



INFORMATION SHEET FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS FOR VIRTUAL, MICRO AND EPISODIC VOLUNTEERING

The Centre for Volunteering acknowledges that building relationships between Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) and their volunteers requires time, effort, resources, communication skills, and active engagement in the volunteering process.

The Centre for Volunteering (The Centre) also recognises that it is vital to enhance the quality of the volunteer experience in order to retain existing volunteers and attract new volunteers. Accordingly, Volunteer Managers, will require adaptable planning and considered implementation of such volunteer projects.

The following are some methods by which a VIO can provide its volunteers with a productive and beneficial volunteering experience.

Virtual Volunteering

Virtual volunteering refers to undertakings or projects which may be completed by a volunteer wholly or substantially using a computer, or phone or other electronic devices with an internet connection. Virtual volunteering is also known as e-volunteering or online volunteering.

The most advantageous feature of virtual volunteering is that it can be done online at any time which suits the volunteer and it can be used in many diverse volunteering projects such as:

- developing apps,
- researching a subject,
- creating resources,
- creating/writing policy or position papers,
- creating web content,
- maintain or creating databases,
- graphic designing,
- writing software,
- fixing software,
- writing submissions, grants, proposals, newsletters and articles,
- providing expertise,
- act as contact for people who are vulnerable,
- online tutoring, and
- creating or editing website or webpage content.

Virtual volunteering is also suitable for those with social inhibitions or anxieties and those potential volunteers with physical challenges who may not be suitable for “the



usual" volunteering projects¹. This characteristic, allows VIOs access to a brand new set of people who are able to volunteer for projects and undertakings. This also enables the VIO to develop contacts with other organisations, particularly service organisations, which may have members or clients who are able to volunteer virtually. Virtual volunteering further permits individual volunteers to provide their unique talents and specialities to the VIO at times when the VIO requires those skills.

It is to be noted that the VIOs will need to ensure that all virtual volunteering opportunities which require Police or Working With Children Checks are properly undertaken so as not to create a liability for the organisation. The VIO should undertake an application process, screening and training, if required, for the volunteer.

While virtual volunteering will not replace individual, face to face and on site volunteering, it does provide another opportunity by which VIOs can access individuals who wish to volunteer but are unable to do so in a traditional setting.

Micro Volunteering

Micro volunteering is completing a range of small tasks which contribute to an overarching project. The micro volunteering tasks are generally broken down into small, easily completed elements. Micro volunteering does not require a long term commitment to the project and can take from a few minutes to a few hours.

There are numerous VIOs already who use micro volunteers to complete projects, such as museums using volunteers to decipher written documents from their archives for researchers, the states' annual bird count, and the NASA citizen science projects, to name but a few.

The advantage of this type of volunteering is that, there is no necessity for the VIO to conduct an application process, screening or training for the volunteer.

Episodic Volunteering

Episodic volunteering is also called one-time volunteering because it relates to volunteering opportunities which are defined projects held over a defined period of time, usually from few hours to a day long event.

Many VIOs already use this type of volunteering to meet volunteer needs which arise periodically, such as for a beach clean-up or a service day in a retirement community.

Episodic volunteering creates a positive relationship between volunteers and the VIOs and is a good way to promote the organisation and its mission.

¹ https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/tech/tech_article.jsp?articleId=78



Further, unless, the volunteering opportunity involves directly dealing with vulnerable persons there may be no necessity for the VIO to conduct an application process, screening or training for the volunteer.

Finally, VIOs wanting to attract micro, virtual or episodic volunteers should ensure that the following matters are addressed prior to advertising the project:

- a detailed description of the role should be created for the volunteer within the parameters of the volunteer program,
- placement of individuals who are able to set standards of conduct and provide encouragement to volunteers,
- have Volunteer Managers and team leaders who are able to understand and manage micro, virtual and episodic volunteering
- Identify what extra training, if any, is required to be provided to the volunteers and
- Finally contact your local Volunteer Referral Centre for assistance on promotion, recruitment and scoping of the role.

Please Note that this information sheet does not purport to be legal or insurance advice. Should you require specific legal or insurance advice in relation to your programs, you should speak to your own legal practitioner or insurance company.

The Centre for Volunteering has a range of services and resources available for Volunteer Involving Organisations and volunteers. For more information please visit www.volunteering.com.au or contact us on membership@volunteering.com.au