

Best Practice for Volunteer Involvement

Guide

When involving volunteers, an organisation needs to identify which part of their service is to be enhanced by volunteers. Having the right structure for volunteers can be the key to a successful program.

The next step is to consider what types of roles are required and exactly what these roles will entail. It is important to aim to provide fulfilling and rewarding roles for the volunteers, along with clear guidance and support.

Volunteering is a two-way opportunity. Volunteers bring important benefits including time, skills, and experience to an organisation. Volunteer involvement can contribute to the capacity of organisations to meet their aims and goals, as well as enhance the reputation of your organisation in the community. Volunteers will thrive in roles that match their needs and interests. Considering these points will help provide a meaningful experience for the volunteer.

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

You don't have to take the journey alone. The [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#) (the National Standards) are a best practice framework to guide volunteer involvement. They are a helpful resource for all organisations and groups that engage volunteers.

What are the National Standards?

The National Standards were initially established by Volunteering Victoria. In 1997 they were revised and compiled by Volunteering Australia with contributions from Volunteer-involving Organisations (VIOs) and volunteers across Australia. After a sector-wide consultation, the National Standards were refreshed in 2024. There is also a wide range of supporting information that will provide more guidance.

The National Standards are easy to follow and adaptable to different forms of volunteering. They help improve the volunteer experience and ensure that the wellbeing of volunteers is supported, and their contributions are valued.

The National Standards highlight eight key areas for effective volunteer involvement:

- 1. Volunteering is embedded in leadership, governance and culture.**
 - » Volunteer leaders are supported and provided with clear responsibilities. Effective systems, policies and procedures are developed and implemented to support volunteer participation.
- 2. Volunteer participation is championed and modelled.**
 - » Volunteer participation is part of the organisation's vision, purpose, goals, and objectives and is developed through volunteer engagement. Volunteer management and resources are adequately allocated for volunteer involvement.

3. Volunteer roles are meaningful and tailored.

- » Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles that contribute to the organisation's or club's purpose. Roles are designed and negotiated with volunteers to consider their needs and interests. Roles are reviewed through engagement with volunteers about their experience.

4. Recruitment is equitable and diversity is valued.

- » Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are designed to attract people with relevant interests, knowledge, and skills. Selection is consistent with anti-discrimination law. Screening processes maintain the safety and security of service recipients, employees, and volunteers in line with legal requirements and regulations.

5. Volunteers are supported and developed.

- » Providing induction, training, and supervision supports volunteers to take part safely and effectively. Volunteers understand their roles and gain the knowledge, skills, and feedback needed to participate.

6. Volunteer safety and wellbeing is protected.

- » Volunteers understand their rights and responsibilities. Processes are in place to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of volunteers, including relevant insurances. Volunteers understand and have access to complaints procedures.

7. Volunteers are recognised.

- » Volunteer contribution, value, and impact are understood, appreciated, and acknowledged. Volunteer acknowledgement is appropriate to the volunteer and respectful of cultural values and perspectives.

8. Policies and practices are continuously improved.

- » Policies and procedures are designed and implemented to effectively guide all aspects of volunteer involvement. Opportunities are available for volunteers to provide feedback on their experience and relevant areas of the organisation's work.

The National Standards are not mandatory. Rather, they help inform organisations by providing a framework to assist in planning, establishing, or improving a volunteer program. Benchmarking against the National Standards can greatly benefit both the organisation and volunteers.

Raise your head

Many people who manage volunteer programs do so in isolation, with few chances to look around and see how others might be doing it. The National Standards offer a structured way of doing so – whether you are setting up a new program or evaluating an existing one.

The National Standards might give you new ideas for working with volunteers or identify important gaps in your policies and procedures. They could even save you time and effort in the long-term, by streamlining your administrative systems. Involving the team in the goal of implementing the National Standards can be rewarding and motivating.

The status of volunteering within your organisation benefits from the collective and nationally recognised approach the National Standards represent. Likewise, volunteer-involving organisations benefit from public recognition of the professionalism, organisation, and effort required to effectively engage, support, and empower volunteers.

Make them work for you

The National Standards are comprehensive and designed to be useful to a broad range of organisation and program types.

While some organisations choose to work through all the National Standards, you may wish to identify the areas that are most relevant and important to your program right now and focus on those.

Further information

As Victoria's peak body for volunteering, you can always come to us for reliable resources and advice. Below are some helpful links and resources to continue your understanding of *Best Practice for Volunteer Involvement*.

- » The [Volunteering Victoria website](#) is your go-to resource for all things volunteering, with timely and reliable support, training, resources, and expert advice.

Can't find what you're looking for?

Contact the Volunteering Victoria team at info@volunteeringvictoria.org.au anytime with your questions.



Volunteering Victoria website

 <p>Guides for Leading Volunteers</p>	 <p>National Standards for Volunteer Involvement</p>	 <p>Training & Workshops <i>(Some offered free of charge)</i></p>
 <p>National Knowledge Base for Volunteer Managers</p>	 <p>Resource Library: Developing Policies and Procedures</p>	 <p>Governance Journeys (Volunteering Queensland)</p>