



## Engaging Newly Arrived Migrants in Volunteering

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The Volunteer Management Activity aims to increase opportunities for people to participate in the social and economic life of their broader community through volunteering. Volunteering Tasmania are using a co-design approach to work together with key stakeholders to help understand the challenges and needs of newly arrived migrants and identify and implement strategies to support them into volunteering.

### Background

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The project commenced in August 2021, and by the end of the year, initial stakeholder consultation had been undertaken with a total of 32 individuals and organisations State-wide. The consultation involved newly arrived migrants who were volunteering as well as those unsuccessful in gaining volunteer roles, volunteer involving organisations and specialist multicultural agencies.

At the same time, a Volunteer Network Group was established with State-wide representation from newly arrived migrants, specialist agencies who provide support for migrants, and volunteer involving organisations. The group meet regularly from February to August 2022, following a co-design process to work through the challenges facing newly arrived migrants wishing to volunteer, and for volunteer involving organisations engaging and supporting those volunteers. This has involved group members sharing their own experiences as well as undertaking further community consultation.

The group designed a survey which was distributed in March 2022 and received 37

responses from newly arrived migrants and 34 responses from volunteer involving organisations. To gain deeper understanding of some of the common issues which started to arise, the group then undertook additional conversations with their stakeholders. At least 20 individuals, both migrants and organisations, were consulted through this process to share their experiences and thoughts on improving the experience of volunteering for migrants.

Information from all these sources was considered and discussed when the group met in Campbell Town in March 2022. During this process, common issues arose across all data collection methods and several themes were identified.





## Common Themes

During the co-design process and community consultations, the following themes emerged when discussing challenges and opportunities:

- Terminology – definitions and understanding of volunteering
- Onboarding processes – recruitment, induction, training
- Expectations – by volunteers and volunteer involving organisations
- Motivations
- Resources and supports
- Systems, policies and procedures
- Racism, bias and prejudice
- Organisational culture



### 1. Terminology

- Misunderstanding what volunteering means in Australia, unfamiliar term for many
- Confusion between work experience, student placement, internship, and volunteering
- Context of first introduction into volunteering is key in understanding concept
- Informal volunteering not widely recognised
- Volunteering may be perceived as working for free, slave labour, exploitation
- English colloquialism, phrases, cultural context

time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain

### 2. Onboarding

- Complex, time consuming and confusing processes
- Language barrier and digital literacy barrier
- Whose needs are being met through current processes?
- Are the stated requirements actually necessary e.g. Australian drivers licence
- Forms often only ask for country of birth and language spoken rather than heritage and ethnicity, so VIOs might not be meeting cultural needs of volunteers
- It's not clear how to look for volunteering opportunities, let alone apply
- Police check and WWVP application forms very hard to complete and costly. Sometimes need details from past 5 years including police checks from other countries
- Feedback is often not provided to unsuccessful applicants, which leads to discouragement
- VIOs need additional time (and cost) to onboard migrants and to provide ongoing support
- Too theoretical, not enough practical

### 3. Expectations

#### Volunteer Involving Organisations

- Reliability and commitment
- Code of conduct, acceptable behaviour
- Assume abilities based on ethnicity
- The 'right' level of English or a certain 'type' of volunteer
- Roles promoted with position descriptions and require high level applications
- Certain length of time committed before giving reference/certificate

#### Volunteers

- Training, mentorship
- To feel safe, basic WHS
- Sometimes feel exploited if too much is asked of them or if no flexibility
- Sense of belonging, to be included
- Meaningful volunteer roles
- To have qualifications recognised in Aus.

Respect us and trust us



#### 4. Motivations of volunteers

- To gain a reference, a certificate of volunteering or points towards visa
- To access opportunities for paid employment
- Helping out in community, giving back
- To expand social networks and connections, friendships
- Opportunities to practice English and improve social skills
- To learn new skills
- Experience in Australian workplace culture
- It is okay for volunteers to seek personal benefit
- Motivations may change
- Can be values clash in motivations from migrants/non migrants
- Many migrants come from cultures with a more collective mindset and see giving back to community as everyone's responsibility (which we might call informal volunteering)

Volunteering can be a great gateway to Australian society – for those who understand what it actually is

#### 5. Resources and supports

- Checks and requirements often expensive, time consuming and complicated
- Extra support needed to fill out forms – police check, WWVP, application, registration
- Volunteers shouldn't be out of pocket for costs e.g. transport - but what about consideration for time? Especially when being encouraged to contribute to an advisory group etc.
- Appreciation e.g. certificates, newsletters, mention at staff meeting etc
- Recognition e.g. award ceremony, significant milestones
- Identity and belonging e.g. pin, name badge, keyring, lanyard
- VIOs need support to know what to do with information around ethnicity and culture

#### 6. Systems, policies and procedures

- Not asking about ethnicity assumes people need to adjust themselves to fit into that workplace and their norms
- Western culture/habit to fill out forms for everything
- Might be unclear what pathway is available for volunteers who may be interested in paid employment
- VIOs often set up to support a certain type of volunteer, now need to adapt

#### 7. Racism, bias, prejudice

- There has been a significant increase in reporting racist complaints to Equal Opportunity Tas in past 3 years
- Invisibility felt by migrants if their needs are not recognised or met
- Blurred lines between volunteering and paid roles may lead to feelings of exploitation
- Organisations often don't measure cultural diversity so how do they know if improving
- Ignorance or not willing to try and understand/accommodate cultural needs of migrants
- Use phrases about feelings and behaviour rather than asking if someone has experienced racism
- Subconscious bias where people naturally prefer people from same background as own
- Migrants may feel need to change name to be more accepted and have access to opportunities
- How to name up some behaviours as racism?
- People perceive racism differently according to their culture and life experience
- Overt racism is no longer fashionable or easily observable, but it still finds expression and can still do long-term harm
- It is impossible that everyone knows everything about other cultures/backgrounds. It's okay to ask about ethnicity/origin country/tradition as long as people are friendly and open-minded
- When migrants are given unequal opportunities and access to resources, and less communication can make the volunteer experience a feeling of racism and bias


Subtle racism and bias is death from 1000 cuts



## 8. Organisational culture

Need to be open to a range of volunteering relationships, not just what VIO thinks it wants or needs, or what it has traditionally included

- Does the VIO prioritise the volunteer? e.g. induct in person, use plain English
- Need paradigm shift to recognise cultural diversity is a strength in workplace
- An individual needs to feel comfortable and safe to bring whole self to workplace
- Australian Public holidays are based on Christianity and not applicable to many cultures and religions
- Eating food in front of people in some cultures is not polite
- As more migrants are accepted into the volunteering community, the circle will become more diverse, inclusive and forward-looking



Friendly greetings and small talks within the group make me feel connected... and willing to stay with the organisation

## Brainstorm Solutions – Prototype Ideas

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The next phase of co-design involved the Volunteer Network Group brainstorming a plethora of ideas and solutions to address the themed challenges and barriers. Using a voting process, the ideas were narrowed down until just two ideas were prioritised and selected. Two sub-groups of the Volunteer Network Group were then formed, to develop each idea into a concept prototype which could be tested with community.

The two prototype solutions were tested with a total of 28 migrants and 19 volunteer-involving organisations to ensure they would be effective and achievable. Feedback received was very positive and indicated that the sector believed the concept prototypes would both be very useful tools to help support inclusion for migrants in volunteering.

Working groups will now be established to review feedback received to date and progress the development of both resources. This will include further refinement of the questions asked within the video resources, and content slides in the PowerPoint resource. Further testing of the resources will be undertaken with networks, and through the CoP.

## Next Steps – Community of Practice

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Ongoing support and connections will be provided to the Volunteer Network Group and broader interested community, through a Community of Practice (CoP) which will be facilitated by Volunteering Tasmania. The CoP will help improve the awareness and capacity of organisations to engage newly arrived migrants in volunteering opportunities.

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*Vision Statement: To support sector and community change to improve the pathways and experience of volunteering for newly arrived migrants*

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