

# Acknowledging Volunteers

The purpose of this quick guide is to outline the reasons to acknowledge volunteer contributions and how to recognise volunteers in a meaningful way.

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## Why acknowledging volunteer contribution is important

Volunteers play a vital role in our communities and without them many services wouldn't exist. Volunteer contribution should be recognised and valued, whatever their personal reasons for volunteering are - giving back to community, learning new skills, building connections, a step towards employment. When volunteers feel appreciated, they are more likely to feel connected to their volunteering with your organisation and stay engaged longer.

Acknowledging volunteer contributions and how they link to your organisation's values and objectives, clearly demonstrates the value your volunteers bring.

## What type of acknowledgement should I provide?

You can ask your volunteers how they would like to be recognised for their contribution, this will help guide you to ensure the types of acknowledgements are inclusive, reflective and appropriate for your team of volunteers.

You can ask through:

- An annual volunteer survey
- Asking during the volunteer interview
- Asking during the volunteer induction process

## National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day

Celebrate your volunteers during National Volunteer Week, Australia's largest annual event celebrating the contribution of volunteers. Held annually, during the third week of May, connect with your state volunteer peak body to find out what is happening locally. International Volunteer Day happens annually on 5th of December and is another opportunity to celebrate with your volunteers.

## Some ideas for acknowledging volunteers

### Low cost

- Saying thank you
- Sending a message on their birthday or on the anniversary of their volunteering
- Showing an interest in their lives, remembering pets, family, holiday plans and renovations
- Newsletters
- Acknowledging holidays and festivals of other cultures in newsletters or emails
- Email updates
- Facebook page/group (may require time for moderating the group, or trusted volunteer moderators)
- Facebook/social media/print media stories about volunteers
- Inclusion of volunteer contributions to your annual report or other organisational documents
- Making sure staff are ready for volunteers when they arrive, have work for them to do, that volunteers have an available desk or work station, etc. or letting a volunteer know if you don't need them that day.
- Acknowledgement by staff, managers, CEO
- Nomination for external awards
- Sharing stories recognising the impact volunteers have made
- Postcards/thank you card/mail out including statistics about volunteer impact

- Obtaining feedback from volunteers demonstrates that you value their contribution. This can be done in several ways such as:
  - Team meetings - inclusion in decision making e.g. by forming a volunteer reference group, holding consultation sessions and feedback surveys (and responding to/acting on their feedback)
  - Reviews/feedback, meetings or phone calls
  - Asking how volunteers like to be shown appreciation
  - Asking about their goals, satisfaction levels, future intentions
  - Providing a safe space that is respectful for people to identify and communicate their inclusion needs

Low cost gift ideas can include finding an inspirational quote, or symbolic gestures like a gift of seeds or seedlings saying "thank you for helping our organisation grow" or lifesaver lollies with "thanks for being a lifesaver" (Pinterest has lots of volunteer appreciation ideas).

### Medium cost

- Monthly/quarterly meeting, light lunch/morning tea
- Information and training sessions or other professional development opportunities
- Coffee vouchers, gift cards, instore discounts, meal vouchers (source donations/sponsorship from local businesses where possible)
- Certificates
- Plaques
- Holiday cards and gifts
- Merchandise, corporate uniforms, lanyards, name badges
- Service pins
- Personalised cards signed by clients and staff
- Certificates recognising individual volunteer's contribution
- Providing options for parking, travel reimbursement, meal allowances, etc
- Tickets for sporting events or movies
- Volunteer mugs, chocolates, figurines

## Some ideas for acknowledging volunteers (continued)

### *High cost (but worth it)*

- Events/functions/awards/Christmas party/National Volunteer Week
- Service awards/awards related to impact/contribution (not just number of years) including a perpetual plaque or honour board placed in a prominent location in your organisation
- Volunteer conferences
- Dedicated paid Volunteer Coordinator/Manager and adequate resourcing of the volunteer department and program

Volunteer acknowledgement is not just a “nice thing to do” – in a sector where there is increasing competition for volunteers, investing in volunteers and showing they are appreciated will save you time and money. As well as specific acknowledgement activities ensuring your volunteer program is accessible, inclusive and diverse and respects volunteers demonstrates how much you value volunteers and their role in your community.

# Acknowledgement

*This document includes excerpts reproduced by kind permission from Volunteering Queensland & Volunteering Australia*



*The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.*

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