

Recruiting Volunteers

Recruitment is not just about attracting enough volunteers to your program; you need the right people and you need them to stay. This starts with careful planning and administration – well before you print up any flyers.

Start from the start

First, write down **why** you want to include volunteers in your organisation and **what** you want them to do.

A carefully constructed job description helps ensure that the aims and objectives of the volunteer program are being met. It also protects the rights of the volunteer and can help them negotiate the demands of a busy agency.

A job description doesn't need to be long or complex, but should include:

- a description of the position (position objectives)
- skills and/or qualifications required (both mandatory and desirable)
- key areas of responsibility or a list of duties
- key relationships, such as supervision
- conditions of the role, such as attendance times, required training.

Not sure where to start? See Volunteering Australia's toolkit on *Designing Volunteer Roles and Writing Position Descriptions*.

Targeted recruitment

When it comes to attracting volunteers, it helps to understand something of why and how people come to offer their time.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 57%* of volunteers do so in order to give back to their community; a further 36%* want to do something worthwhile.

A recruitment campaign that **highlights the impact** a volunteer's contribution will have on your community or cause will appeal to this motivation—and stand a better chance of attracting attention.

The ABS has also found that 64%* of volunteers first got involved because **they were asked to** or through someone they know. The lesson? Think local connections first. For example:

- Tap into word-of-mouth: ask your current volunteers to spread the word among friends and relatives
- Target your recruitment to interest groups that may relate to your cause
- Ask your volunteers for suggestions and make contact with local branches
- Ask the volunteers themselves to hand out flyers at their club or network.

As well as **saving you time**, targeting recruitment in this way will give your message a better chance of getting through to people with increasingly busy lives.

*All data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006*

Make a good impression

You must ensure that the **first point of contact** for potential volunteers gives the best possible impression of your organisation.

- Inform all relevant people of the recruitment campaign and selection processes, from those who will take calls to those who will supervise volunteers.
- Make sure your documentation (position description, information packs and policy and procedures) is up to date – see *Fast Facts – Essential Policies and Procedures* for a start.
- Think ahead to how you might deal with the possibility of too many volunteer applicants, or unsuitable volunteer applicants – prepare your response so you are not caught out if applicants phone to check their status.

Selection

Selecting the right volunteer is an important part of **managing risk** in your program: the risk that the volunteer will not stay, the risk that they lack the interest or skills for the role, or the serious risk that they may cause harm or be harmed through the role.

A well thought-through selection process is the best way you can manage these risks.

Interviews

It is good practice to interview applicants for volunteer roles. Recruitment interviews for volunteers are like standard interviews. Though they tend to be much less formal, they work best with some structure; put some time into planning the interview venue, timing, format, questions and points for discussion.

See *Interviewing: A Conversational Approach* by Volunteering Queensland for tips.

Checks

Most organisations today also conduct checks on volunteers in recognition of their duty of care to the organisation's clients or service recipients. Most organisations should plan to conduct:

- proof of identity checks
- reference checks and qualification checks (where applicable)
- police checks*
- Working with Children Checks (where applicable)*.

*See *Fast Facts – Police Checks* and *Working with Children Checks* for more detail.

Mass campaigns

Common mass publicity methods include arranging an article in the local paper, distributing flyers and posters, radio announcements and paid and unpaid advertising in print and on websites.

Although the ABS reports that only 5% of the people they surveyed commenced volunteering in response to a media campaign, such campaigns can serve to increase awareness of your 'brand' and make people more receptive to other recruitment approaches.

And while they are by nature general, media campaigns can also be targeted: think about the social groups who may be attracted to your activity and the places and media they frequent and spend your resources accordingly.

More information

Way2Go Volunteering – a complete volunteer program management toolkit created by Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau
www.vrb.org.au/training_way2go_toolkit.php

National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not for Profit Organisations – a guide to best practice in managing volunteer programs by Volunteering Australia
www.volunteeringaustralia.org/html/s02_article/article_view.asp?id=3700&nav_cat_id=384&nav_top_id=61

Manage your volunteers – on the Victorian Government Volunteering Portal
www.volunteer.vic.gov.au/resources-for-volunteer-organisations/best-practice-toolkit/manage-your-volunteers

Volunteering Victoria is the state peak body for volunteering. We provide support to volunteers and not for profit organisations, and represent the interests of volunteering in Victoria.

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