



WHY IT IS NECESSARY FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVING ORGANISATIONS (VIO) TO IDENTIFY VOLUNTEER TRAINING NEEDS AND GAPS

The Centre for Volunteering (The Centre) acknowledges that building relationships between it and its volunteers requires time, effort, resources, communication skills, and active engagement in the volunteering process.

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 Involving Organisations (VIOs) require adaptable, planned and considered volunteer policies, including training policies.

In order for VIOs to deliver accurate, timely and relevant assistance to their stakeholders, their volunteers need to be properly trained for the positions they occupy and the services they provide. Properly trained volunteers can significantly improve the services provided by the VIOs.

VIOs should seek to frame the training they provide to their volunteers as performance enhancement tools, as VIOs now operate in technologically rich environments where traditional volunteer roles no longer exist or are augmented by technology. VIOs may require volunteers to be familiar with computer aided telephony, databases or other information technologies. Volunteers who are properly trained are an ongoing asset to the VIOs, allowing them to operate more cost effectively.

VIOs will need to perform a training needs analysis in order to identify what training is required for their volunteers to operate efficiently within the organisation which, in turn, allows for the organisation to function proficiently in its own operational sphere. "Training needs analysis is a process by which an organisation defines the training needs that are required for individuals'...The focus is on the job role of those involved and what skills and knowledge are needed in order to perform that job competently."¹

There are many and varied ways to conduct a Training Needs Analysis. A VIO conducting a Training Needs Analysis will need to ascertain those who need training and what kind of training is needed. Consequently, a VIO will need to identify its organisational goals and objectives, and determine the actual level of performance of volunteers as well as the expected level of performance of a volunteer role, which may be required for the organisation to operate most effectively and efficiently².

Each volunteer role must be deconstructed in terms of its location and fit within the organisation, each volunteer job description should be examined to ensure that it lists the knowledge, skills and abilities required to undertake the role, and finally, the

¹ <https://www.deakinco.com/media-centre/article/a-comprehensive-guide-to-training-needs-analysis>

² https://hr-guide.com/Training/Determining_Training_Needs.htm



VIOs should examine whether the volunteer role requires any “external” competencies such as a licence, a certification or a particular qualification.

VIOs should consider the following when designing a volunteer training chart:

- Whether the position is fixed or responsive to changing needs e.g. front desk reception but also basic data entry
- Whether the position requires sophisticated, high level communication skills
- Whether the position has any independent decision making scope
- Whether the position has any fiscal decision making; if so, under what terms
- Is the position a “leadership” position?
- Are the organisational risk management policies being adhered to?
- What level of problem solving skills does the position require?
- Is the position self-managed or directed?
- Is the position a part of team, if so, does the whole team undertake the same work or do they work individually?
- What technologies are to be used by the holder of the position and is the training provided to be in-house or external?

This is not an exhaustive list of matters to be taken into account but a set of suggestions.

Once such a review is completed, the VIO can then develop a “training needs map” specific to its organisation and to each volunteer role. The most important question that the VIOs should keep in mind while undertaking this analysis is:

- What knowledge/skills and abilities are needed to perform the task at its optimum level?

The VIO must match the training to its immediate and long-term needs.

NB Please note that additional resources relating to this topic will be available shortly.

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For more information, contact us on 02 9261 3600.