

Recruiting and retaining volunteers



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Recruiting and retaining volunteers

Recruiting and retaining volunteers is an essential part of running a successful volunteer program. This booklet provides useful information to help you attract, engage and retain volunteers.

Know the standards

The National Standards for Volunteering provide a sound framework for supporting the volunteer sector in Australia. They are adaptable to each organisation or community group and reflect the diversity of this the sector.

Basing your volunteer program on these standards will give you the greatest chance of success.

The standards cover all aspects of volunteer management and have many practical uses, including:

- Auditing your organisation in terms of best practice for volunteer involvement and recruitment.
- Identifying opportunities for making improvements.
- Assisting in planning and establishing a new volunteer management program.
- As a baseline from which improvements can be monitored and measured.



Appoint and empower a Volunteer Manager

Recruiting and retaining volunteers takes time, enthusiasm and commitment – and is best carried out by a dedicated Volunteer Manager.

The role of a Volunteer Manager is to recruit, retain, support and facilitate the recognition of your volunteer workforce, and is vital to the success of your volunteer program.

They should be a clear communicator and have a good understanding of the current status of your volunteer program, as this will help with informed decision making and planning to meet your organisation's objectives.

Appointing a Volunteer Manager will also benefit your volunteers, providing them with a leader they can look to for direction, support and mentoring. Volunteers need to know that as a group of invested individuals they have a visible leader who is valued and empowered by the organisation.

A Volunteer Manager may undertake the following responsibilities:

- Preparation and ongoing review of recruitment plan for the organisation's volunteer program.
- Preparation and up-keep of a volunteer handbook and other volunteer resources as required.
- Preparation of interview questions and any other induction material relevant to your group.
- Preparation of position descriptions for volunteer roles.
- Initial screening of all volunteer enquiries.
- Interviewing volunteers, which may be in conjunction with other key members of the organisation.



- On boarding of volunteers and providing an induction and orientation.
- Ongoing training of volunteers as required and preparation and up-keep of any training manuals necessary for volunteer engagement.
- Day to day support and supervision of volunteers.
- Preparation and activation of a communication plan that keeps all volunteers effectively engaged, supported and in touch with one another and the organisation. This may involve a volunteer newsletter and a range of social media initiatives.
- Administration of volunteer database including tracking and reporting on hours, up to date police, working with children and NDIS checks and emergency contacts.
- Development and implementation of a volunteer recognition strategy.
- Provide information to the wider organisation on volunteer initiatives and trends across the sector.
- Engage with various stakeholders to ensure best practice is being adhered to across the organisation's volunteer programs at all times.
- Active involvement with any relevant networks to support and grow the volunteer program.
- Provide event and activity based support as required (i.e., community events, expos and volunteer recognition activities.)

Assess your recruitment needs

It is important to have a clear idea of the type of volunteers you want to attract and roles you want to offer.

Before you begin recruitment, consider:

- Who are our current volunteers?
- What kind of people do we want to recruit and how many?
- What do we want our volunteers to do? When and for how long?
- What demands will be made on our volunteers?
- What authority will our volunteers have?
- Who are our volunteers answerable to?
- What support and training will be provided?

Tip: Remember to be real and specific about your expectations. Avoid asking for too much and create opportunities that will appeal to real people.

Understand your volunteers

People volunteer for a range of reasons. Understanding these motivations will help you to recruit and keep your volunteers motivated.

If you are unsure, consider asking your current volunteers what motivated them to join and why they keep coming back. You may be surprised by their answers!



Motivations to volunteer

Type of motivation	Things to keep in mind
<p>Mutually beneficial relationship People looking to help and gain something in return.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead your marketing and recruitment with what is in it for them. • Be clear about what you can offer and what you need from the volunteer.
<p>Community minded People who are looking to solve problems and make a difference in the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear with your messaging and mission to appeal to their altruism. • Provide opportunities for them to solve the problem.
<p>Specific skill set People looking for an opportunity to apply a particular skill or knowledge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match people's skillsets to the most appropriate role. • Look for opportunities to create roles or tasks to make the most of their skills.
<p>Job seeker People looking to build their resume, gain work experience or meet Centrelink requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear on the time requirements of the role. • List the skills and experience you can gain from the role. • Be willing to provide a meaningful reference.
<p>Satisfaction People wanting to contribute in ways that have visible and measurable value and impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide meaningful roles and tasks with measurable outcomes. • Share stories about how your volunteers have made a positive impact on the lives of others.
<p>Purpose People wanting to use their skills and knowledge, fill spare time or simply get out of the house.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the skills and experience you can use or gain in the role.
<p>Social interaction People looking to network with like-minded people or gain new friends.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be inclusive and value diversity. • Hold events and provide opportunities for volunteers to socialise and make friends. • Ensure everyone feels they are part of the team.

Creating inclusive opportunities

Not all people have the time, resources or motivation to volunteer in a traditional setting. If you want to appeal to a wider range of volunteers, consider if you can create:

- Remote or online volunteering opportunities.
- Short term or time-flexible opportunities.
- Opportunities that achieve a specific outcome, rather than just supporting a cause.



Volunteer position descriptions

Providing position descriptions for your volunteers will help your volunteers understand what is expected of them and feel confident in their role. It will also help you to define your recruitment needs and how each role fits in to your organisation's goals.

Here is an example of what to include in your position descriptions.

Organisation's name:

Title:

Location: May be a virtual role or provide address.

Purpose: This may include a brief statement about the mission, aims and goals of the organisation and how the role supports this.

Key responsibilities: Detail all tasks expected of the volunteer to ensure both parties are in agreement and the volunteer can, with the support of the organisation, meet the expectations.

Reporting framework: Who the volunteer reports to with suitable contacts noted.

Commitment: Times and days.

Qualifications: This may include actual qualifications or may just outline the skills or interests desirable for the role.

Training and support: This should outline any training or resources provided by the organisation that will be required to complete the role, such as computer, food preparation, even external paid training that the organisation may offer. Also note the ongoing support or incentives that the organisation may provide, such as free lunches or travel reimbursement.

Dress code: This may not apply, but instances that should be highlighted would be where manual jobs require personal protective gear (PPE) or even long sleeves and hats if working outside. There may be an expectation of wearing a uniform.

Volunteer's Agreement:

I _____ (*Volunteer Name*)
have noted the statement of duties and responsibilities as detailed in this document and agree to abide by this role description. In the event that I feel that the duties contained within this document no longer reflect my role, I will notify my direct report to review and amend the role or duties as necessary.

Signature: _____

(*Authorised person within the Organisation*)

Date: _____

Recruitment marketing

There are many ways to approach marketing but here are four important steps to remember.

1. Know your product and sell the benefits

Knowing your product means knowing what you are 'selling'. When recruiting volunteers, the product you are 'selling' is the experience of being a volunteer in your organisation or local community group.

While it is important to include clear and simple information about your organisation and the volunteering role, don't forget to share how the opportunity will benefit your potential volunteers.

The benefits will vary from person to person depending on their motivation, so consider the:

- benefits of volunteering with your particular group, and
- benefits of the particular role you want to fill.

For example, the benefits of joining a conservation group may be helping to protect the natural environment, while taking on a fundraising role may help develop marketing, sales, or event management skills.

2. Identify your target audience

Your target audience is the kind of person you would like to recruit. Knowing your target audience will help you decide what kind of messaging to use and where to aim your marketing.

To define your target audience, consider:

- Age – which age best suits the role? Or maybe there is no ideal age.
- Employment status – part-time, retired, full time.
- Experience – does the role require specific skills, knowledge or career background or just simply someone who has a passion and wants to learn and be involved?
- Interests – what interests and motivates your audience? This can help inform what benefits to include in your marketing.
- Membership status – if you are a sporting, service club or have any type of formal membership consider current members, parents of children that participate, community members.

Tip: Create a draft advertisement and get feedback from friends and family who are in the same demographic as your target audience.

3. Use the right channel to reach your audience

There are many different marketing channels you can use to recruit volunteers, such as:

- Becoming a member of the Swan Volunteer Resource Centre (SVRC). Membership is free and we will advertise on your behalf on a range of online platforms and websites (for example, GoVolunteer, Seek Volunteer, Volunteering WA, SVRC Facebook page and the City of Swan website)
- Social media
- Community radio and TV
- Print advertising (for example, local newspapers, specialist magazines and professional associations)
- Brochures, flyers and newsletters
- Posters and noticeboards
- Word of mouth (for example, your existing volunteers recommending your organisation to friends)

Make sure you choose the channel that is most used by your target audience.

For example, if you would like to recruit people aged 17 to 21, you are more likely to be successful by placing your marketing online or on social media, such as Instagram and TikTok, rather than in newspapers or community newsletters.

If you are unsure what channels are most appropriate for your target audience, ask your committee members to talk to people in that demographic, such as their children, grandchildren, partners, work colleagues and friends.

Tip: Your existing volunteers and members can be your most valuable marketing tool. Let your volunteers know you are recruiting and encourage them to ask friends, family and people in their community to get involved.

4. Make it happen

Once you have developed your marketing messaging, identified your target audience and chosen the right channel, it's time to make it happen!

- Do you need money to pay for your campaign? Consider applying for special funding grants.
- Do you need help to implement your volunteer marketing campaign? Can you get an existing volunteer to help out? Or do you need to recruit a marketing volunteer?

Need more help?

- If you're a sporting organisation, talk to your local association or peak body. Local, state and national bodies can provide support to clubs or members. Your club secretary should have these details.
- Other community groups and not-for-profits have networks – get to know them and reach out for support.



Be active in the right spaces

Traditional marketing isn't the only way to recruit new volunteers. Simply being proactive and reaching out to different people, groups and organisations can be the most effective way to find and attract new recruits:

- Place posters, pamphlets, flyers in supermarkets, community and school notices boards, and ask existing volunteers and members to help distribute.
- Request announcements on community radio or the TV. The ABC often run volunteer specials and 98.5FM have a dedicated volunteer and community announcement slot available.
- Give presentations to schools, universities, TAFE and other training organisations.
- Give presentations at pre-retirement groups and over-55 lifestyle villages.
- Look to make mutually beneficial partnerships with the commercial sector. For example, if you are a conservation organisation, the local nursery may partner with you, or if your organisation works with children, supermarkets might support and promote your group when they are advertising their back to school material.
- Consider corporate volunteering - contact the corporates' Community Liaison Managers or Volunteering WA who have dedicated staff to facilitate corporate volunteer strategies.
- Ask your current volunteers to share your message at their place of employment. For example, in their office and social club newsletters and noticeboards.
- Contact places of worship and ask to share your message in their newsletters and notices.
- Organise social activities aimed at specific demographics. For example, organise a coffee morning for a mothers group.
- Organise a day where volunteers and members can bring their family and friends along to see what you do, why you do it and how it impacts the community or your environment.
- Hold 'open house' tours of your program or organisation so the public and potential volunteers can get a glimpse into how and where you work and the impact you make.



- Have a 'try before you buy' day – invite prospective volunteers to work with you for a day.
- Reach out to past and present volunteers and members and share information on upcoming club activities and opportunities to get involved.
- Inform job service providers and Centrelink that you are looking for new volunteers.
- Ask partners and supporters of your program to share your messages on their social media.

Did you know?

Migrants are largest growing pool of volunteers. Consider how you can reach out to and welcome migrant communities to your organisation.



Using social media

Social media is a great way to raise awareness of your organisation and connect with your volunteers and the community.

Social media platforms

Facebook Facebook is the world's largest platform where you can create and share a wide range of content. While well-known, it is now most commonly used by older demographics.

With Facebook, you can create an organisation or business account that gives you access to a range of tools, such as advertising, data analytics, messaging and fundraising campaigns.

Instagram Instagram is a widely-used visual platform where you can share images, videos, stories and reels.

Use this platform to:

- Profile volunteers, members and the communities you contribute to.
 - Showcase people enjoying your activities, food, events, etc.
 - Capture and livestream events using the Instagram's story and reel tools.
-

LinkedIn LinkedIn is a professional network platform where you can share text, images and video posts. While it is designed for businesses and professionals, it can be a useful tool for non-profits and volunteering programs. Use LinkedIn to:

- Highlight your employees and volunteers' achievements and promote your organisation as a whole.
 - Network with other organisations.
 - Offer support and advice to leadership and entrepreneurship groups.
-



Twitter

Twitter is a text-based platform useful for sharing short updates known as “tweets” that consist of 240 characters or fewer. When using Twitter:

- Be active in following and retweeting others’ posts.
- Use popular and relevant hashtags to boost your posts.

YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing platform where people can view, upload, rate, share, and comment on video content. Use this platform to create and share:

- Explainer videos that share your mission.
 - Volunteer stories and testimonials from communities you have helped.
 - Training, tutorials and how-to videos (for example, if you provide meals for people, you could share recipe videos.)
-



Respect, recognise and reward your volunteers

Your volunteers gift their time, skills and experience, so it is vital to give back to your valued helpers. Here are some ways your organisation can show respect, recognise and reward your volunteers.

Respect

- Be inclusive. Making an effort to understand your groups' collective culture and promote diversity.
- Don't ask too much of your volunteers. Stick to the volunteer position description and split tasks if needed.
- Make your volunteers feel comfortable and try to accommodate their needs, where practical.
- Pay attention to what your volunteers are saying - they can be a great source of wisdom and ideas.
- Ensure volunteers have the training, support and resources they need to do their job.
- Communicate regularly with your volunteers by providing relevant information and asking for feedback.
- Take time to listen, talk and get to know your volunteers as people.
- Provide positive reinforcement. If someone has done an excellent job or achieved great outcomes tell them and let them know how their contribution has made a difference.
- Offer opportunities to take on new challenges and gain new skills to enhance your volunteers' experience.
- Say thank you in lots of different ways – a full biscuit tin, a thank you card and an event during Volunteers' Week all say "I recognise and value your contribution".



Recognise

- Provide uniform and name badges.
- Acknowledge your volunteers by sharing their stories and achievements in annual reports, newsletters and on social media.
- Provide participation and long service awards to recognise your volunteers' contribution.
- Show appreciation and recognition on national days such as International National Volunteer (5 December) and National Volunteer Week (May). And don't forget to recognize your Volunteer Coordinator too, on 5 November, International Volunteer Managers Day.

Reward

- Encourage your volunteers to connect and build peer support networks.
- Hold an end of year social event to celebrate your volunteers.
- Offer social opportunities such as morning teas, a weekend picnic or an invite to an event the organisation may be running.



Putting it into action

Here is a quick checklist to help you put your recruitment and retainment plan into action.

- Appoint a Volunteer Manager/Coordinator.
- Assess your recruitment needs and wants.
- Identify the motivations and benefits of volunteering with your organisation.
- Develop position descriptions.
- Determine policies and procedures surrounding induction, training and retention strategies, including police clearances, working with children and NDIS checks and determine your position on COVID-19 vaccinations, or any other requirements.
- Develop a marketing plan – and assign someone to implement it.
- Be active in asking people to volunteer. Reach out to members, groups and organisations.
- Become a member of one of the Volunteer Manager Networking groups, share your experiences and challenges and learn from others – you are not alone.
- Consider attending recruitment training at your local Volunteer Resource Centre or through Volunteering West Australia.
- Ensure you provide your volunteers with a comprehensive induction – and be inclusive.
- Review, reward and recognise your volunteers – formally through practice and informally every time you are with your volunteer.



City of Swan Volunteer Resource Centre

The City of Swan Volunteer Resource Centre is your gateway to all things volunteering. We promote, educate and encourage volunteering in the community and can provide:

- A free referral service to enquiring volunteers.
- Free support to volunteer organisations, including the online and face-to-face promotion of your volunteer roles and the provision of effective tools and resources.

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