

Volunteer Management Cycle

FOR VOLUNTEER-INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS

Planning

In this stage, you develop the position descriptions of your volunteer roles.

The position description outlines duties, tasks and activities involved within each volunteering role. It should include:

- Position title
- Key tasks and responsibilities
- Who the volunteer reports to
- Where the position is located
- The time commitment and frequency of attendance
- Training and support
- Benefits of volunteering (out-of-pocket expense reimbursement, professional development, etc.).

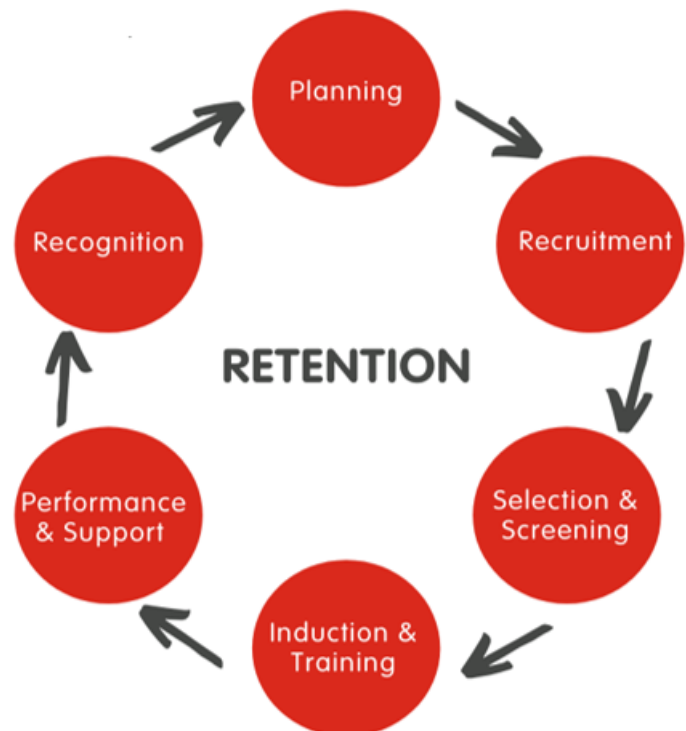
Recruitment

Maintaining your volunteer pool can be challenging – people come, and people go. You will find that your organisation needs to recruit replacement volunteers.

Writing an advertisement

When preparing to advertise the position to potential volunteers, you need to factor in:

- Statement of need: Is there a problem?
- Solution: Can this job help solve it?
- Fears/Questions: Will I be capable of helping?
- Benefits: What's in it for me?
- Contact point: How do I get involved?



Recruitment involves identifying sources of suitable candidates for volunteer positions and understanding how best to approach these sources. The following tools will assist in recruiting volunteers.

Make sure you tell people more about the need than about logistics. Potential volunteers will first decide whether the organisation is worth volunteering for, then decide if they can fit it into their schedule.

Selection and screening

Interview all potential volunteers, aiming to match each person to the right role. Generally, it is the volunteer manager who conducts interviews with potential volunteers.

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Identify the potential volunteer's skills, abilities, interests, wishes and availability to the responsibilities and tasks of the role. This is an important step in getting the right person for the organisation and getting the job done. Sometimes this involves creating or adapting a role for the right person! A person with the right attitude and skill set can often bring new ways of achieving goals.

After the interview, record the information gathered, reflect on this information, and carry out any follow-up, as required. All confidential information should be stored securely. Keep the prospective volunteer updated with the outcome of their recruitment process.

Reference checks and compliance checks are likely to be required prior to appointment with the organisation, just as for employed staff.

Upon appointment, provide the volunteer with a Volunteer Agreement which outlines the key points of what the volunteer and the organisation can expect from each other. This agreement should reference the relevant position description and should be signed by both parties.

Induction and Training

The induction process supports new volunteers to take up their role as quickly and effectively as possible. It should:

- outline what the volunteer will do in the first couple of weeks and over the first three months, to help them understand their volunteer role
- include orientation of the volunteer to the organisation and workplace, personal introductions to all team members, and showing them where to find things.

Remember: Induction is a vital step in retaining your volunteers. It is not merely giving them a heap of policies to read and acknowledge.

An induction package should include:

- Organisational chart
- Organisation information – contacts, trade hours, security access information
- Relevant policies and procedures
- Code of conduct
- Workplace benefits – tea, coffee, volunteer thank you events, etc.

Performance and Support

Volunteer managers are generally mentors to volunteers, coaching them along the way, supporting them to make the most of their volunteering opportunity by:

- Encouraging the volunteer
- Helping build self-confidence
- Offering ideas and suggestions
- Leading by example – teaching new ways/approaches
- Sharing knowledge
- Identifying expectations of performance
- Advising on behaviours and attitudes
- Managing performance (formal and informal)

Helpful support can be the following:

- Sharing work, challenges, fears, ideas
- Letting them know they are on the right track
- Having open communication
- Making time to provide support – being accessible and available
- Knowing when to step in or hold back
- Offering a chance to clarify ideas and stages of work

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Performance challenges may arise when:

- the volunteer role is unclear
- the volunteer contribution is not recognised
- the volunteer isn't aware that they are not performing as expected
- the manager/support person does not take the time required to listen to volunteers
- there is no opportunity for training and development
- a person doesn't adapt well or cope well with change
- a person doesn't have the skill or knowledge in how to do the job
- the resources/equipment are not provided to complete the role.

Two key things that help retain volunteers are:

- matching a volunteer's availability to the role requirement
- being flexible around volunteer commitments

Recognition

Recognising the contribution of volunteers is an essential part of volunteer management.

Recognition should be timely and meaningful to the volunteer – celebratory occasions like National Volunteer Week, International Volunteer Day, Christmas, New Year, or the organisations founding date/birthday are often a great time to host an event or a thank you activity for volunteers.

Be mindful that some volunteers are comfortable with public recognition, whereas some volunteers avoid publicity and would prefer personal thanks.

Following best practice assists with overall retention of volunteers.

Some volunteers can give longer periods of time, whereas some may only be able to provide a short timeframe.

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