

volunteering in community

Motivation, management, recruiting, retaining and rewarding volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any arts organisation in regional Australia. We simply can't operate without them.

The aging population and initiatives for the unemployed are having a major impact on volunteering and in many ways are changing the face of volunteering. In coming years as the Baby Boomers become retirees we need to think about how we attract them to volunteer in our organisations. We also need to take advantage of the volunteering schemes through Centrelink and regional volunteer resource centres.

We are all so busy trying to recruit volunteers and managing their day to day involvement in our organisations that sometimes we forget to take a step back and look at who we are trying to attract.

- Who has the time to volunteer?
- What motivates people to volunteer?

You need to find the people that suit your organisation – your target “audience” to market to for volunteering.

Who has the time?

Generally, the people with time for community activity are those who are retired, working casually or part-time or who are unemployed. That is not to say that these people are not also busy with personal interests, family, work or job seeking. Everyone seems busy these days, but sometimes busy people, including the working population, can find the time because they are good time managers.

What motivates people to volunteer?

Many retirees are busier in their “third age” than they were during their working life because they devote themselves to what they are passionate about. That is the key. Connect with a person's passions or interests and you will attract them to your organisation no matter how busy they are.

For others wishing to volunteer it is about gaining work experience. Can the volunteer work your organisation is offering lead to a career path?

When the volunteer knocks on your door you need to ensure that you have ample structures in place to make them feel a valued member of the organisation. There are many resources available to assist your organisation in retaining and rewarding volunteers.

Volunteer Management

It sounds very corporate, but it is important these days to run organisations like a business to ensure their sustainability and particularly to manage volunteers.

The peak body in this field is Volunteering Australia with its subsidiary in this state being Volunteering Queensland (VQ). They offer great documents and templates on their websites that can be used in developing your management system for volunteers. Why duplicate documents when you can adapt ones already developed to recognised best practice standards?

Volunteering Australia – www.volunteeringaustralia.org

Volunteering Queensland – www.volunteeringqueensland.org.au

Ideally, you need to appoint a Volunteer Manager or Coordinator. This person would be responsible for interviewing, placement and planning for volunteer duties and activities within your organisation. They can have a team to help them do this but it is best to find one person to oversee this function. VQ offers training for managers and volunteers which is sometimes delivered through a local resource centre. Go to the VQ website to see if there is one near you.

Your Volunteer Management System

Having a considered and appropriate volunteer management system for your organisation is essential for several reasons:

- To reduce your risks and potentially your insurance premiums.
- To build your organisation's reputation as a great group with which to volunteer.
- To meet the requirements of the national standards outlined by Volunteering Australia on their website; and
- To meet the membership requirements of your regional volunteer resource centre (if applicable).

One of the best reasons is that once your system is adopted within your organisation, you have the processes in place to support you and your volunteers and provide consistency.

The following points of consideration have been offered by Volunteering Australia in order to develop or review policies, procedures and documentation to meet the national standards:

- Interview and employ volunteer staff in accordance with anti discrimination and equal opportunity legislation;
- Provide volunteer staff with orientation and training;
- Provide volunteer staff with a healthy and safe workplace;
- Provide appropriate and adequate insurance coverage for volunteer staff;
- Do not place volunteer staff in roles that were previously held by paid staff or have been identified as paid jobs;
- Differentiate between paid and unpaid roles;
- Define volunteer roles and develop clear job descriptions;
- Provide appropriate levels of support and management for volunteer staff;
- Provide volunteers with a copy of policies pertaining to volunteer staff;
- Ensure volunteers are not required to take up additional work during industrial disputes or paid staff shortage;
- Provide all staff with information on grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures;
- Acknowledge the rights of volunteer staff;
- Ensure that the work of volunteer staff complements but does not undermine the work of paid staff;
- Offer volunteer staff the opportunity for professional development;
- Reimburse volunteer staff for out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation;
- Treat volunteer staff as valuable team members, and advise them of the opportunities to participate in agency decisions; and
- Acknowledge the contributions of volunteer staff.

(National Volunteer Skills Centre, June 2005)

Some of the components of your **volunteer policy and procedure manual** you may consider are:

- the vision of your organisation
- your mission statement
- your definition of volunteering
- volunteer roles and position descriptions in your organisation
- volunteer rights and responsibilities
- a Code of Behaviour
- policies and procedures
- forms and records (such as application forms, agreements, personnel registers and time sheets)

The main **policy areas** for consideration are:

- confidentiality
- anti-discrimination
- workplace health and safety
- volunteer insurance
- workplace harassment
- security
- volunteer participation
- recruitment and selection
- volunteer management
- training
- communication
- record keeping
- reimbursement of out of pocket expenses
- paid/unpaid roles
- conflict resolution
- program performance review (Bundaberg Arts Centre, 2006)

Don't be daunted by this list. Check other local relevant sources for examples of their policies and procedures. Ask Council run arts facilities such as regional galleries or libraries. Approach fellow arts organisations in your region. Find out what other Local Arts Councils have done so far as volunteer management goes. There is no point in reinventing the wheel!

Managing volunteers involves three 'R's:

- **Recruit**
- **Retain**
- **Reward**

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

Defining positions and developing position descriptions prior to recruiting to your organisation is essential. The right position description may just attract the volunteer with the right skills.

Positions in Your Organisation

Have you ever defined the roles of volunteers in your organisation?

From committee members to ticket sellers and toilet scrubbers, it is important to define the roles of these volunteers to give them a sense of ownership within your organisation. Give them a position title and a badge. It is a low cost way of acknowledging their role in the organisation. Volunteers are effectively unpaid employees. A position description gives them and other volunteers or staff members a clear outline of what is expected of them in their role.

Incentives

Why would someone want to volunteer for your organisation? Aside from the importance of contributing to the arts and cultural development of your region, it is ideal to offer other incentives. These could be low cost or they could be larger scale requiring sponsorship. Some ideas are:

- Social networking opportunities such as morning teas or bus trips
- Offers to reimburse out of pocket expenses including travel to and from their volunteer commitment
- Professional and skills development opportunities

Have these clearly outlined before you begin recruiting.

Attracting Volunteers

Arts organisations often struggle to attract volunteers. Volunteer bases, particularly in small communities, are usually consumed by emergency service, social action and sporting organisations. Essential services and charities are always going to be the first port of call for many looking to volunteer.

So how do we attract volunteers to our arts organisations? We need to take the same approach that we would when we are developing a marketing campaign for an event:

- Why is my organisation important to my community?
- Who are my target audiences?
- What is my message to those target audiences?
- How do I get my campaign to those audiences?

Only you and your community can define why your organisation is vital to your region. The arts provide a framework to build social, economic, environmental and cultural cohesion and to tell those joint stories. Stand on that platform and give examples of how your organisation has built the capacity of your community.

The most obvious **target audiences** for arts organisation volunteering are:

- artists and artswomen in your region
- art supporters/ patrons/ ticket buyers
- Silent Generation; Baby Boomers; Generation X; Generation Y

Baby Boomers are the generation that is now starting to retire/semi-retire. Once they have satisfied their initial desires to travel, there will be a large, skilled volunteer workforce to tap into. All volunteers tend to have a desire to improve something about their community and to contribute to the building of the capacity of their community. However, there are some more explicit needs and desires for each audience. The marketing tools used need to communicate a message that connects to these needs and desires to attract those people to your organisation.

Below is a table that you may find useful in targeting marketing materials:

Audience	Potential Needs/ Desires	Marketing Tools	Distribution
Artists and Artsworkers	To promote their practice To share their skills and learn new skills	Flyers Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other local arts organisations • Performance venues/ theatres/ galleries • Restaurants and cafés
Art supporters/ patrons/ ticket buyers	To have more social interaction within the arts To encourage more arts activity in the community in which they can participate	Flyers Posters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance venues/ theatres/ galleries • Restaurants and cafés • Community development organisations
Silent Generation	To utilise/ share their skills To learn new skills Social interaction	Flyers Posters Sponsored ads in newspaper and on radio Community notices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior citizens groups • Retirement villages • Performance venues/ theatres/ galleries • Local newspapers, Radio
Baby Boomers	To utilise/share their skills To learn new skills Social activities Follow their desire to become an artist where work and family have previously taken their time Fill the void if retiring	Flyers Posters Sponsored ads in newspaper and on radio Community Notices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance venues/ theatres/ galleries • Restaurants and cafés • Local newspapers • Radio
Generation X	To utilise/ build their skills Work experience Social activities	Flyers Posters Sponsored ads in newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restaurants and cafés • Performance venues/ theatres/ galleries • Childcare centres • Local newspapers
Generation Y	To build their skills Work experience	Flyers Posters Text messages (would involve building a contacts list with approval for marketing materials to be sent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance venues/ theatres/ galleries • Restaurants and cafés • University/ TAFE campuses • Secondary schools *

*Inquire if any of these distribution places are willing to include a flyer in one of their mail outs or email group communications.

The previous table has been developed based on observation and experience but does not set out to be all encompassing. Use this as a tool to brainstorm the more specific needs and desires of volunteer audiences in your region.

Application process

To formalise the process you can distribute Application Forms to those wishing to volunteer with your organisation. This can help you with a record of:

- contact information
- the applicant’s qualifications, interests and skills
- any health issues to be aware of
- the applicant’s preferences for the work options available in your organisation.

A formal application process shows potential volunteers that you are well-organised and that you take volunteering seriously.

Interviewing Volunteers

Interviewing is a process that benefits both the organisation and the volunteer. You do not want to sign up a volunteer who is not a match for your organisation. They need to be committed to the mission of your organisation and likewise, you need to be offering something that interests and benefits them as an individual. Run through the different positions offered by your organisation to find the right match of skills, experience and volunteer needs.

Be prepared to say no to a volunteer that doesn't seem to be the right match by having other places to refer them to that are more appropriate for their needs and interests. Be generous about guiding them to the right path for volunteering. Other organisations just might do the same for you.

Appointing Volunteers

When you and the volunteer have found the right place for them within your organisation, you need to formalise this. A **Volunteer Agreement** is advised to ensure that both parties acknowledge the rights and responsibilities of volunteers. It also needs to outline your policy stances and reinforce any relevant legal and legislative issues. For example, if your organisation works with children, you need to outline your process for ensuring that your volunteers have a current Working with Children Blue Card from the Queensland Government.

A **Volunteer Agreement** would contain the following:

- A description of the arrangement between... (the organisation) and.. (the individual)
- A statement of appreciation of the services about to be rendered
- Nature of the task
- Benefit of this task to the organisation
- Time to be committed
- Induction to be provided and Volunteer Handbook or other printed information
- What the organisation will commit to do for the volunteer
- Standards expected
- Person to whom the volunteer will be reporting
- In-service or other training opportunities that will be offered including health & safety
- Any expenses that will be covered, or that the volunteer will need to cover
- Any specialist clothing
- What to do if there is a dispute
- A statement of commitment that the volunteer is undertaking
- Space for signatures of the organisation's representative and the volunteer
- and the date.

It is important to get the nuts and bolts of a volunteer management system right. We don't need to do all of the work ourselves. Many experienced organisations are willing to share resources. A system that effectively attracts volunteers to your organisation and in turn supports and nurtures these important people who carry our organisations is certainly one well worth putting the time into. Happy volunteers lead to a healthy organisation.

RETAIN VOLUNTEERS

If your community activity involves volunteering (including pro-bono work and in-kind support) then showing how much you value the efforts of those volunteers becomes an important consideration. Acknowledging the dollar value of their labour is part of this process. It highlights their gift of time.

Value Volunteers

It is a worthwhile exercise to cost your volunteers' efforts by the hour to give you an idea of the value they add to your event or organisation. Knowing the value of your volunteers and their work can be important when it comes to applying for grants for your activities. It strengthens your argument for funding support and lets the funding partner know that for every dollar they are putting in, your group is making a matching contribution.

- If a local professional or tradesman completes some pro-bono work for your community group, how much would your group have normally paid for that work - \$50 an hour? \$100? \$200? \$500?
- What if 10 or 20 volunteers help you landscape and revegetate along the local riverbank? Their efforts would probably total several thousand dollars.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) values volunteers at what they would cost to replace.

- Firstly they match volunteer activities to occupations, working out a weighted average earnings, and then have the number of persons engaged in each of the volunteer activities used as "weights", the ABS worked out the average earnings estimate for volunteers as \$15.90 per hour in 1999/2000.
- This figure is still used by many volunteering organisations – including Volunteering Australia.

Check with the funding body you are approaching what measure they use.

Know Your Volunteers' Value When Applying for Grants

Use the ABS estimate to cost out how much your volunteer hours are worth. This figure is your in-kind contribution. It will show that you are making a real contribution to your funding partnership.

For example: If you have four volunteers working on a project two days a week for four weeks, that would result in the project having a "volunteer value" of just over \$4,070. (Four volunteers X eight days X eight hours per day X \$15.90).

Factor in any pro-bono advice you may be receiving to assist with the project. This would be done at the rate that the practitioner would charge in their other work in the market place.

For example: If a public relations company was offering two hours a week for four weeks, the value might be closer to \$1600-1800 than the \$127 calculated at \$15.90 per hour.

REWARD VOLUNTEERS

It is one thing to recruit your volunteers, another to retain them. How do you keep them interested in your organisation and happy within their role? The main requirement is to provide meaningful work. Most volunteers like to be kept busy and to feel useful. The best way to facilitate this is to ensure your Volunteer Manager knows each volunteer and can accommodate their needs.

Volunteers like to feel they are a part of a team. They desire and deserve respect and acknowledgement. Team building activities like social gatherings and outings can go a long way to helping a volunteer feel valued within your organisation. Rewarding volunteers for their efforts can be reflected in many ways:

- Name badges
- Award or certificate presentations during National Volunteer Week (held in May) or on International Volunteer Day (5th December)
- "Volunteer of the Week" or "Month"
- Profiling volunteers in your newsletters
- Social events such as Christmas Parties or social meetings a few times a year
- Put on a video night
- Make sure there are a few drinks, nibbles, barbecue or a winding-down party planned after the volunteer-based partnership event.
- Try and build team spirit - ways of doing this could include providing them with team T-shirts for their event, or complimentary gloves for an outdoor exercise.

Recognise volunteers

- List their names where appropriate – be it in a newsletter, annual report, on your website.
- Thank them publicly in speeches for example, or by name dropping. For more information on name dropping, refer to the Name Dropping Help Sheet at the Our Community website.

Respect volunteers and their work

- Give them the training they need. Help them learn new things.
- Talk to them.
- Supervise them properly and offer them resources and support.
- Demand that they do a good job.
- Consult them. Ask them to suggest other volunteers, for example. Ask their opinion on the experience. Brainstorm for their ideas.
- Tell them about the complaints and grievance resolution procedures in case they have a complaint.
- Challenge them. Take them seriously and find them tasks that produce worthwhile results. You have to allocate volunteers' time just as if they were paid staff.
- Work their skills and abilities. If volunteers have certain skills and abilities, use them for the partnership project's best benefit. It will also give them confidence because they will know what they are doing.

Survey Volunteers

- Do you survey your volunteers?
- Are they satisfied with the way you engage them?
- Have they any suggestions for improved conditions?
- Are there creative ideas for this project or any other?
- How could this process assist you in fundraising?

What you learn from your volunteers will be valuable. The process will increase their sense of being valued and make them good ambassadors. Their word of mouth promotion of your organisation will attract more volunteers.

For a sample of a volunteers' satisfaction survey, refer to the Help Sheet *Volunteers and Your Partnership – Volunteers' Satisfaction Survey*, available at the partnerships Brokerage Service section of the Our Community website.

This survey can be handed out to volunteers after they have finished a task, working bee or volunteer activity. It should not be handed out every single time they complete something, as that may become tedious and have the effect of dissuading them from helping out!

A good survey can provide you with helpful feedback on what went right – or wrong – with your partnership's volunteer activity so you can improve next time, or remedy problems that may have arisen.

References

National Volunteer Skills Centre, June 2005, *'Information Sheet: Model Code of Practice for Organisations Involving Volunteer Staff'*, Volunteering Australia, Melbourne.

Bundaberg City Council, 2006, *'Bundaberg Arts Centre Volunteer Program'*.

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