



volunteering
TASMANIA

Innovation Series: Connection Workshop

As humans and primates, we are fundamentally social beings. We require connection for so many things in life and research shows that connection is fundamental for a good life. A strong social network or community makes us more resilient in times of need and supports positive well-being. Research has found that the quality of connection, the quantity of relationships and the positive resonance that connection has plays a big part into the resilience of our communities.

However, the impacts of COVID-19 over the past two years have changed the way we connect. COVID-19 has made us rethink and get creative in the way we connect with each other, including the way we connect with volunteers. While physical distancing remains important to our everyday lives, ensuring we are flexible and adaptable about social connection is important.

During Covid-19 lockdowns in 2020, 70% of Tasmanian volunteers were stood down and as of April 2021, 2.3 million volunteers in Australia have not re-engaged in volunteering. For those that have re-engaged, connection to their organisations or groups may look and feel different.

Feeling connected may not be the sole purpose participants engage with a service, organisation, group, or cause, it is the by-product of their involvement and the reason they remain.

So how do we ensure volunteers remain connected?

1. Make it fun: try activities that produce higher levels of connectivity between people. Encourage laughter and creativity.
2. Mix it up: come together differently, over different tasks. Work on something together, or link independent projects that you can work on in the same space (physical or virtual).
3. Simulate: experiment with swapping experiences that you would normally do in person to virtual.
4. Learn and nurture: small connections will be made, nurture them so they can continue.

For More Info:

OECD Better Life Index: oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/community/

Centre for Social Impact: [CSI.edu.au/media/uploads/csi-covid_factsheet_lonliness.pdf](https://csi.edu.au/media/uploads/csi-covid_factsheet_lonliness.pdf)

Emergency Volunteering: emergencyvolunteering.com.au/act/yourcommunity/what-is-community-resilience





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Inspiration for different ways to connect

The above formula encourages the 'threads of connection' to spread throughout your organisation/group activities. For further inspiration to connect and 'friend-raise' check out the below ideas:

- Vertical Concert
- Lasagna Love
- Eden project – Big Lunch
- Pen pals
- Care packages: put together packages for your volunteers that might have crafts, or ways to relax in them. Encourage them to send in photos of them using the packages.
- Online themed dinner events: put together a theme, e.g. Mexican restaurant. Everyone makes a meal and sits together on zoom celebrating the festivities.
- Buddy system: link volunteers with other volunteers to allow them to build a connection and check in with each other.
- Online quizzes and game events
- Online book clubs
- Street libraries – many communities have free library boxes on the sidewalk. Make a time to meet with other volunteers, choose books, review and recommend books.
- Watching parties: line up a movie for everyone to watch and login to zoom at the same time.
- Virtual Choirs
- Video diaries: ask volunteers to send in small snap shots of them volunteering.

Links and resources

1. <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/community/>
2. https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/csi-covid_factsheet_loneliness.pdf
3. <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2021/social-connection-and-well-being-during-covid-19/>
4. <https://emergencyvolunteering.com.au/act/yourcommunity/what-is-community-resilience>

The way food can bring us together and make people feel connected:

1. <https://www.lasagnalove.org/>
2. <https://www.edenprojectcommunities.com/the-big-lunch>

Exploring different ways to run events in a new covid era:

1. <https://liveforlivemusic.com/news/vertical-concerts-ukraine-video/>

Places to build in connection:

1. <https://streetlibrary.org.au/>

Advice on how to ensure your gathering online and offline are meaningful:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yLjrYijllw>
2. https://www.ted.com/talks/priya_parker_how_to_create_meaningful_connections_while_apart

