
Code of Practice for Organisations involving Volunteers and Mentors

Approved by Board : 1 SEP 2019
Next Review Date : 1 SEP 2020
Accountability : Chief Executive Officer

This code has been endorsed by Volunteering Australia

In order to enhance the volunteers and mentors experience, and comply with legislation and duty of care, an organisation which involves volunteers and mentors agrees to;

- Interview and engage volunteer staff in accordance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation;
- provide volunteer staff with orientation and training;
- provide volunteer staff with a healthy and safe workplace;
- not place volunteer staff in roles that were previously held by paid staff or have been identified as paid jobs;
- differentiate between paid and unpaid role;
- define volunteer roles and develop clear job descriptions;
- provide appropriate levels of support and management for volunteer staff;
- provide volunteers and mentors with a copy of policies pertaining to volunteer staff;
- ensure volunteers and mentors are not required to take up additional work during industrial dispute or paid staff shortage;
- provide all staff with information on grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures;
- acknowledge the rights of volunteer staff;
- ensure that the work of volunteer staff complements but does not undermine the work of paid staff;
- offer volunteer staff the opportunity for professional development;
- reimburse volunteer staff for approved out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation;
- treat volunteer staff as valuable team members and advise them of the opportunities to participate in agency decisions;
- acknowledge the contributions of volunteer staff;
- ensure that all voluntary work is undertaken on a voluntary basis and without coercion;
- offer volunteers and mentors work opportunities appropriate to their skills, experience, and aspirations;
- maintain written policies and implement procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of volunteers and mentors, including maintaining appropriate current volunteer Personal

Accident Insurance and Public Liability Insurance which includes volunteer workers (refer to Fact Sheet: Insurance for Organisations Involving volunteers and mentors for further information);

- maintain policies and implement procedures in compliance with all legislation pertaining to volunteer workers. In particular, the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000, and any other legislation that is relevant to volunteer workers;
- ensure the tasks and activities undertaken by volunteers and mentors benefit the community and that volunteers do not derive financial gain for themselves.

Keeping Volunteers and Mentors

Once a person has shown an interest in volunteering, the key is to keep them active. Six ways to keep great volunteers and mentors working and coming back year after year are;

1. Be mindful of their time. They may only be able to work a few hours at a time due to family or work commitments.
2. Don't expect more than they can offer. People have limitations, both financially and physically. If they know they can't do a specific job, respect their limits and allow them to perform tasks they are comfortable with.
3. Show appreciation. Make sure everyone who volunteers knows how much you appreciate their service. They choose to be there.
4. Show them their work has purpose. Show them why they are needed.
5. Introduce volunteers and mentors to the leaders of the organisation. This allows the leaders to meet those who support their cause and allows the volunteers and mentors to meet those responsible for what they are doing.
6. Showcase their talents. If you have a volunteer who continually goes above and beyond what is expected, recognize his or her commitment within the organisation and publicly.

Volunteers are often the life force of an organisation. Finding and keeping good volunteers and mentors will help keep your organisation productive and benefiting those who rely on it.

Best Practice in Volunteer Management

Even the smallest not-for-profit organisation can achieve best practice in the management of its volunteers. "Best practice" in managing volunteers does not mean you need to have formal volunteer management practices in place or an extensive procedures manual, but you do need planning and sound processes. Best practice is about how well your organisation can support its volunteers so that they feel comfortable working in your organisation. Here are some best practice ideas;

1. Make sure volunteers and mentors have the right job for their skills, interests and make sure their involvement benefits both the volunteer and your organisations.
2. Use a simple checklist for inducting and orientating new volunteers.

3. Invite current volunteers and mentors along to induction sessions and relevant training/orientation sessions.
4. Make up a kit for new volunteers. Include their job description/s, information about your organisation and relevant volunteer policies and procedures.
5. Keep a log/communication book to allow volunteers to pass on any queries, suggestions or comments.
6. Use a buddy system so newcomers are supported by existing volunteers or staff.
7. Provide opportunities for professional or personal development for volunteers.
8. Distribute information about appropriate courses to volunteers.
9. Reimburse volunteer staff for out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation.

Following these minimum standards will ensure that volunteer feels valued, welcomed and that they work in a safe and healthy environment.

Ways to thank and recognise your valued volunteers and mentors:

By saying; 'Thank you!' and;

- Acknowledge volunteers and mentors by names at public events;
- provide volunteers with a name badge not just a “Volunteer” name badge;
- establish a volunteer recognition board in a prominent place;
- nominate volunteers and mentors for local volunteer awards;
- plan staff and volunteer social events;
- offer personal praise and recognition on the job, through the media and at public occasions;
- give complimentary tickets to volunteers for special events and functions;
- award memberships, certificates, Volunteer of the Month Awards;
- create volunteer skill development opportunities;
- farewell volunteers when they are retiring or moving away from the area;
- offer volunteers the opportunity to change roles.

Centacare Volunteer Service has many different resources to assist registered NfP organisations with all aspects of their volunteer management program. Please feel free to ask how we can help.

The [not-for-profit law website](#) is another great resource for volunteer-involving organisations seeking information.