

Common Languages Guide

The Common Languages Guide outlines a generally accepted glossary of terms and definitions widely used in the volunteering sector. Volunteering Australia, as the national peak body for volunteering, encourages the use of the Common Languages Guide for consistency across the volunteering ecosystem.

Please note: The guidance provided, including the application, phrasing and capitalisation of words, is deliberate. Acronyms are included but the use of these is discouraged as they can be exclusionary.

volunteering

Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain.

volunteers

Those who give their time willingly for the common good and without financial gain.

Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community.

State/Territory volunteering peak body (VPB)

There are seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies that advocate for volunteering and deliver state/territory and local volunteering programs and initiatives.

volunteer involving organisation (VIO)

Any organisation/company/department that engages volunteers may be known as a volunteer involving organisation (VIO).

Volunteering Support Service (VSS); Volunteer Support Organisation (VSO); Volunteer Resource Centre (VRC)

Volunteering Support Service, Volunteer Support Organisation and Volunteer Resource Centre are terms used to describe place-based organisations that promote, resource and support volunteering in local communities. These organisations enable people to volunteer and help ensure their volunteering experience is positive and safe. They also help the thousands of community organisations reliant on volunteers to recruit, manage and recognise those volunteers.

volunteering ecosystem

The volunteering ecosystem is the network of organisations and people that enable and benefit from volunteering. It covers the non-profit, public and private spheres. It involves relationships between volunteers, volunteer involving organisations, Volunteering Support Services, Volunteering Australia, State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies, national peak bodies, community organisations, philanthropy, business, and Governments, all working for the collective viability and recognition of volunteering in Australia.

volunteering sector

The volunteering sector comprises not just volunteers but volunteer involving organisations, volunteering support services, associated service providers, and businesses that sell volunteering-related products and services to others in the sector.

volunteering infrastructure

The enabling governance, operational and technological structures, bodies and platforms that provide volunteer involving organisations with the capability to involve volunteers ethically and efficiently.

formal volunteering

Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place within organisations (including institutions and agencies) in a structured way.

informal volunteering

Time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain, taking place outside the context of a formal organisation or group. This includes assisting people in the community, excluding one's own family members. For example, looking after children, property or pets; providing home or personal assistance; or giving someone professional advice.

manager/s of volunteers

Also referred to as coordinator/s of volunteers

The person/s who are responsible for the recruitment, induction, training, supervision, and ongoing support of volunteers.

spontaneous volunteers

People who are not affiliated with recognised volunteer agencies, and may not have relevant training, skills or experience, but seek out or are invited to contribute their assistance to various volunteering opportunities.

spontaneous emergency volunteers

People who seek out or are invited to contribute their assistance before, during and/or after an emergency, who are not affiliated with recognised volunteer agencies, and may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience.

corporate/employee volunteering

Where paid staff from a company or business engage in unpaid work for a Volunteer Involving Organisation for a wider societal benefit, and for the benefit of the volunteer and the business.

corporate/employee volunteering program

A program where paid employees are given work time by their employer to volunteer with another organisation. The activities undertaken by corporate/employee volunteering programs have been categorised into two main types: skills-based and activity-based volunteering.

skills-based volunteering

Where individuals or groups with professional qualifications and/or experience offer their skills and expertise to Volunteer Involving Organisations to enhance community capability. This includes volunteering professional skills such as web design, development of risk management/business continuity plans, financial management/account systems advice, and landscaping)

activity-based volunteering

Where individuals or groups volunteer together on a task to assist a Volunteer Involving Organisation. Usually, these tasks are short-term and physical in nature. This includes gardening, painting and packing food hampers.

inclusive volunteer(ing) program

An 'inclusive volunteer(ing) program' is one which includes strategies to involve volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including people with a disability, from a culturally and/or linguistically diverse background, and people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

virtual volunteering, remote volunteering or online volunteering (e-volunteering)

Virtual, remote or online volunteering allows individuals to work with organisations remotely. Volunteer tasks are completed online, and interaction is through a digital platform or via email.

episodic volunteering

This refers to volunteering on a periodic or recurring basis, as opposed to on an ongoing capacity. It could include people who are engaged in 'project-based volunteering'.

microvolunteering

This describes volunteering in small, bite-sized chunks, typically less than 30 minutes in duration. Microvolunteering can take place online or offline, and usually does not require an ongoing obligation on behalf of volunteers.

international and/or cross-national volunteering

International volunteering is when volunteers contribute to projects or activities outside of their home countries or across national borders.

group volunteering

People who assist communities in groups, as opposed to individually, by giving their time willingly for the common good and without financial gain.

youth volunteering

This is where young people (typically those aged 15-24 years) give their time willingly for the common good and without financial gain.

student volunteering

This type of volunteering is undertaken by students, and can build skills, experience, knowledge and interest for the student.

family volunteering

Family volunteering is undertaken by family members, and allows for family members to enjoy the benefits of volunteering while spending quality time with each other. Family volunteering can be a practical way to express values to children and young people.

voluntourism

This is a combination of volunteering and tourism, and can be a popular form of international travel that allows individuals to engage in volunteering abroad.

National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement are recognised as the best-practice guide for volunteer involvement in Australia. The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement are the intellectual property of Volunteering Australia.

National Strategy for Volunteering (NSV)

A National Strategy for Volunteering is a strategic framework to guide the future of volunteering. The new National Strategy for Volunteering is in development and will be designed and owned by the volunteering ecosystem with the aim of providing a blueprint for reimagined volunteering in Australia (to be released in December 2022).

Volunteering in Australia research (VinA research)

The Volunteering in Australia (VinA) research is a national research program which details demographic data on volunteers and volunteer involving organisations, highlights trends in volunteering, and provides evidence-based analysis and commentary on key volunteering issues in Australia.

Volunteering Resource Hub

The Volunteering Resource Hub is an initiative of Volunteering Australia, which brings together useful, evidence-based and current best practice resources to support effective volunteer management across Australia.

State of Volunteering research/report

State of Volunteering research include trends, demographics, challenges and successes in volunteering. It typically involves surveys of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.

National Volunteering Conference

The National Volunteering Conference is Volunteering Australia's premier, biennial volunteering leadership event, that advances volunteering through knowledge sharing and discussion.

National Volunteer Week (NVW)

National Volunteer Week is the annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contribution of Australia's volunteers.

National Student Volunteer Week (NSVW)

National Student Volunteer Week is a week of events, activities and campaigns that promote student volunteering led by higher education providers and schools across Australia.

International Volunteer Day (IVD)

International Volunteer Day is an annual event auspiced by United Nations Volunteers, aimed at raising awareness on the important role volunteers play in responding to challenges facing the world.

International Volunteer Management Day (IVMDay)

International Volunteer Managers Day is the annual celebration of the profession of volunteer leadership across the world.

GoVolunteer

GoVolunteer is an initiative of Volunteering Australia, aimed at matching people who are interested in volunteering with appropriate volunteering opportunities. The website uses a national database of volunteering opportunities. SEEK Volunteer offers a similar platform

VIKTOR

VIKTOR is Australia's comprehensive volunteering platform that was built by the volunteering sector to connect Volunteer Involving Organisations, business, Universities, Volunteering Support Services and volunteers to benefit our communities. VIKTOR feeds the largest database of volunteers and organisations in Australia. This national volunteering database is the single source for a huge network of apps and websites that connect to VIKTOR, including SEEK Volunteer, Volunteer Profile and the GoVolunteer App.

Volunteer Information Records Administrator (VIRA)

VIRA is a volunteer management tool that allows Volunteer Involving Organisations to record volunteers' personal details, contribution in hours, services provided, recognition, reimbursement, and training undertaken.

International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE)

The International Association for Volunteer Effort, exists to promote, strengthen and celebrate volunteering in all the ways it happens throughout the world.

engage or involve volunteers

Volunteers are 'engaged' or 'involved' in a wide variety of activities or initiatives that support the community. They are not utilised or used as this suggests that volunteers are being taken advantage of or exploited.

volunteer recognition

This encompasses recognising the volunteer contribution and ensuring the value and impact of the voluntary involvement is understood, appreciated and acknowledged.

volunteer roles

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles that contribute to an organisation's purpose, goals and objectives.

volunteer insurance

Volunteer insurance is one way an organisation protects itself, its volunteers, paid staff, management committee, clients and customers against risk. Work Health & Safety legislation requires organisations to organise personal accident and public liability insurance on behalf of their volunteer, it's not the duty of the volunteer. This is usually referred to as Volunteer Personal Accident Insurance.