

SECTION 11

Volunteers

Many Associations rely on Volunteers for their activities and services. The Committee themselves are usually volunteers, donating their time and expertise to lead and govern the organisation. Recognising the importance of Volunteers and managing and rewarding them for their efforts is essential if you want to maintain a strong and committed Volunteer base.



Volunteers Checklist

Do you have written job descriptions for volunteers?	<i>Volunteers should be managed in much the same way as you would paid staff. Job descriptions are a fundamental tool in developing an effective volunteer workforce.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you provide training and supervision for volunteers?	<i>Like staff, volunteers will need training and supervision to be able to do their jobs effectively. How much training and supervision is required will depend on the task at hand and the skill level of the volunteers involved.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you made adequate provision for volunteer programs and management in your budget?	<i>Volunteers donate their time and skills, but that doesn't mean that there are no costs associated with your volunteer programs! Ensuring that these programs are adequately resourced will give them the best chance of success.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have appropriate policies for your volunteer workforce?	<i>In many ways, volunteers must be treated in the same way as paid staff, so an appropriate set of policies are required. In particular, make sure that Work Health & Safety issues are addressed.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>



SECTION N 11

Tips & Techniques

Volunteer Policy
Volunteer Job Description



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TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Volunteers Policy

If your organisation has (or is planning to have) volunteers, then you should have a Volunteers Policy (and supporting Procedures) so that everyone who is part of your organisation (or has any dealings with it, or is considering becoming a volunteer or referring potential volunteers) understands your views on managing volunteers.

The principles in your Volunteer Policy should set out why you have volunteers and what value they add to your organisation. The Definition should include a statement along the lines of:

A volunteer is someone who:

- benefits the community and themselves by participating in our volunteer program
- provides their services of their own free will
- does not receive any monetary reward (out of pocket expenses are not regarded as monetary reward)
- complements, but does not replace or threaten the livelihood of paid workers or contractors.

The Policy should make reference to the National Standards for Volunteers developed by Volunteering Australia. It should outline the rights and responsibilities of people volunteering with your organisation. For example:

Our volunteers have the right to:

- be made aware of our Code of Conduct and our policies and procedures
- a healthy and safe working environment
- be covered by personal accident and public liability insurance
- be recognised and included as a valued team member
- have a clearly written job description
- receive proper training, initially and on an ongoing basis
- know whom to turn to with difficulties and problems
- know to whom they are accountable
- be supported and supervised in their role
- say no if feeling exploited or if the task is inappropriate to the volunteer
- be reimbursed for out of pocket expenses
- be informed and consulted on matters which directly or indirectly affect their work and
- have confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with privacy legislation and the organisation's Privacy Policy.

Our volunteers have the responsibility to:

- abide by our Code of Conduct and our policies and procedures (which include working in a safe manner in regard to themselves and others, and to maintaining the privacy, dignity and confidentiality of the people and organisations that we work with)
- work within the framework established by our values/goals
- be reliable and notify an appropriate person if unavailable or running late
- value, support and respect the rights of other volunteers and paid staff
- respect confidentiality
- give feedback which will assist the development of our activities, programs and services
- work to the job description
- accept feedback and direction from their supervisor in relation to their performance
- respect, acknowledge and act on decisions made by colleagues and the Board of Management
- address areas of concern with the appropriate person
- undertake training when requested
- exercise a Duty of Care in areas of Health and Safety, including informing others of potential or actual hazards
- ask for support when needed and
- care for our equipment and property and carry out their agreed role responsibly and ethically.



TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Volunteer's Policy

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

You should also outline your organisation's responsibilities. For example:

Our organisation has the responsibility to:

- maintain appropriate Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance cover for our volunteers
- have a budget allocation for volunteer management (including training)
- ensure that paid or unpaid staff who manage volunteers will be allowed sufficient time and resources and given relevant training and recognition to enable them to appropriately carry out their responsibilities
- ensure that each volunteer has:
 - an up-to-date job description which clearly describes their role
 - an appropriate induction, including being given a copy of the our Code of Conduct and ready access to our policies and procedures
 - a safe workplace with the necessary space, tools and equipment to safely fulfill their role
 - appropriate training and development to meet the needs of the role
 - the opportunity to participate in meetings, planning and in consultation and decision making appropriate to their role and responsibilities and
 - on-going support and supervision.

ELIGIBILITY

Clear delineation needs to be made between volunteering, work experience, work or rehabilitation placements and Job Services Australia requirements. There are subtle differences between each one so your policy should make it clear about who is eligible to be a volunteer.

AGE LIMITATIONS

The social benefits of volunteering are important for healthy ageing, and many volunteers will be able to continue volunteering with modifications to their role and duties as they age.

Personal accident insurance for volunteers is available up to 90 years of age, however a volunteer does not need to stop volunteering provided they are able to properly and safely fulfil their role. You may need to include a statement about older volunteers, and equally, younger volunteers, especially those under 18 years of age.



TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Volunteer's Policy

COORDINATION

Your policy should make statements about who will have responsibility for the overall management of your volunteer program including:

- developing procedures
- designing job descriptions
- promoting volunteering opportunities
- recruiting, selecting and placing volunteers
- monitoring the work performed by volunteers
- organising training opportunities for volunteers
- recognising the effort and contribution of volunteers
- maintaining up to date, accurate records of all volunteers and
- identifying and responding to issues that are raised by or impact on volunteers.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Under Work Health and Safety legislation, your organisation is responsible for providing a safe working environment for volunteers. Any breaches of your duty of care towards volunteers are treated as seriously as if the person were a paid employee. Your policy needs to make this clear.

BUDGET

Even though volunteers are not paid for their labour there are costs involved in successfully managing a volunteer program, for example recruitment costs, name tags, training, uniforms and protective equipment, reimbursement etc. Your policy should make it clear that you recognise this and will make funds available.

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Job Description tells an important story about your organisation – it shows that you are organised, systematic and professional in your approach to managing people. It tells anyone looking at your organisation that you have carefully considered how best to involve volunteers and that you value and respect their contributions. Your policy should make it clear that every volunteer will have a job description. Refer to the Job Descriptions Tool.

RECRUITMENT, SCREENING, INDUCTION, REVIEW AND RECOGNITION

Your policy should summarise the process your organisation will use to find, screen and select new volunteers. How complex this process is will depend on what you want the volunteers to do, and what risks need to be managed. You will need to spell out, in broad terms (because the detail of 'how' will be in the Volunteer Procedures) how you will screen and select (or reject) potential volunteers. You will also need to include some broad statements about your organisation's commitment to inducting, training, reviewing and recognising your volunteers – the key components of a good volunteer management system.

REIMBURSEMENT

Although volunteers offer their skills and time for no remuneration, volunteers are entitled to reimbursement of pre-approved out of pocket expenses. It is important to identify situations in advance where the volunteer will be considerably out of pocket to minimise confusion and embarrassment for both parties and to describe what, if any, reimbursements are available.

TRAINING

There are two purposes for volunteer training. The first is to manage risk and health and safety responsibilities, ensuring that you have equipped volunteers with the skills and knowledge they need to perform their role. The second is to provide volunteers with personal development. Your policy should include training.



TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Volunteer' s Policy

MANAGING POOR PERFORMANCE AND UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Your organisation has a responsibility to ensure that its volunteers maintain high standards of conduct and performance. Unsatisfactory performance or unacceptable behaviour must be managed in a fair, reasonable and timely manner. Your policy should outline what behaviour is unacceptable and what will be done to address the situation.

INSURANCE

You should seek advice from your peak body or insurance broker about what insurance policies your organisation should hold to ensure that volunteers are provided with the right mix of protections. Your policy should include a statement about this.

IMPROVING AND DEVELOPING

Your policy should include a statement about how your organisation appreciates volunteers making suggestions for improvement and innovation and welcomes formal and informal involvement by volunteers in decision making that affects their volunteer roles.

REVIEW

Like all policies, your Volunteer Policy should be reviewed regularly.

Volunteering Australia has a range of resources and tools to assist organisations find direction and develop structures and systems to manage volunteers.

<http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org>

Each state or territory has its own state or local volunteer resource centres who can help you and local councils are often able to provide assistance. You can search for them from Volunteering Australia website's front page. For example:

<https://volunteeringqld.org.au/>

Your peak body will have expertise in managing volunteers in your particular area of activity.



TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Volunteers Job Description

Every (smart) organisation wants to make the most of what their volunteers bring to the organisation's strategic goals and day-to-day work. This is even more so for those organisations who have no paid staff.

The Job Description tells an important story about your organisation – it shows that you are organised, systematic and professional in your approach to managing people. It tells anyone looking at your organisation that you have carefully considered where and how best to involve volunteers and that you value and respect their contributions. For some roles you will design Volunteer Job Descriptions and then recruit to fill the positions. For other roles you might customise an existing Job Description to suit the particular skills or circumstances of an individual volunteer.

A good Volunteer Job Description sets out the responsibilities and supervision or support arrangements for a volunteer. It helps everyone to be clear about what is expected of the volunteer and it helps the volunteer to feel confident in their role.

Not-for-profit Law has produced a National Volunteer Guide, in consultation with Volunteering Australia, for use by Volunteer Involving Organisations across Australia. The Guide provides an overview of the key legal obligations organisations owe volunteers and practical examples, template documents and tips to assist in their understanding.

For a copy of the Guide go to: <https://www.nfplaw.org.au/volunteers>.

Also see Volunteering Queensland resources page: <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/resources/central>.

A good Job Description is more than a list of tasks viewed in isolation from the other roles. For most positions it's more productive to set out the responsibilities of the position – the meaningful contribution the volunteer makes to the organisation by highlighting what the work actually achieves.

For example, instead of saying 'prepare financial reports' you might say 'Is responsible for ensuring that financial records are kept and that members have the information they need to make informed decisions about the organisation's financial affairs.'

If you do decide to list Key Tasks make sure that each task (the how) links to the Key Responsibilities (the what).



Sample Volunteer Job Description

You can provide information and describe expectations using the following headings:

Name of the Organisation	
Team/Program/Unit	
Title of Supervisor	
Title of Volunteer Position	
Weeks Required	
Days Required	
Hours Required	
Key Responsibilities	
Key Tasks (optional)	
Essential Skills	
Essential Attributes	
Essential Experience	
Requirements Prior to Start	Medical Check [] Police Check [] Blue Card [] Other [] Other []
Training Requirements Prior to Start	
Future Training Requirements	
Special Conditions or Considerations	
Induction Date	
Reimbursements or Allowances	
Performance Review Due Date	
Volunteer's Name	
Date:	Signature:
Volunteer Coordinator's Name	
Date:	Signature:
Job Description Review Due Date	



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Congratulations

You've worked the whole way through the Good Governance Health Check. Take a bow!

It doesn't matter how long it took you to get here - the important point is that you've taken the time and put in the effort to carefully consider how well your Association is performing.

By now you'll have a plan for continuous improvement (Organisation Development Plan - call it whatever you like, we're plain and simple so we like 'To Do List' - but whatever works for your Committee is fine by us).

You'll also have developed a much greater understanding of what good governance really means - in practice, not just in theory and we're confident you'll have a much greater appreciation of its value to any organisation.



If you ever need assistance you can contact us:

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About Us

The original concept and development The Good Governance Handbook and the online Good Governance Health Check are the result of an original collaboration between Kate Hartwig and Kate Reynolds. Leisa Donlan & Adrian Hart from www.goodgovernanceconsultants.com.au have tailored this guide & updated the content specifically for your organisation and the regulatory framework you work in and added a few templates and other information.

We've all been working in the not-for-profit sector for most of our working lives (hooley dooley, that's about 120 years between us!) and we know what works and what doesn't. Our approach - as you can see with this Handbook - is plain and simple - we provide no-nonsense, proven, practical assistance with governance and organisational development.

We've pooled our good, bad and ugly experiences and some of the many publications, tools, tips and techniques we've developed over the years into one, easy to access Handbook. We hope you've found it useful.