

community-led solutions



New safety regulations and procedures mean that many organisations face challenges as their volunteer programs resume. Local communities are a wealth of knowledge, and the best ideas often come from those with lived experience. Why not engage your volunteers and community to find solutions to the challenges you may face?



Volunteer programs are resuming. Most are doing so in a different way.

The future looks different for a lot of volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs), local councils and volunteers. There are new safety regulations and procedures, increased risks, health concerns and reduced capacity.

Seeking input and support from your volunteers and local community increases the likelihood that programs and volunteers will return. It also builds community momentum and capacity for recovery.

We know that creating meaningful opportunities for volunteers builds organisational and individual capacity. We also know that Tasmanians rally to help when help is needed.

Why not engage your community to find solutions to the challenges you may face? It's a great way to keep local people engaged or re-engage them through the recovery process.



Did you know?

- Many VIOs and councils are now looking at redesigning programs and volunteer roles.
- Volunteers join programs and organisations for a variety of reasons. Tasmanian research shows that 48% of people who volunteer do so to contribute to community, and 42% want to support a cause.
- During a crisis, trends show an increase in volunteer participation - people want to help out during a crisis.
- COVID-19 has increased the risk of feeling isolated and disconnected.

This resource offers some simple steps on how to drive community-led efforts for successful volunteer programs post-COVID-19.

Community-led solutions

5 Simple steps to drive community-led effort:

1

Define the challenge, issue or problem

What is stopping you from re-starting volunteer programs or re-engaging volunteers? Develop a deep understanding of the problem. Do your research and ask those involved in all aspects of volunteering.

2

Create a ‘how might we’ question

How can you turn this challenge into an opportunity? Develop questions that will be broad enough for lots of creative ideas but narrow enough to provide people with some helpful boundaries to keep them focused.

3

Brainstorm

Use your ‘how might we’ question to engage and generate ideas with your volunteers and community. Think about workshops – in-person or online – interviews or surveys. Have a look at the consultation resources. Encourage as many ideas as possible—think quantity over quality!

Tip: Small groupwork is beneficial. People build on each other’s ideas and can get creative ideas. If in-person is not an option, try online meetings and breakout rooms.

4

Identify options

Work together to identify the ideas that are viable and put some detail around them. How would they be implemented?

5

Test your solution

Trial your solutions with the intention to review, refine and improve them. These are new ideas, so it’s important to agree to review them in the future.

Community-led solutions (cont'd)

Example scenario

Lakeside Community Garden want to restart their volunteering program post COVID-19. They called their volunteers and announced reopening the gardening program on Tuesday from 11–1 as usual. They promoted this on their Facebook page, but no one showed up.

- 1 Define the challenge, issue or problem.** The Garden Coordinator called around to speak with the volunteers who attended prior to COVID-19 to determine why they were not re-engaging with the program. They expressed concerns about being in close proximity to others while volunteering and the health risk sharing tools might pose to them.
- 2 Create a 'how might we' question.** The Coordinator worked with the volunteers to look at a way to flip these concerns into opportunities for change. They agreed on the following question: 'How might we create a safe environment at the garden so we can still participate without health risks or safety concern?'
- 3 Brainstorm.** The coordinator ran two sessions (online and in-person) with groups of volunteers and non-volunteer community members. During these sessions there were 6 people in attendance and the sessions were short and sharp. The groups fired off lots of ideas and the coordinator continued to prompt and record all ideas encouraging lots of ideas rather than the 'right' ideas.
- 4 Identify options.** Volunteers were invited to another session to discuss the ideas and prioritise the suitable and manageable solutions that they felt would help create a safe environment at the garden.
- 5 Test the solution.** The following Tuesday a number of volunteers tested the ideas.
 - They agreed that volunteering with others for social interaction was important but decided on one volunteer per garden row.
 - The coordinator washed all tools with disinfectant before the volunteers arrived and each volunteer was allocated a set. These were re-cleaned before use by another volunteer.
 - Instead of one long session they decided to trial a few shorter sessions.
 - The coordinator also purchased individual gloves for all volunteers.

Two weeks later, on review, the volunteers expressed satisfaction with the changes and found that they began to enjoy the shorter, more frequent sessions. They decided that the one volunteer per row was not required and the 1.5m distance was enough to make them feel safe.

Need more help? Volunteering Tasmania's **Safeguarding Project** is focused on supporting councils and their volunteer communities. As part of the project, we've consulted with three councils regarding their experiences during COVID-19. The summary of findings is available at the link below, where you can also find resources to support councils, VIOs and volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic and into recovery.

See: www.volunteeringtas.org.au/covid-19-informationandresources/

Reach out! If you'd like to chat about additional resources, please get in touch with us by emailing Amy at amyb@volunteeringtas.org.au

