Be clear and open: What will young people gain?

Gaining skills that will be useful for future employment features high on the list of motivations for young people who engage in volunteering. In fact, over 80% of young people reported that employment opportunities and CV building were positive outcomes of volunteering activities they had taken part in (Youth VIP). However, volunteering does not need to be limited to photocopying and charity collections. Young people can be the best advocates for your work, they can be advisors to your Comms team or can hold your Management Committee to account. Many volunteering opportunities are now online such as the management of social media accounts.

Acquiring softer skills is important too. Young volunteers should leave their role feeling more confident, being better team players or with their first ten hours of commitment to something other than school under their belt. Recognise that for some, becoming a volunteer may be a form of respite from their home life or the only chance to socialise with others of a similar age or interests.

Be inclusive: Is this opportunity accessible to all audiences?

Equality and accessibility featured strongly in the recommendations of the Youth VIP report. Taking very practical steps such as using Equality Impact Assessments for buildings and roles can help to address this. For example, ensuring buildings can be accessed by all volunteers. This does not mean only considering those with disabilities but also taking into account whether it's a space that has good (and cheap!) transport links. It's important to reimburse travel costs. Over 23% of young people surveyed by Youth VIP stated that not having access to financial support was a barrier to them volunteering.

How are young people expected to sign themselves up to the opportunity? Long application forms are disliked (18% of young people cited this as an issue - Youth VIP). Electronic forms that are compatible with mobile phones are preferred.

You may want to provide an option for carers or key workers to be able to fill in the form (with the young person's consent) for those who have additional needs. Remember, young people, are unlikely to have references and may not have ID.

It is worth remembering that volunteering is often a first step back into positive community engagement for young people who have been in the criminal justice system. Specialist help and support is available to help you to support these vulnerable young people through agencies such as [SACRO](#).

Recruit

Think about how young people with additional needs can be supported to volunteer. Awareness courses and training for some conditions are widely available. It may be as simple as allowing a friend or support worker to be able to accompany your volunteers, where appropriate. Consider liaising with organisations who can offer advice and support in making your opportunity more accessible such as The [Scottish Children's Service Coalition \(SCSC\)](#).

Be relevant: Do your recruitment materials attract your target audience?

Recruitment materials should be appropriate to the volunteering offer, representative of the young people you are hoping to target and concise. Where to go for additional information and how to apply/enrol should be clear. Ask other young people to review your recruitment materials to make sure they are user friendly.

Young people surveyed said that the most common way for them to find out about volunteering opportunities was through schools or other interest groups (Youth VIP). Advertising volunteering opportunities via social media is becoming increasingly popular due to the ability to target very specific groups. 20% of young people surveyed said social media and websites were the preferred locations for finding opportunities to volunteer (Youth VIP). For seldom heard young people, contact local youth organisations, Social Services and Youth Offending teams who may be able to offer additional support to those who are not in employment, education or training.

Using existing young volunteers to attract their peers is a strong proposition. Having a young volunteer present in the recruitment/selection of new volunteers is a strong and positive signal to potential new recruits that you are a young person friendly organisation.

Glasgow based Youth Work Charity the GKexperience is founded on the belief that young people are brilliant and that they all deserve the same opportunities in order to enable them to reach their potential. GK has a strong belief that young people from Scotland's most disadvantaged communities are gifted, talented and brilliant, having skills and qualities exclusive to them. The Young Team is a young leaders programme, where young people are identified and invited to be part of an intensive period of training and self-development.

GK start their recruitment from where young people are and build on the strengths they have. They favour relationships and getting to know young volunteers rather than extensive paperwork. They are very clear with young volunteers that the role of a volunteer comes with expectations and hard work but that they are there to support the young person one step at a time.



Retaining Young Volunteers

Working with young volunteers is hugely rewarding for all involved and can be incredibly beneficial to your workplace. Creating a high-quality voluntary experience that encourages young people to want to remain with the organisation should be balanced with the right amount of flexibility and support to ensure the young volunteer feels connected and empowered.

A good volunteer experience is not just about doing something of value but also feeling recognised and rewarded for participation and doing something well. Aim to create a supportive network around your volunteers. These networks can prove vital in ensuring volunteers return when needing to take a break. For most people, sharing experiences with others for a common purpose is the key to good volunteer retention. This also means making those experiences as accessible and inclusive as possible with policies to protect volunteers and create a sense of structure and security in their role. Lastly, aim to make volunteering 'business as usual' by embedding it in your practice to avoid tokenistic participation.

➡ Positive experiences = continued participation

Feeling valued, respected and contributing to the 'cause' builds purpose and meaning for young volunteers. The higher the feeling of purpose and meaning is, the more likely your young volunteer will flourish.

➡ Recognising achievement

It's a generational requirement to receive positive feedback often and in as many creative ways as you can! Using young people focused programs like the Saltire awards alongside informal recognition and feedback is a superhighway to helping your young volunteer feel like they are making a difference.

➡ Being Volunteer-ready

Have a main point of contact (or volunteer champion) for your young volunteers. Their role is to keep in touch with young volunteers regularly ensuring they are safe, well-supported and barriers to participation are identified and addressed. This can be a brilliant role for an experienced or former volunteer.

➡ Communities of support

Team building activities, a robust induction, a 'buddy' or involving those who have already completed the experience can help to create a feeling of community and support that will encourage a sense of belonging and retainment. Mentoring programs (peer, staff or reverse) are hugely successful in helping young volunteers learn, grow and develop.

Retain

Positive experiences = continued participation

Having an enjoyable experience is understandably a top reason for people engaging in volunteering activities. Creating a welcoming, inclusive environment is high on the list of young people's needs as well as being able to improve their life chances through volunteering and being able to help others. Encouraging a sense of achievement through both formal and informal recognition and allowing young people to share their experiences creates a sense of community and shared values. Volunteering should encompass a double benefit; to the young people themselves and to the wider community. ([#iwill 2019](#)).

Where stigma towards volunteering remains, showcasing positive examples of how volunteering can be useful (to self and community) is helpful in attracting young people who may not have previously considered volunteering. Similarly, having a diverse team that is reflective of the communities you are working with may encourage participation from young people who would not usually access your provision.

Recognising achievement

Young volunteers surveyed stated that recognition is an important element to volunteering. This can take the form of certificates of achievement or 'staged' awards that recognise participation at given points. Staged awards can help volunteering opportunities feel more attainable for those who are new to volunteering or those who may have to fit their voluntary activities around other commitments.

Accreditation may be something to consider to make volunteering opportunities more attractive to participants and relevant to employers, colleges or universities. Youth VIP are keen to see better support for young people who are not in education employment or training in this respect. While taking part in volunteering, the young people could additionally sit [SOA accredited qualifications](#) or take part on the [Duke of Edinburgh award scheme](#) to give them a foundation when applying for work, training or education in the future. Rewards such as discounts or vouchers may also be appropriate in some instances.

Being Volunteer-ready

'Young volunteers can be a great asset...bringing new skills and perspectives to an organisation.' (Youth VIP)

Aim to embed volunteering within your workplace. Being 'volunteer-ready' is critical in retaining volunteers as it means you are better prepared to support sustained participation. Having a dedicated Volunteer Lead or Coordinator is good practice. This person will be the main point of contact for your volunteers and be responsible for keeping them safe and ensuring they are well-supported.

Retain

Your policies and procedures will need to reflect that you are working with young people under the age of 26. You may also be working with children aged under 12. Learn from the best practice of other organisations when creating your policies. These policies should be easy to understand and made available to your volunteers too.

Make your work with young volunteers part of your strategy with senior-level buy-in and an appropriate amount of allocated resource. Be proud of your volunteers and publicise their achievements internally and externally. Having young people involved in as many aspects of 'business as usual' can very quickly win hearts and minds and lead to a more positive experience for all.

Communities of support

54% of young people felt more connected to their community and had a better understanding of social issues after volunteering (Youth VIP).

Many young people take up volunteering as an opportunity to meet others with a similar interest. Where groups of volunteers are expected to work together creating a 'community of support' is worthwhile. Team building activities, a robust induction, a 'buddy' or involving those who have already completed the experience can help to create a sense of community and support that will encourage retainment. It may be worth considering more formal arrangements such as each young person having a peer mentor with whom they can share experiences, learn grow and develop. Peer mentors are a powerful source of information and insight of lived experience within your organisation that can be used to inform and drive change.

Likewise, there may be scope to introduce young volunteers to other external networks of volunteers in their local area. Volunteering conferences, local youth networks, regional and national youth organisations all hold regular opportunities for engagement in activities beyond your own organisation. Youth VIP have recommended that the Private and Voluntary Sector come together via a national forum to share best practice and support each other in enabling wider access to volunteering for young people.

Matthew is a young man from Perth who volunteered for PUSH, in their eBay shop, which resulted in him being offered a paid role. During his placement, the manager of the store described Matthew as a 'great worker, a godsend!' It is, therefore, no surprise that upon interviewing for a Community Jobs Scotland role with PUSH as a PAT Tester & Warehouse Assistant, Matthew was successful.

Key to his retention and growth, Matthew was matched with a role that suited his interests and skills. With the support of PUSH, he was encouraged to grow and develop his personal and practical skills. This well-placed investment was mutually beneficial for Mathew and PUSH.



Developing Young Volunteers

The opportunity to try, learn and build their skills is of utmost importance to young volunteers. Having a range of opportunities for young volunteers with the ability to smoothly transition between these roles is vital in allowing them both the freedom and fun of exploring different activities.

Flexibility is key, and the opportunity for young people to co-create or shape their experience adds an element of agency and empowerment that lends itself to a greater sense of reward from having achieved something from an idea that they have designed or contributed to. The ability to support and implement their thinking in a volunteer role can have a profound effect on both the experience of the volunteer, the community and the organisation itself!

➔ Young Representatives

Participation of young volunteers within your organisation does not need to be limited to award schemes or issue-based opportunities. By involving young people in decision-making and development, not only will decisions be made with young people in mind, but their contribution will provide fresh perspectives and new challenges to old problems.

➔ Shaping future responsibilities

Involving current volunteers in the development of future opportunities adds huge value to your volunteering scheme. The best examples allow young volunteers to work 'in' the organisation and 'on' the organisation. Consider creating a Young Person's Advisory Group who can meet on a periodical basis to review and evaluate your existing work with young volunteers.

From the outset it is worthwhile thinking about the impact of your youth volunteering efforts. [Evaluation Support Scotland](#) can help with this important work.

➔ Supporting transition

Do you have a clear idea of how you would like a volunteer to develop and grow into having greater responsibility? Where internal development opportunities are limited, signposting your volunteers to a partner or other local organisation may be appropriate.

Young Representatives

Participation of young volunteers within your organisation does not need to be limited to award schemes or issue-based opportunities. Taking on young people in membership or governance roles allows them to gain invaluable workplace experience and leadership skills.

‘By involving young people in decision-making and development, not only will decisions be made with young people in mind, but their contribution will provide fresh perspectives and new challenges to old problems.’ (Youth VIP)

Young adults are great at informing new ideas and processes. The ability to challenge existing work cultures can become easier when you involve young people at all levels. Examples of such roles are Young Trustee, Young Advisor, Committee Co-Chair, Young Advocate, Representative.

Like with all volunteer roles, the capacity to support these young people is key to their success. How any new roles will be integrated into existing governance structures will need to be considered carefully and reflected in supporting documents. Managing the expectations of young people in these roles is also incredibly important. Are they going to be part of a decision-making board or a consultation group? They need to know how their contribution will make a difference.

Shaping future responsibilities

Involving current volunteers in the development of future opportunities adds huge value to your volunteering scheme.

Young people can act as Peer Mentors alongside new or younger volunteers, they can review your policies and recruitment processes and be involved in designing other opportunities for engaging more young people in volunteering.

Consider creating a Young Person’s Advisory Group who can meet on a periodical basis to review and evaluate your existing work with young volunteers. Following their initial experience, 54% of young people surveyed by Youth VIP took part in further volunteering activities so getting it right counts in terms of impact.

Develop

Supporting transition

Internally - is there a clearly defined pathway for transition to further opportunity? For a staged award scheme, this may be as simple as providing a 'passport' documenting achievement with details of what is required at future stages. For other opportunities, this may mean facilitating an induction to a new role or introducing a volunteer to a new team.

For time-bound volunteering opportunities where there is no progression, consider a celebration event and the opportunity for reflection and evaluation.

Progression to employment or education - local employers, schools and colleges may be interested in supporting or sponsoring your volunteering programme as a means of promoting their own initiatives. Working with external partners to develop a package of support for transition can be really beneficial in ensuring young people maintain their interest in both parties and feel supported in their new venture.

On a similar theme, allowing all your workforce to take part in volunteering activities during their working week will help to embed social action as common practice. Volunteering days and corporate responsibility partnerships are becoming increasingly popular in the public sector. Youth VIP recognise that small and medium sized enterprises need additional support with this and encourage businesses to seek further guidance from an organisation such as [Volunteering Matters](#) or [Volunteer Scotland](#) and trial this approach.

Cal is a transgender man. He suffered a lot with social anxiety. He was searching for an experience that would help him make his transition to the next step in his career. With the help of local support agencies, Cal was encouraged to build his confidence and self-esteem whilst volunteering at the British Red Cross serving customers, organising the shop and dealing with customer queries.

Cal was encouraged to think about how he wanted to develop his skills and what he wanted to do to progress his increasing experience and confidence. His support workers supported him to develop a CV and have the confidence to apply for other paid work. Cal was successful in gaining and sustaining full-time employment in a local factory doing Quality Control.

Cal said that he was encouraged to think big as soon as he started volunteering and without this encouragement to progress that he wouldn't have had the confidence to move forward in his life.



Appendix 1

Case studies

Sam has been volunteering as part of our Youth Voice in a Sustainable Democracy Project since July 2019. This project is aimed at helping young people have their voices heard on the issues that matter most to them. Sam is working with a group of young volunteers looking at how we can end poverty in Scotland. He has original ideas and is a vital part of the team, it has also been fantastic to see his confidence grow since we first met and see him take more of a leadership role.

It wasn't always this way though. Sam says "I experienced racism for a decade from primary to secondary school. Now I am working and it still affects me. It all started one day when someone pushed me during lunch at the playground and as I turned around to see who it was, the individual said, "Go back to your country." The people around him laughed at that comment. I was confused for the rest of the day as to what he meant as I thought I was in my country. I would eventually forget about it, thinking it was a random one-off event. I didn't realise at that point that it would be a daily event in my life for most of my primary and secondary education. I missed so much school that it became a problem, it made me feel like everybody was against me; like they were all talking about me and they all hated me. I felt rejected and isolated and it messed with my self-confidence.

Having fewer friends meant more isolation and feelings of helplessness which led me to have depression and suicidal thoughts, which is still affecting me, and it brought on my persisting social anxiety. It made me think about moving school, but I didn't feel anything would get better; I'd just be an outcast there like I was at my high school".

Volunteering outside of school was the only place that Sam felt safe and that he fitted in. These feelings of a safe and purposeful life led Sam to volunteer for local and national groups which he says have been greatly beneficial in rebuilding his confidence. Sam says "I'm gaining new skills and qualities and meeting new people, it's brilliant. 2 of the projects I am involved in are the Young Scot, Fairer Future project which is about Race equality in Scotland and closer to home I'm volunteering with Renfrewshire youth commission focusing on young people's mental health"

He continued "My volunteering experiences allowed me to meet and work with people (staff and other volunteers) who respect me and value my opinion. Unlike school, I feel safe when I'm volunteering. It helps me a lot with my mental health. I am happy when I am volunteering and learning new ways to cope with my depression. As a result of this, I can now contribute in ways that I never thought possible. The staff at both projects always have time to talk with me. They get alongside me with a gentle word when I need it and trust me to work as part of the team. They have accepted me for who I am and what I bring. This has been very important by helping me to change for the better.

I've learned that a small number of racist people from school were the minority and that the majority of people in Scotland are very friendly and welcoming. If I had one message for others it would be please welcome volunteers into your organisations and help them discover their talents, it helps them and it will help you".



Appendix 1

Case studies

Ross Elder is 25 years old and lives in Inverness. He tried studying. He started a couple of courses, but they didn't stick and he wasn't happy. He learned about volunteering online and was keen to explore what it had to offer. Ross wasn't having any luck at the Job Centre and the lack of direction was adding to feelings of disinterest and depression.

Ross describes himself as feeling a little lost before volunteering. He didn't know what to do next, without doing another course within further education. With the help of ProjectScotland Ross realised the benefit of gaining experience through volunteering. This was a turning point for Ross.

Ross was happy to go the extra mile, literally. He travelled 30 miles each way to meet the commitment of his volunteering role. His volunteering agency helped him arrange a car share with a colleague so he could work 2 days a week with the Digital Communications Team, supporting content creation for Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Sian Jamieson is the Digital Campaigns Officer at Cairngorms National Park Authority. She is an advocate for supported volunteering. She said "Ross made an immediate impact. He has a keen eye and we were able to send him out on location to gather content and cover significant events at the Park. He quickly established himself as a key member of our team and demonstrated great commitment and enthusiasm for the role. We know that matching the skills and passion of the volunteer to the opportunities we offer and removing practical barriers such as transport are crucial to the success of a placement."

Before Ross even completed his volunteer placement, he was offered an internship at the Park. Ross said he was surprised – he didn't realise the value he was adding and it was great to hear such positive feedback. "I was made to feel so welcome and was quickly working on an archive of images which I found interesting. I've also done a bit of photography and am really into it, so it was great to be asked to take pictures of events or video clips for use on social media."

The cherry on the top was the job offer, which essentially means he will continue to do the work he started as a volunteer but as a paid employee. Ross is feeling a lot more positive and talks about his desire to continue working hard, trying new things, including doing more photography. He feels like doors are opening for him, including the door to a new flat (after previously living with his family). He's a lot happier and his mood has changed towards everything.

"I feel really lucky to have to be placed in such a lovely organisation, everyone is so nice so being offered a job was a lovely surprise. I had been trying to do freelance photography with no success but this experience has given me a big boost. I'm now working on getting back into wedding photography...it's all really helped my confidence."



Appendix 2

Additional support

A range of national organisations work to progress the volunteering agenda and can offer guidance and support. This list highlights some of the organisations, but is by no means exhaustive.

Volunteering

Volunteer Scotland - <https://www.volunteerscotland.net>

Volunteering Matters - <https://volunteeringmatters.org.uk/category/scotland/>

Scottish Volunteering Forum - <https://scottishvolunteeringforum.wordpress.com>

SCVO - <https://scvo.org.uk>

British Red Cross - <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer>

Young People

Project Scotland - <https://www.projectscotland.co.uk>

YouthLink Scotland - <https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/develop/volunteering/>

Young Scot - <https://young.scot>

Young Person's Guarantee - <https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/youngpersonsguarantee>

Health

Voluntary Health Scotland - <https://vhscotland.org.uk>

SAMH - <https://www.samh.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering>

Volunteering in the NHS - <https://www.nhsinform.scot>

Business

Social Good Connect - <https://socialgoodconnect.org>

Regional & local support

Find support regionally and locally:

<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-volunteers/find-support-locally/>

Policy

Scottish Government - <https://www.gov.scot/policies/third-sector/volunteering/>

Thanks

Thanks to:

Scottish Government

ProjectScotland YVIE members

Youth VIP Volunteers and partners

Get The Gen

ProjectScotland

theGKExperience

Push

The British Red Cross

Young Scot

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Next steps

These guidelines are delivered with a set of training materials and facilitator notes. The training materials can be delivered in an online or face to face context as the situation determines.

The aim of the training materials is to give a practical application to the guidelines. They are designed to encourage host organisations to reflect on their current opportunities and practices and develop them in line with the guidelines.

To this end the training materials and guidelines are designed to enable small and subtle nudges to existing behaviour.

Further information on accessing the training materials can be found by emailing hello@getthegen.com



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