

• HOW DO I
• GET INVOLVED?
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WHERE DO
I START?
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The Volunteer's Journey

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO LOCATING AND RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

For volunteer-involving organisations and managers of volunteers



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The Volunteer's Journey – A step-by-step guide to locating and recruiting volunteers can be used in conjunction with the Online Guide to Locating and Recruiting Volunteers on Volunteering Australia's website. The Online Guide lists free resources that can be accessed on the internet and is divided into seven sections:

- [Setting up volunteer programs and designing volunteer roles](#)
- [Helping organisations understand and reach potential recruits](#)
- [Sending the right messages and helping volunteers select your organisation](#)
- [Fielding and processing volunteers' applications](#)
- [Strengthening the interviewing process](#)
- [Selecting, screening and communicating with applicants](#)
- [Designing and running strong orientation and induction programs](#)

The Online Subject Guide is accessible at <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org> > Publications.

The *Volunteer's Journey – A step-by-step guide to locating and recruiting volunteers* is available in PDF format in the Online Guide.

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The volunteer's journey: A step-by-step guide to help you locate and recruit volunteers

Take a moment to step into a volunteer's shoes and walk through the recruitment process from their perspective. With this tool you can draw out those aspects in your strategy that help volunteers make a decision about who and where they will volunteer. Some of the deciding factors may include:

- the goals of your organisation

- the actual work that needs to be done

- what support and training you offer

- whether they have the necessary skills to undertake the task

- the times and days that volunteer will need to come in.

The recruitment process is divided into a number of steps, each beginning with:

- questions the volunteer will ask themselves

- questions you and your organisation would be asking in response

- action steps you can take to bridge the gap between the volunteer's wants and your needs.

The purpose of the step-by-step guide is to help you understand what will bring a volunteer to your door.

As a first step, however, we recommend that you implement the *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations*. These standards will form the basis of your volunteer program, ensuring that you and your organisation follow the principles of best management practice.

All resources developed by Volunteering Australia, such as fact sheets, information and training materials, as well as research articles to assist you, can be located on our website – just follow the links – www.volunteeringaustralia.org>Publications.



• I THINK I WANT
• TO VOLUNTEER

• WHO ARE YOU?

VOLUNTEER

MANAGER OF
VOLUNTEERS

When someone decides they might volunteer, you'll need to get a sense of who they are, why they want to volunteer and what they want to get out of it.

Before starting a successful recruitment campaign it's useful to remind yourself that volunteers are not a homogeneous group. They can be young, old or in-between; male or female; students, in or out of the paid workforce; some are bringing up kids; retired or travelling; and some have just arrived in Australia.

Whatever their circumstances they are a source of new, dynamic, diverse and enthusiastic volunteers for your organisation. How do you reach out to them? Think about it from the volunteer's perspective – step into their shoes and find out what inspires people to volunteer.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Get hold of some of the research on volunteers and use it to find out who they are and what they are looking for:

- Corporate or employee volunteers for instance can either be looking for 'done in a day' team projects or for individual positions where they can use their professional skills.
- Many volunteers, particularly young people, prefer to work on shorter projects from beginning to end rather than agreeing to a long-term weekly commitment.
- Baby boomers moving into retirement can be a rich source of volunteers if you pitch the job to meet their needs; so design projects or jobs that give them the chance to keep using their skills and maintain autonomy.



➤ Migrant and refugee populations are strong volunteers; although they often don't call it volunteering. Traditionally they have worked for their cultural or religious organisations but we are learning that the younger generation are also attracted to organisations in the wider community.

➤ Parents with young kids are a prime source of volunteers providing their volunteering role fits with their family commitments.

2. Research your own locality. Is your organisation in a rural area, are you in a retirement zone, close to a university, in a developing area with lots of young families, in the CBD or are you looking for volunteers living in other states or regions? This information will give you an idea on how to structure your job roles, for example

➤ short-term and flexible roles for students and corporate volunteers

➤ discrete projects for virtual volunteers or parents with young kids,

➤ longer-term for retirees or

➤ seasonal opportunities for baby boomers.

Understanding your potential audience will also give you an idea of what to emphasise about your organisation, for instance: an excellent cause, been around for ages, a fun place or a very serious place with a big vision.

3. Ask yourself the question, 'Do I have a specific group to target?' It will help you pitch your message if you know who you'd like to recruit:

➤ people with a specific skill set

➤ individuals who can make a long-term commitment

➤ individuals who would like to learn a specific skill

➤ young people at the beginning of their career who are interested in a number of short-term projects which they may repeat, or simply

➤ large teams of any age and experience.

● WHERE DO I FIND ALL THE INFORMATION I NEED?

WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO LOOK FOR INFORMATION?



They're not ready to make a commitment yet, and they want to see what's around, so you'll have to work out where they're going to look for information and tailor the information to suit them and the medium.

People look for information in different places and through different media. Young people or office workers, for example, may be more likely to search for information on the internet. Others may go to the local paper or radio for their primary source of information. Your advertising needs to be tailored to suit the intended audience as well as the medium if you want to recruit particular people as volunteers. There is a lot of advice available to 'help get your message across' and this, combined with the understanding you now have of your target audience, should go a long way towards creating that first link with your new volunteers.

We know that the most effective recruitment method is word of mouth, that is, people are told about opportunities or asked to join in. So your existing volunteers can have a very real and active role in recruiting other volunteers for your organisation. The more committed volunteers feel to your organisation, its roles and its cause, the more likely they will be to tell others.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Firstly pick your audience and identify their preferred sources of information. If you're looking for young people think about where they are most likely to go and what they like, for instance, the internet, advertisement postcards, particular FM radio stations. Baby Boomers on the other hand may read the daily newspapers and listen to AM radio. Just be careful of making sweeping assumptions, remember some Baby Boomers will listen to particular FM radio shows which target this age group, and some young people will listen to AM.



2. Think about what you should say and how to say it, to attract the people you've targeted through the media they use. Newspaper ads can be expensive but there are all sorts of media available depending on your budget and your needs. The people you are targeting may not know about you yet, but be prepared for when they do and think of using:

- your web pages – demonstrate your good track record for involving volunteers and post volunteer testimonials on your website

- GoVolunteer or other internet matching services

- newspapers and radio stories, interviews or news items

- advertisements or community service announcements (CSA)

- brochures, posters and postcards

- information sessions at universities, schools, pre-retirement or career expos

- word of mouth – your volunteers may be your best ambassadors if you run a good program

- local government directories

- volunteer centres

- public displays at community gatherings such as local shopping centres and festivals.

3. Match your message to your medium:

- Web based: short, to-the-point statements so that a person can view the whole message without scrolling down the web page.

- Postcards: use catchy and attention grabbing graphics or photographs on the front of the postcard.

- Radio interviews and spots: a humorous anecdote or a punchy statistic keeps listeners' attention.

- Newspapers and magazines: provide photographs, quotes from existing volunteers and an interesting, 'newsworthy' story.

4. Write an overview of the organisation, its mission and its commitment to volunteers and the potential for their involvement.

5. Help people who may want to learn about volunteering. Hold volunteer information sessions that not only give people a deeper understanding of volunteering in Australia but also what your particular organisation has to offer. Such a session has extra benefits by reinforcing your reputation as well as educating people about your cause.

- THERE ARE A LOT OF ORGANISATIONS AND ROLES TO CHOOSE FROM...

WHAT CAN WE DO TO MAKE YOU CHOOSE OUR ORGANISATION AND OUR ROLES?



You know they'll be comparing your organisation to others, so you'll need to work out what will make your organisation more attractive to them.

Most people come to volunteering with a complex set of motivations of which only some can be clearly defined and articulated by the volunteer. We know volunteers search for opportunities that make a difference in the community, while at the same time identifying the benefits for them as individuals. Benefits can be anything from a sense of personal satisfaction through to developing skills or using those built up over a lifetime. Young people, for instance, often look for ways to build up their experience for resumes. Older people, however, may want a social outlet or keep their skills up to date.

For every volunteer there will be a number of clinchers in choosing one organisation over another, such as:

- whether the organisation can help them meet their aspirations
- that the organisation recognises that people have different distinct and personal motivations and needs
- the role itself and how it is described
- the mission and reputation of the organisation
- the successes of the organisation
- any recent positive media coverage
- the organisation winning an award
- the statistics related to your cause and how volunteers can make a difference



- ease of access – people need to be able to get into your organisation and you may be close to public transport or situated in the CBD
- availability of virtual volunteering experiences to capture the skills of people in remote areas.

Keeping these things in mind when designing volunteer roles and 'selling' your organisation and its cause will help a potential volunteer make the best choice. Your speciality or recent successes may just be the deciding factor that brings people to your door.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Frame the work in your organisation as opportunities for people to meet their aspirations to:

- make a difference or bring about change
- use their skills
- develop new skills
- test out other careers
- build up their experience
- have access to training
- make friends and socialise.

2. Make a list of the important things your organisation does for the community: for instance, providing services to a disadvantaged segment of the population, promoting environmental change, advocating on behalf of a cause, issue or set of people, or influencing public policy.

Your organisation may provide information or educational opportunities, it may respond to emergencies such as fire, accidents, floods or storms, or it may provide emergency relief. As long as your organisation can demonstrate that it has a real purpose, does its work well, is accountable and transparent, and involves volunteers because of the value they bring, then it will be on the front foot.

These things are important to prospective volunteers who may make a decision based on what you can tell them about the organisation and how that relates to their own values base.

3. Make sure your job design caters to the needs of volunteers as well as the needs of your organisation. For instance, you might be able to combine a variety of work so that the role would be more interesting, or you can design it so that the project can be completed in stages. An example might be the restoration of a heritage site – the restoration may need many skills and take a very long time but you may be able to organise the work so that volunteers can come in at different stages and take part.

- I THINK I KNOW WHAT I WANT TO DO, SO WHAT'S NEXT?
-
-

WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU NEED TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP AND APPLY?



When they contact you, make the first impression count and make the application process as straight forward and efficient as possible.

At this stage the person has made the decision to volunteer, investigated available opportunities and made the choice to apply for a position with your organisation, so now it's important to maintain their enthusiasm. At this stage, the potential volunteer is excited by the opportunities you are offering and is looking forward to the possibility of working, for the cause, in your organisation and in your volunteer positions. So here's your chance to enhance the good impressions that you've already made.

The application process should be smooth, efficient and informative. Remember: every time a prospective volunteer comes into contact with your organisation they are building a picture that either confirms or detracts from the information you provide about your organisation and volunteer program. Keep existing staff (both paid and volunteer) informed and involved in your recruitment process.

Even if a person changes their mind, and doesn't continue with the application process, there is a good chance that they will tell others about their experiences with your organisation. If their experiences have been positive this will be reflected in the stories they tell others, thus enhancing your reputation as well as reinforcing the beneficial opportunities that can be provided by volunteering.



TAKE ACTION:

1. Make sure you are ready for enquiries. A potential volunteer may ring your organisation direct and ask for information so make sure everyone who answers the phone or answers email enquiries is briefed on the volunteer roles, the application process, timelines, contact person, etc.

2. Imagine that you are a person who is thinking of applying to your organisation and plan the application process accordingly. If your application form is on your website, for example, don't design a form that needs their signature.

3. Develop a kit of information – this will be more in-depth than the advertising information you have been using up to now. The information in this kit may include:

- any application forms

- information about any checks and screening processes that are necessary for the role including police checks. Or you may need evidence of specific qualifications such as first aid certificates to be brought along to interviews.

- position description

- organisation profile

- information on the achievements of the organisation brought about by the involvement of volunteers.

4. If you are part-time, organise an interview schedule to be coordinated by a colleague and let everyone know who has that schedule so that applicants do not have to wait to set up a time to either visit or meet for an interview.

- THEY WANT ME TO COME IN
- FOR A CHAT

WHAT DO YOU NEED
TO KNOW, AND WHAT
DO WE NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT YOU?



Make sure you give them an opportunity at interview to talk about their skills and why they are interested. You'll also need to gather information about them to make sure they fit your organisation.

Interviews give volunteers the opportunity to ask questions, confirm the decision to seek volunteering opportunities with you and express their needs. They are also an opportunity to gather the basic information you need to make a decision to involve this person, decline that involvement at this point in time or refer the applicant to either another position or organisation.

The style of the interview can vary to meet the style of the interviewer, the needs of the position and the organisation. Some interviews may be formal and take place in an office setting while others may be informal and take place over a cup of coffee at a cafe, over the phone or even via email.

So whether you intend an informal chat, a group interview or a formal one-to-one interview, make sure you tell the interviewee what kind of meeting it will be so they are properly prepared. Also ensure that the interview allows the person the opportunity to demonstrate what they can offer. The interviewee also should also have the opportunity to find out the information they may still need to make a decision to volunteer with you.

Sometimes in an interview it is apparent that the interviewee has skills and talents that could benefit the organisation in other ways than through the advertised position. When this happens, be frank, talk about the options and find out if the interviewee is interested in another position in your organisation. This may open up the opportunity to 'think outside the square' to develop new roles, projects and how they will be achieved.

Regardless of the formality of the selection process, prospective volunteers should be interviewed fairly using the same selection criteria in compliance with the principles of equal rights and discrimination legislation.



TAKE ACTION:

1. Think about your criteria. Develop the set of questions you will ask each applicant that will give you this information. Work out what are the necessary and desirable criteria for the position and ask questions that will reflect this. It may help to think of what an acceptable answer would be. This might include how a person would handle a certain situation or an example of a similar experience.

It may be that you wish to involve a person with a particular set of professional skills, for instance, a graphic designer or a writer. You will need to think about questions that will bring up issues that may arise as you manage situations where there is disagreement over the products produced. Example questions may include:

- How do you want to receive feedback?

- Tell us about the processes you will use to be sure that you understand our organisation and our mission.

- How comfortable are you going to be with us managing your professional skills?

2. Talk about the volunteer role. This can mean reiterating information already sent to applicants and may include the benefits they will derive from volunteering with your organisation, such as

- options for training

- opportunities for transfer to other projects and volunteer roles

- opportunities for advancement.

3. Provide practical information about

- transport – car park accessibility, public transport routes, etc.

- hours – the prospective volunteer may want to discuss flexibility regarding hours and days

- equipment they will need to bring if necessary

- insurance coverage

- out-of-pocket expense reimbursements

- the screening processes such as following up referees and police checks if necessary.

4. If interviews occur at set times throughout the year don't let prospective volunteers drift away. Keep them informed about the work of your organisation by:

- sending them your newsletters

- providing updates on your website and

- reminding them when the next round of interviews will occur.

4. Take notes so that you can use responses for later consideration in making your decision and when giving interviewees feedback about the interview. Give yourself time between interviews so that you can write any final comments and prepare for the next interview. Most importantly, this means that you won't keep interviewees waiting.

5. Think about what information you will need from the nominated referees and design a list of questions that reflect the selection criteria – you can use the interview questions as a guide.

6. Look at all the information you have gathered from the application form, the interview responses and the referee reports. Consider the necessary qualifications and experience you require as well as other aspects the interviewee will bring to role. Write down your decision and your reasons. Be prepared to constructively relay these to applicants.

• HOW AND WHEN DO YOU WANT TO KNOW OUR DECISION?

SO, DID I GET THE JOB?



You'll need to get back to them quickly with your decision, so they can decide whether it's still what they want to do.

Whatever your decision about a candidate you need to get back to them in a timely manner. The main message is that a volunteer has skills and their time is valuable; so whether you are saying 'yes' or 'no' it has to be done quickly. The trickier conversations are those where you feel 'a fit' is not possible even though the potential volunteer is highly skilled. A quick rehearsal with a colleague may help you think through the message and the best way to deliver it. Of course, an affirmative is much easier, but should also be done quickly in case the volunteer thinks you are indifferent.

People often report that they volunteer 'to give something back to the community'. So it is within this context that you need to frame your response when relaying your decision about whether or not they can volunteer in a particular role for your organisation.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Think about the best means of letting people know, perhaps phone, post, email or in person. Also think about how a volunteer will want to hear your decision – do they want to hear 'we had many skilled applicants' or 'on this occasion you were not successful' or do they want to hear some honest or constructive feedback.

2. If you decide to reject an applicant as a volunteer, make contact at the agreed time and give a constructive reason for your decision; remember this person has many skills and attributes. Be clear if the qualifications and experience don't meet the criteria for this role. For instance you may decide that a person's professional skills do not meet the brief. Do acknowledge them and provide options you think could help them by suggesting:

- Opportunities within your organisation. If you decide after assessing all the interview and application information that there are other more suitable positions within your organisation, provide feedback to the prospective volunteer and talk about these options. For instance, if a graphic designer has come to talk about designing your brochures you may feel their skills are better suited to designing your website.



- External volunteering opportunities: this can include referring someone to the regional volunteer resource centre or state volunteer centre. Or you may be aware of other volunteer-involving organisations locally also seeking volunteers.
- Further training. If you consider the person lacked the skills necessary for this position and the applicant wants to develop the skills necessary for the position. Prepare suggestions of educational/training options available in your local area. So, if someone needs a first aid certificate you might suggest where they could obtain one locally.

3. If you decide to accept the applicant as a volunteer this is your opportunity to be excited for them and with them. Give information that may be necessary including:

- Time and date for the orientation session. Or, if a virtual volunteer will be working with you, prepare an information kit that will help them do their volunteering job for you.
- Volunteer starting date and times – you may need to be flexible so that you are both happy with this. For instance, a volunteer who is working in a remote location may choose their own hours and you only provide critical times when you need reports.
- Tell the volunteer if there will be documents to sign.
- Directions of where to go. You may need to send map directions if the place of work is other than the place of interview.
- The name and contact details of the person who will show them around – again this is necessary if the work location is separate from your organisation.
- Tips about public transport, parking – make sure you provide information about parking meters and parking restrictions.
- What equipment to bring for the first day.
- Facilities, kitchen, cooking, a quiet place for reflection/prayer.

WHAT INFORMATION WILL YOU NEED?



WHEN DO I START AND WHAT HAPPENS ON MY FIRST DAY?



When they start you'll need to make sure they feel welcome, safe and comfortable in their new role.

Orientation and induction are the first steps towards building a new volunteer's commitment to your organisation. This may take the form of an information session or an email setting out what is necessary to be able to perform that role with you. It helps to 'set the scene' and provides an opportunity to begin the process of educating volunteers about your cause, your organisation and how important they are in helping you meet your mission goals.

A well thought out orientation process helps new volunteers ease into the work of your organisation, it can lower any stress they may feel about starting a new position and can give people confidence that they have made the right decision.

TAKE ACTION:

1. Survey or simply ask existing volunteers –what helped them to settle in? Volunteers can provide you with valuable information for the development and maintenance of your program.
2. If the supervisor is someone other than the manager of volunteers ensure that they are aware of what is required of them. They will need to know about volunteer policies and procedures for example and any other information that will assist in making this a good working relationship.
3. Give practical information on the first day and ensure you collect the information you need:
 - contact and emergency details
 - agreement to comply with confidentiality requirements, policies and procedures.



4. If you haven't done so this will be the day to give volunteers:

- a tour of your organisation

- an introduction to the immediate people they will be working with as well as people to go to for assistance and the people they will often interact with such as people at reception and in administration. You might organise a buddy process to help ease the new volunteer into their role.

- formal orientation and training information/dates

- dates of all regular ongoing volunteer/staff meetings that the volunteer is expected to attend

- information about what to do and who to call if they are unable to attend on their designated days

- reimbursement procedures for out of pocket expenses incurred by the volunteer during their work

- equipment as necessary for their position

- a guide to where they can keep:
 - ongoing work – this may be files (either paper or electronic)

 - their personal belongings

 - for shared workstations introduce the volunteer to the others sharing that space (if possible) and point out how the portable equipment is stored.

5. Revisit the information you gathered surveying volunteers about what worked successfully when they first became involved. Is there anything you have left out? And, remember, you can always ask the new volunteer if there is anything they would like to help them settle in.