

THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

Draft for consultation

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National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Introduction

Volunteer involvement is a critical part of Australian society. It contributes to civil society and active participation in building strong, inclusive, and resilient communities. It underlies innovation and social change, our responses to community need and community challenges, and it brings together and supports the local strengths and assets of communities.

There are important benefits to both organisations and to volunteers when volunteers become involved in organisations.

Volunteer involvement can contribute to and extend the capacity of organisations to meet aims and goals. Volunteers can provide the skills, expertise and points of view that enable an organisation to pursue programs and activities that benefit the community.

For individuals, volunteering provides an opportunity to be involved in activities reflecting their interests and using their skills. Meaningful activity in turn promotes a sense of belonging and general wellbeing.

Volunteer involvement is a two way relationship, providing an opportunity for organisations to achieve their goals by involving volunteers in their activities, and for volunteers to make meaningful use of their time and skills, contributing to social and community outcomes.

The National Standards

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement have been developed in consultation with the volunteering sector to support the involvement of volunteers and act as a resource for organisations in which volunteers are involved. They provide a framework for organisations to consider the role of volunteers within the organisation and the impact effective volunteer involvement can have on achieving the strategic goals and aims of the organisation.

The National Standards have been designed by assisting organisations to:

- incorporate the values and maximise the benefits of volunteer involvement
- develop effective volunteer involvement strategies and practices
- involve volunteers in meaningful and useful activities that contribute to the outcomes of the organisation's work
- ensure the rights of volunteers are protected and that they are supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities

The National Standards incorporate the following principles:

 Volunteer involvement should be a considered and planned part of the organisation's strategic development, aligning with the organisation's strategic aims and being incorporated in its evaluation framework.



- Effective volunteer involvement requires organisational leadership, and a culture and structure that supports and values the role of volunteers.
- Volunteers have rights, which include the right to work in a safe and supportive environment with appropriate infrastructure and effective management practices.
- Volunteers have responsibilities, which include acting responsibly, being accountable for their actions to the organisation, and respecting the organisation's values and practices.

Overview of the standards

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement will replace the *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations*. The revised standards allow organisations to make use of simple, practical criteria across a broad range of volunteering situations.

There are 7 standards addressing the key areas of volunteer involvement:

- Strategic engagement
- Volunteer recognition
- Leadership and management
- Volunteer roles
- Recruitment and selection
- Support and development
- Quality management

Each standard contains a brief summary of the intent of the standard, a statement that defines the scope of the standard and a set of criteria against which the level of achievement of that standard can be assessed.

The standards are intended to be flexible enough to apply to different sizes of organisations with varying levels of resources, in both rural and urban settings, led by paid staff or by volunteers. They are designed to be inclusive of the full range of volunteering activities and types, including:

- Ongoing regular volunteering
- Episodic or reactive volunteering
- 'Brokered' volunteering (where the organisation partners with another agency around the supply of volunteers – this would include work placements, Centrelink or similar placements, corporate volunteers, student placements)
- 'Virtual' volunteering, where volunteers work at a distance

Some criteria apply only to particular volunteering situations.



Uses of the standards

Organisations can use the National standards in a number of ways:

- as an audit tool that provides an overall appreciation of where the organisation is placed with respect to best management practice for volunteer involvement
- as a guideline or checklist to help identify opportunities for making improvements;
- as a framework of reference to assist in planning and establishing a new volunteer service;
- as a baseline from which progress in making improvements can be monitored and measured.

An organisation that is able to demonstrate compliance with the standards is well positioned strategically to recruit and retain more volunteers, as well as attract funding or sponsorship for new initiatives.

[to be inserted: explanation of the self-assessment and quality assurance process once decided]

[to be inserted: Glossary of terms]





Standards overview

STANDARD 1: STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

Commitment to volunteer involvement is set out through vision, planning and resourcing, and links to the organisation's mission.

Criteria: The organisation publicly declares its intent, purpose and commitment to involving volunteers.

Criteria: Volunteer involvement is planned and designed to contribute directly to the organisation mission, goals and objectives.

Criteria: Appropriate resources (including time, funds and equipment) are allocated for volunteer involvement.

Criteria: The organisation's volunteer involvement performance is monitored and reported to the governing body, staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

STANDARD 2: VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood and recognised.

Criteria: The governing body and staff understand how volunteers benefit the organisation, service users and the community.

Criteria: The organisation acknowledges contributions made by volunteers and the positive impact on the organisation, service users and the community.

Criteria: Volunteers understand how their contributions benefit the organisation, service users and the community.

Criteria: Volunteer acknowledgement is appropriate to the volunteer role and respectful of cultural values and perspectives.

Criteria: Consistent opportunities are available for volunteers to provide feedback on the organisation's volunteer involvement and the broader organisation's work.

Criteria: Processes are in place to confirm the contribution of current and previous volunteers as appropriate.

STANDARD 3: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

A culture of volunteer involvement exists throughout the organisation, with effective leadership and management systems supporting valued and safe volunteer contribution.

Criteria:Responsibilities for leading and managing volunteer involvement are clearly defined and supported.

Criteria: Volunteer policies and procedures are communicated, understood, and applied by all people across the organisation.

Criteria: Risk management is applied to the organisation's volunteer involvement.

Criteria: Effective working relationships with and between volunteers are facilitated by the organisation.

Criteria: Processes are in place to protect the health and safety of volunteers.

Criteria: Adequate volunteer involvement records are securely maintained.



Criteria: Processes are in place to manage relationships with placement or brokering agencies (This criteria only applies to organisations working with placement or brokering agencies where another organisation provides the volunteers (e.g. Centrelink, corporate volunteers, school groups, student placements etc)

Criteria: Processes are in place to manage relationships with partner agencies in collaborative activities

(This criteria only applies to organisations working with other organisations in a collaborative activity involving volunteers and/or sharing responsibility for particular volunteers)

STANDARD 4: VOLUNTEER ROLES

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful roles which contribute to the organisation's aims and objectives at all levels.

Criteria: Volunteer roles are flexible and reflect current trends of volunteer involvement.

Criteria: Volunteer roles are designed to contribute to the organisation's aims and objectives at all levels.

Criteria: Volunteer roles are clearly defined, documented and communicated throughout the organisation.

Criteria: Volunteer roles are reviewed with input from volunteers and staff.

Criteria: Volunteers are actively involved and positive about their roles.

STANDARD 5: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, consistent and meet organisation and volunteer needs.

Criteria: Relevant strategies are used to attract suitably interested, knowledgeable and skilled volunteers.

Criteria: Potential volunteers are provided with detailed information about the organisation, the volunteer role and processes throughout recruitment and selection.

Criteria: Volunteers are selected based on their interest, knowledge and skills appropriate to the role, and consistent with anti-discrimination legislation.

Criteria: Screening processes are applied for volunteer roles to maintain the safety and security of service users, staff, volunteers and the organisation.



STANDARD 6: SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Volunteers understand their roles and gain knowledge, skills and feedback needed to carry out their duties.

Criteria: Volunteers are provided with orientation appropriate to their role and responsibility.

Criteria: Volunteers' knowledge and skills are reviewed to inform support and development needs.

Criteria: Training and development opportunities are planned and provided to meet volunteer knowledge and skill needs.

Criteria: Volunteers are provided with supervision and feedback that supports them to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Criteria: Changes to the involvement of a volunteer are undertaken fairly and consistently.

STANDARD 7: QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Effective volunteer involvement results from a system of good practice, review and improvement.

Criteria: Volunteer involvement strategies, policies and procedures are informed by current best practice and meet legislative requirements.

Criteria: Policies and procedures are implemented to effectively guide all aspects of volunteer involvement.

Criteria: Volunteer involvement is regularly reviewed in line with the organisation's evaluation and quality management frameworks.



Standards criteria and practice evidence

STANDARD 1: STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

Commitment to volunteer involvement is set out through vision, planning and resourcing, and supports the organisation's strategic direction.

Strategic involvement ensures that the organisation has a clear idea of why it is volunteer involvement, the values and principles it will apply in its work with volunteers, and how the involvement of volunteers will enhance and support the work of the organisation.

Meeting this standard will assist the organisation to approach the involvement of volunteers in a planned manner, making sure that sufficient resources are allocated and that it is accountable for the way that it works with volunteers.

The organisation publicly declares its intent, purpose and commitment to involving volunteers.
A public statement, endorsed by the governing body, articulates the organisation's philosophy, direction and broad objectives for involving volunteers.
The benefits to the work of the organisation of involving volunteers is recognised through strategic and operational plans.
The organisation's commitment to volunteer involvement complies with industry standards, guidelines and codes of practice.
Volunteer involvement is planned and designed to contribute directly to the organisation mission, goals and objectives.
The organisation's broader planning processes incorporate volunteer involvement.
Volunteer involvement planning identifies strategies for recruitment, recognition, management and development of volunteers.
Proposed volunteer involvement is assessed to ensure relevance, appropriateness and benefit.
Volunteer involvement plans clearly align to organisation mission, goals and objectives and volunteer activity contributes directly to these.
The organisation is open to opportunities for collaborating with other agencies in involving volunteers.
Appropriate resources (including time, funds and equipment) are allocated for volunteer involvement.
A budget is allocated and used for volunteer involvement planning, operations and review.
The governing body, staff and volunteers dedicate time to plan, discuss and manage volunteer involvement.



	Adequate equipment, materials and space are provided which support volunteers to undertake their roles. Volunteers are adequately reimbursed for out of pocket expenses. Staff with volunteer involvement responsibilities are provided with sufficient training, supervision and resources to effectively undertake their volunteer management duties.
Criteria	The organisation's volunteer involvement performance is monitored and reported to the governing body, staff, volunteers and stakeholders.
Practice evidence	Quantitative and qualitative performance data relating to the organisation's volunteer involvement objectives are identified, collected and analysed. Performance data is used to regularly evaluate the organisation's volunteer involvement.
	Targeted reports on the organisation's volunteer involvement performance are communicated to the governing body, staff, volunteers and stakeholders on a regular schedule.

STANDARD 2: VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Volunteer contribution, value and impact is understood and acknowledged.

Volunteer recognition ensures that the organisation understands the contribution made by its volunteers and that it lets them know that this contribution is appreciated.

In assessing the impact of volunteer contribution, the organisation should consider the results of the work done by volunteers, the value to the organisation, and less tangible benefits such as volunteer contributions to change and innovation.

Meeting this standard assists the organisation to develop and maintain a respectful relationship with its volunteers, ensuring that volunteers are encouraged to actively participate in the business of the organisation, provide feedback and appreciate the way their work benefits the organisation.

Criteria	The governing body and staff understand how volunteers benefit the organisation, service users and the community.
Practice evidence	People at all levels of the organisation are informed of, and can articulate, the organisation's reasons and benefits for involving volunteers.
	The governing body, staff and volunteers are involved in the evaluation of volunteer involvement.
Criteria	Volunteers understand how their contributions benefit the organisation, service users and the community
Practice evidence	Volunteers are informed of the organisation's reasons and benefits for involving volunteers.



	Volunteers are provided with feedback on the impact and value of their contribution to the organisation and its work.
Criteria	The organisation acknowledges contribution made by volunteers and the positive impact on the organisation, service users and the community.
Practice evidence	The organisation plans and schedules activities to acknowledge volunteers. Formal and informal acknowledgement of volunteer contribution, value and impact is consistently provided, both within and external to the organisation. The governing body and management are involved in providing volunteer acknowledgement. Acknowledgment is provided direct to individuals and groups of volunteers.
Criteria	Volunteer acknowledgement is appropriate to the volunteer role and respectful of cultural values and perspectives.
Practice evidence	Volunteers are involved in determining appropriate acknowledgement. Volunteer acknowledgement is provided in a variety of public and private formats appropriate to the volunteer role. Activities that acknowledge volunteers align with the volunteer's culture and perspectives.
Criteria	Consistent opportunities are available for volunteers to provide feedback on the organisation's volunteer involvement and the broader organisation's work.
Practice evidence	Mechanisms are in place to actively seek feedback and input from volunteers about their experience as volunteers. Volunteers are provided opportunity to contribute to the review and development of the organisation. A range of methods is used to gain volunteer feedback, appropriate to the volunteers and the roles.
Criteria	Processes are in place to confirm the contribution of current and previous volunteers as appropriate.
Practice evidence	Written statements of service and contribution are provided to volunteers as appropriate. Verbal references of volunteer service and contribution are provided for volunteers as appropriate.



STANDARD 3: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

A culture of volunteer involvement exists throughout the organisation, with effective leadership and management systems supporting valued and safe volunteer contribution.

Effective leadership ensures that the aims and values of volunteer involvement are promoted within the organisation, and that there is clear accountability for the implementation of volunteer involvement.

Effective management ensures that processes and systems are in place to implement positive volunteer involvement, providing a safe and supportive work environment.

Meeting this standard assists the organisation to provide clear direction and guidance for the work of volunteers, understand and mitigate any risks related to involving volunteers, and ensure their health and safety.

Criteria	Responsibilities for leading and managing volunteer involvement are clearly defined and supported.
Practice evidence	Specific responsibility is assigned for providing leadership and managing the implementation of volunteer involvement.
	Volunteer involvement responsibilities are documented through position descriptions, delegation authorities, policies and procedures.
	Staff and governing body members are supported to understand and action their volunteer involvement responsibilities.
	Staff with direct responsibility for volunteer involvement have appropriate qualifications, skills and experience and for the role.
Criteria	Volunteer policies and procedures are communicated, understood, and applied by all people across the organisation.
Practice evidence	Staff, governing body members and volunteers receive information, orientation and training on the organisation's volunteer policies and procedures.
	Compliance with volunteer policies and procedures is regularly monitored and improved.
Criteria	Risk management is applied to the organisation's volunteer involvement.
Practice evidence	Risk management systems are in place to identify, assess and respond to risks relating to volunteer involvement.
	Volunteer risk management is overseen by management and the governing body.
	Volunteers are informed of potential risks and are supported to manage or mitigate risk factors.
Criteria	Effective working relationships with and between volunteers are facilitated by the organisation.
Practice	Structured processes are in place for communicating and meeting with volunteers.



evidence	Grievances from volunteers are managed consistently and equitably.
	Volunteers are provided with opportunity and resources to meet collectively.
Criteria	Processes are in place to protect the health and safety of volunteers.
Practice evidence	Health and safety management policies and procedures address the needs of volunteers.
	Volunteers are adequately insured for personal injury and liability.
	Volunteers have access to post incident debriefing and support.
Criteria	Adequate volunteer involvement records are securely maintained.
Practice evidence	Required information to be collected from volunteers is clearly identified.
eviderice	Information from screening checks for volunteers are documented and kept secured.
	The organisation has documented and implemented processes for securely managing volunteer personal and confidential information that comply with Privacy legislation.
	Records of volunteer contribution, achievements and acknowledgement are maintained by the organisation.
Criteria	Processes are in place to manage relationships with placement or brokering agencies (This criteria only applies to organisations working with placement or brokering agencies where another organisation provides the volunteers (e.g. Centrelink, corporate volunteers, school groups, student placements etc)
Practice evidence	Expectations of volunteer placements and agreements about respective roles of the parties are clearly documented.
	Procedures for addressing disputes or issues with volunteer placements are documented.
	Arrangements and agreements are reviewed on a regular basis.
Criteria	Processes are in place to manage relationships with partner agencies in collaborative activities (This criteria only applies to organisations working with other organisations in a collaborative activity involving volunteers and/or sharing responsibility for particular volunteers)
Practice evidence	Agreed frameworks and practice principles for co-design are clearly documented.
	Expectations of volunteers and agreements about respective roles of the parties are clearly documented.
	Procedures for evaluating progress and outcomes are documented.
	Arrangements and agreements are reviewed on a regular basis.



STANDARD 4: VOLUNTEER ROLES

Volunteers are engaged in meaningful and appropriate roles which contribute to the organisation's aims and objectives at all levels.

Volunteer roles ensure that the work done by volunteers is clearly defined, and that it meets both the needs of the volunteer and the objectives of the organisation.

Meeting this standard assists the organisation to match volunteers with appropriate work roles, provide relevant and satisfying activities for volunteers and ensure that its involvement of volunteers contributes to the organisation's objectives.

Criteria	Volunteer roles are designed to contribute to the organisation's aims and objectives at all levels.
Practice evidence	Descriptions of volunteer roles indicate how the role contributes to the organisation's aims and objectives
Criteria	Volunteer roles are flexible and reflect current trends of volunteer involvement.
Practice evidence	Volunteer roles reflect current developments in volunteering, volunteer availability and ways of involving volunteers.
	Volunteer roles are appropriate for the community or stakeholder groups with which the organisation works.
	Volunteer roles and activities are designed to attract people with relevant skills, and a diversity of experience and interest.
Criteria	Volunteer roles are clearly defined, documented and communicated throughout the organisation.
Practice evidence	Volunteer roles have written descriptions that include duties, responsibilities, skills required, time and designated hours.
	Current volunteer role descriptions are distributed and readily available to all staff and volunteers of the organisation.
Criteria	Volunteer roles are reviewed with input from volunteers and staff.
Practice evidence	Feedback from current and exiting volunteers is sought and used on the relevance and appropriateness of volunteer roles and activities.
	The governing body, management and staff contribute to the development and review of volunteer roles.
Criteria	Volunteers are actively involved and positive about their roles.
Practice evidence	A range of feedback mechanisms are in place to gain feedback from volunteers.



Volunteer role satisfaction data is collected, analysed and used to inform role development.

STANDARD 5: RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Volunteer recruitment and selection strategies are planned, consistent and meet organisation and volunteer needs.

Recruitment and selection ensures that the organisation is effective in attracting appropriate volunteers and in screening to maintain safety and security.

Meeting this standard will assist the organisation ensuring prospective volunteers are provided with adequate information to make informed decisions about working with the organisation and with implementing consistent procedures for assessing, selecting and placing new volunteers.

Criteria	Relevant strategies are used to attract suitably interested, knowledgeable and skilled volunteers.
Practice evidence	Volunteer involvement plan/s guide the recruitment and selection of volunteers. Targeted methods are used to advertise and communicate volunteer opportunities to relevant community groups.
Criteria	Potential volunteers are provided with detailed information about the organisation, the volunteer role and processes throughout recruitment and selection.
Practice evidence	Information is readily available to potential volunteers about the organisation and volunteer roles.
	Details of volunteer roles, organisation expectations of the role, and the recruitment and selection process are provided in print, electronic and face-to-face as relevant to the role.
	An identified contact person is available throughout the volunteer recruitment and selection process.
	Volunteer applicants are informed of recruitment and selection outcomes and offered feedback, as relevant to the role.
Criteria	Volunteers are selected based on their interest, knowledge and skills appropriate to the role, and consistent with anti-discrimination legislation.
Practice evidence	A documented selection process is followed to match volunteer interest, knowledge and skill with suitable roles.
	Volunteer recruitment and selection complies with anti-discrimination and EEC legislation.
Criteria	Screening processes are applied for volunteer roles to maintain the safety and security of service users, staff, volunteers and the organisation.
Practice evidence	Volunteer screening requirements are documented, applied and meet legislative requirements.
	Volunteer reference checks are undertaken as appropriate to the role.



Guidelines are applied to determining the types of convictions or disciplinary actions that preclude people from becoming volunteers.

STANDARD 6: SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Volunteers understand their roles and gain knowledge, skills and feedback needed to safely and effectively carry out their duties.

Support and development ensure that the organisation has processes to ensure that volunteers are equipped to perform their roles well, and that any issues with their performance are managed fairly and consistently.

Meeting this standard assists the organisation to identify and provide the orientation, skill development and ongoing support needed by volunteers, and to manage situations where a volunteer may not be meeting the requirements of their role.

Volunteers are provided with orientation appropriate to their role and responsibility.
Orientation requirements for all volunteer roles are documented and implemented. Volunteer orientation includes information about the organisation, their role and how it
contributes to organisation goals and objectives.
Volunteers are made aware of their rights and responsibilities related to the role and to the organisation.
Volunteers understand and agree to a code of conduct and/or rights and responsibilities statement.
Volunteers' knowledge and skills are reviewed to inform support and development needs.
Processes are in place to regularly review volunteers' skills and knowledge in relation to the roles they carry out.
Volunteers' skills and knowledge are reviewed when new roles and duties are implemented.
Training and development opportunities are planned and provided to meet volunteer knowledge and skill needs.
The organisation's workforce development planning incorporates the needs of volunteers.
Volunteers receive written, verbal and practical instruction on how to perform their roles and responsibilities safely and effectively.
Relevant training and development opportunities are offered to volunteers to meet their knowledge and skill needs for the roles they undertake.
Volunteers are provided with supervision and feedback that supports them to undertake their roles and responsibilities.



Practice evidence	Volunteers are assigned organisation supervisors and support contacts.
	Volunteer supervision and review is conducted for individual and/or teams of volunteers, matched to the roles.
	Feedback is provided to individual and/or teams of volunteers on achievements and areas for development.
Criteria	Changes to the involvement of a volunteer are undertaken fairly and consistently.
Practice evidence	Fair and transparent procedures are in place for changing the role or nature of the involvement of a volunteer.
	Fair and transparent procedures are in place for ending the involvement of a volunteer, for whatever reason.
	Volunteer misconduct issues are promptly identified, recorded and addressed through supervision or remedial action.

STANDARD 7: QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Effective volunteer involvement results from a system of good practice, review and improvement.

Quality management ensures that the organisation has a way of monitoring how well its involvement of volunteers is working, and of identifying and implementing ways of improving the outcomes for both volunteers and the organisation. This includes monitoring and reviewing:

- how well volunteer recruitment and management systems are working for volunteers and the organisation
- the extent to which volunteer involvement is providing a positive impact on the organisation outcomes
- how effectively volunteer time is being used

Meeting this standard assists the organisation to implement good practice in its policies and procedures, implement processes for review and evaluation, and systematically make ongoing positive change.

Criteria	Volunteer involvement strategies, policies and procedures are informed by current best practice and meet legislative requirements.
Practice evidence	The organisation maintains knowledge of current best practice for volunteer involvement.
	Processes are in place to ensure legislative requirements for involving volunteers are documented and addressed.
Criteria	Policies and procedures are implemented to effectively guide all aspects of volunteer involvement.
Practice evidence	The organisation's policies and procedures effectively guide volunteer involvement practice.



	All staff and volunteers are made aware of and understand policies and procedures relating to volunteer involvement.
	Volunteer involvement strategies, policies and procedures are reviewed and improved on a regular schedule.
	Processes are in place for identifying, implementing and communicating required changes to volunteer involvement policies and procedures.
Criteria	Volunteer involvement is regularly reviewed in line with the organisation's evaluation and quality management frameworks.
Practice evidence	Quantitative and qualitative performance data is used to monitor, review and improve the organisation's volunteer involvement across volunteer management systems, effectiveness of volunteer contribution and impact on outcomes.
	Formal feedback from volunteers and staff is used to inform improvements to volunteer involvement.