

# Developing Volunteer Roles

The purpose of this quick guide is to provide information to help you develop volunteer roles that are meaningful, purposeful and mutually beneficial to both your organisation and volunteers.

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## What is a volunteer role?

A volunteer role should reflect the values and objectives of your organisation. It should never be a role to replace paid staff and is generally undertaken for 15 hours or less per week. It may be that all roles in your organisation are volunteer roles or that some parts of your organisation run volunteer programs with volunteers involved.

## Why develop a meaningful and purposeful volunteer role?

A volunteer role provides a volunteer with clear expectations and responsibilities. It helps identify support needs and accessibility requirements. Volunteers bring a variety of skills, experiences and perspectives to your organisation, adding value to both the volunteer role and organisation. Developing a volunteer role shouldn't be a generic approach, but an opportunity to be creative and look at different approaches to volunteering. Volunteer roles that are flexible and adaptable will lead to more fulfilled and valued volunteers, an increased diversity in the volunteer program and volunteers who stay engaged longer.

## Planning for volunteer involvement

Assess your organisation's reasons for engaging volunteers and realistic ability to support them in their role. Begin by determining the following and if you answer 'yes' to all, you are ready to start developing a meaningful and purposeful volunteer role:

- Does the role benefit both the volunteer and the organisation?
- Will the role be 15 hours or less per week?
- Are there effective management supports in place for the volunteer?
- Does the role add value and not replace paid staff?
- Will the role provide opportunity for the volunteer to benefit in some way? and
- Is there flexibility in the role regarding times and days of the week?

## How to develop a meaningful and purposeful volunteer role?

People want to gain valid and valuable experiences, by volunteering with organisations that match their values. Clearly demonstrate how the role will support the organisation's values.

Be open to discussing a role with volunteers who don't 'fit' the role criteria, this can be an opportunity to tailor a volunteer role to suit a person's skills, passions and abilities.

## What to include in a volunteer role description?

A well written role description is a valuable tool to recruit volunteers and highlights the reasons why a person should volunteer with your organisation. Taking the time to create a meaningful and purposeful volunteer role description, will attract volunteers who bring the right aptitude, skills and experiences to the role.

A volunteer role description provides clear expectations of the role, sets boundaries for the volunteer, and should include the following:

### Role title

Reflecting the role undertaken e.g. homework tutor, café assistant, opshop assistant

### Role purpose and description

Provides prospective volunteers with an overview of the role and why it is needed. It explains how the role supports the values and objectives of the organisation. Benefits to the volunteer can also be highlighted e.g. training opportunities, volunteer reimbursement, support and resources provided.

### Location

Define where the volunteering will take place e.g. onsite, remotely, or service address

### Time commitment

What is the required number of hours for the role; is it ongoing, once off or a micro- volunteer role? Can there be flexibility with how it is carried out? e.g. 5 hrs spread across 2 days

### Key responsibilities

A volunteer should be clear about what the role requirements are and what is expected of them. Outline as many responsibilities as possible e.g. specific tasks, participation in meetings, other staff and volunteers they may be working with.

### Skills and experiences

Are there specific skills or experiences required for the role? Make sure anything stated is necessary for the role, rather than a generic list of requirements.

### Background checks

State what background checks are necessary for the role and why. These can be a barrier for people to volunteer, let volunteers know what support is in place to apply for the checks.

### Inclusion and diversity

Volunteer roles should be accessible for all potential volunteers, with an equitable process in place. You can do this by:

- using clear and easily understood English-keep it simple
- having online and hard copy formats available
- using inclusive language e.g. 'people from all backgrounds and all abilities are welcomed and encouraged to apply'
- focussing on what people can bring to a role
- highlighting role flexibility e.g. time, days of the week and tasks
- being open to tailoring roles by having potential volunteers guide what their role might be to suit them, provide some options if they're not sure, including visual images
- demonstrating a willingness to make changes and be inclusive for genuine engagement e.g. 'our organisation wants to be more inclusive, join us to help us frame an organisation where you would like to volunteer'

# Acknowledgement

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