Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Managing volunteers in aged care

Guidance handbook for Volunteer Managers

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This is a handbook to help aged care Volunteer Managers access training and information, and for aged care providers to support their Volunteer Managers.

Contact the team at agedcarevolunteer@Health.gov.au for questions or feedback.

Contents

Terminology 4
Definitions 4
Overview 5
General volunteer management 6
Where can I speak to other Volunteer Managers in aged care? 7
Volunteer management resources 8
Understanding volunteers and aged care 9
What volunteers should not do in an aged care setting: 9
Recruitment 10
Writing role descriptions 11
Writing effective role advertisements 13
Sample role advertisement 15
Recruitment avenues 16
Inclusive volunteer engagement 17
Onboarding 21
Key stages of onboarding 21
Regulatory requirements for onboarding aged care volunteers 23
Interviewing and selecting applicants 24
Advising on the outcomes of applications 26
How to advise an applicant if they are found suitable for a role 26
How to advise an applicant if they are not found suitable for a role 26
Explaining the volunteer role 27
Other people who may need information about the volunteer role: 28
Complaints, concerns, and incident reporting 29
Training 30
Core training bundle 32
Training programs – template 33
Retention 34
The volunteer-manager relationship 34
Supporting volunteers 35

Recognising volunteers....36
Communicating changes....38
Public health events: volunteer activities and visitor restrictions....39
Meeting volunteer motivations....40
Reviewing volunteer needs....41
When to discuss concerns with a volunteer....42
Exiting volunteers....43
Administration....44
Business basics....44
Reporting tips....45
Keeping up to date with news....46

Terminology

For the purposes of this document, references to 'older people' means older people living in Australia accessing government-funded aged care services. This can include older people in residential aged care, short-term care (including respite care, short term restorative care, and transition care), and those receiving in-home support.

Definitions

If you are looking for the definition of a word or phrase used at any point in this document, the links provided for each topic likely have the detail you are looking for.

Alternatively, the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has created an extensive glossary of common terms used in the aged care sector.

Access the glossary at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/about-us/corporate-documents/aged-care-quality-and-safety-commission-glossary.

Overview

This is a handbook for aged care Volunteer Managers. It is also for aged care providers and volunteer-involving organisations[1] to support their Volunteer Managers. It is **not mandatory** to use, nor is it intended to replace existing programs' volunteer management handbooks. It is intended to support you in your role to access training and information.

An introduction to engaging volunteers in aged care from an organisational perspective is provided in the guidance handbook for providers. You may find the overview and Frequently Asked Questions in that handbook useful.

You may also be interested in a broader range of topics relevant to aged care. You can access these in the 'volunteers in aged care training and resource kit' that this manager handbook complements.

In that kit, you can find information on:

- Self-care and mental health support for you and your volunteers
- Aged care basics, including system overviews, palliative care, end-of-life care, and advance care planning.
- Understanding older people, including person-centred care, communication skills, diversity fundamentals, hearing health, blindness or low vision and trauma.
- Looking out for older people, including elder abuse, advocacy, infection control, first aid, grief, loneliness, and social isolation, counselling and suicide, fire safety, food safety, and support with technology and mobility.
- Volunteer behaviours, including privacy and confidentiality, and professional boundaries. Please note that some behaviours are expected at an organisational level, whilst others may be required by legislation, such as the Code of Conduct for Aged Care (for volunteers engaged by an approved aged care provider).

[1]Volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs) are organisations that provide opportunities for volunteering as part of their operation. Learn more at https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-volunteer-strategy-2022-2027/glossary-key-terms

General volunteer management

Volunteer Managers are critical to the success of volunteering and the support of older people in aged care.

Under the Aged Care Quality Standards, aged care providers are required to have a skilled and qualified workforce, sufficient to deliver and manage safe, respectful, and quality care and services. This includes planning for volunteer management and adequate resourcing and support for Volunteer Managers.

Your local volunteering peak body provides general volunteer management resources and training. Volunteering Australia is the national peak body. The distribution of Volunteering Australia peak bodies is visualised below.

These links will connect you to each Volunteering Australia state and territory peak body training and resources for volunteer managers page:

- Queensland: volunteeringqld.org.au/training-events/
- New South Wales: www.volunteering.com.au/workshops-events/volunteer-management/
- The Australian Capital Territory: www.volunteeringact.org.au/services/training-and-events/
- Victoria: www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/professional-development/training-and-workshops/
- South Australia and the Northern Territory: vsant.org.au/upcoming-learning-and-development/
- Tasmania: volunteeringtas.org.au/training-events/
- Western Australia: www.volunteeringwa.org.au/volunteer-management

Where can I speak to other Volunteer Managers in aged care?

It can be helpful to connect with other Volunteer Managers who have similar experiences to share learnings, compare approaches, and learn about local or national opportunities.

- **General volunteer management:** Volunteering Australia peak bodies in each state and territory often host Volunteer Manager meetings. Find more information at each peak body website.
- **Program-specific meetings:** If you are a manager within a larger volunteering program, it may have a Community of Practice and/or regular meetings. You should have a central program-specific contact to enquire about this.
- **Sector-specific meetings:** Sectors within volunteering may have Volunteer Manager meetings. For example, the NSW Network of Managers of Palliative Care Volunteer Services is open to palliative care Volunteer Manager from NSW and the ACT. The Community Transport Volunteering Network is another example and is open to providers of transport with the Commonwealth Home Support Programme.

We encourage Volunteer Managers to create their own formal or informal networks to connect with peers. You may wish to create a local social media site, meet in person or explore other ways to connect and share your experiences.

Volunteer management resources

Description	Location	Mode
The National Strategy for Volunteering, co-created by stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem, provides a blueprint that will enable volunteering in Australia to thrive.	volunteeringstrategy.org.au/the-strategy/	Webpage
Volunteering Australia's Volunteering Resource Hub is useful to search for advice, information, and guides on volunteer management and other broad topics in volunteering, including the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement. This link will take you to the 'Quick Guide to Volunteer Management'. It's a great place to start exploring topics of interest.	volunteeringhub.org.au/the-guide/	Webpage
Not-For-Profit Law has created a great set of resources for anyone managing volunteers, including a self-help tool. Their 'National Volunteering Guide' covers the differences between volunteers and employees, volunteer safety, unlawful workplace behaviour and privacy.	www.nfplaw.org.au/free-resources/managing-people/managing-volunteers	Webpage
This factsheet on volunteer program management, published by Swan Volunteer Resource Centre, is a quick guide on how to involve volunteers, particularly through the recruitment process and how to advocate for volunteer involvement within an organisation.	volunteeringhub.org.au/achieving-excellence-in-your-volunteer-program-volunteer-program-management-guidelines/	Factsheet
Volunteering Victoria has created a comprehensive guide on best practice volunteer management.	volunteeringhub.org.au/volunteer-management-toolkit/	Guide

Understanding volunteers and aged care

Volunteers in aged care can undertake a variety of roles in many settings. However, it is important that they understand their role and maintain certain boundaries. Some key considerations are listed below.

What volunteers should not do in an aged care setting:

- Volunteers do not and should not replace the role of paid workers or undertake roles that would ordinarily be those of a paid worker.
- Volunteers should not undertake tasks and activities beyond the boundaries of their agreed role description, including clinical tasks that are not captured by the agreed role description.
- Volunteers must not act in a way that conflicts with the Code of Conduct for Aged Care.
- Volunteers must not undertake tasks and activities that endanger themselves or others, in alignment with organisations' work health and safety obligations.

Find more information about aged care:

Description	Location	Mode
A summary of the Australian aged care system by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, with links to more information.	www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/aged-care	Webpage
Aged care provider obligations under the Quality Standards extend to volunteers. In addition, you should familiarise yourself with provider obligations under the *Aged Care Act 1997*.	www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/standards	Webpage

Recruitment

The next two sections will discuss role descriptions and role advertisements.

These are discussed together because while they are used at different stages of the engagement process, the role description will inform the role advertisement.

A volunteer role description is the formal written description of the role.

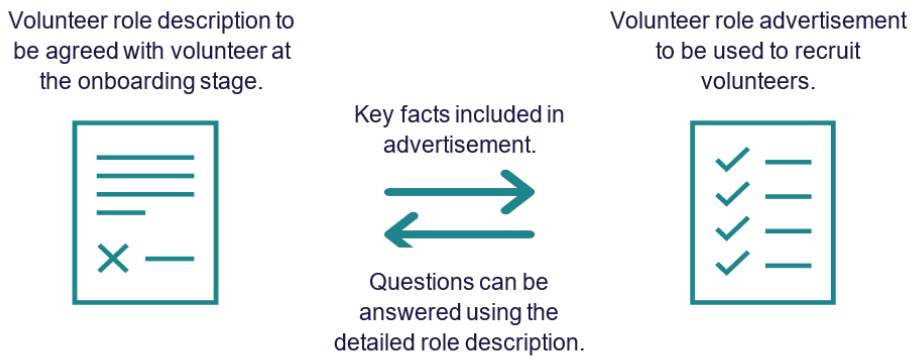
- It outlines the purpose of the role, tasks and activities that a volunteer will be asked to do, as well as what experience and skills they will need.
- It includes what supports the organisation offers, and other key facts that a volunteer must know such as their obligations to comply with a code of conduct and their reporting duties.
- It will be part of the formal onboarding stage after a volunteer has undergone the necessary background screening checks and is ready to be inducted into a role.

A volunteer role advertisement is the way you will attract potential volunteers and let them know about the role.

- This could be a call-out on a library poster or on an online role listing.
- It is intended to capture a person's interest, let them know the key facts about a role, and direct them to take action like contacting a Volunteer Manager.

You will attract more interest and the right person if you are clear on the qualities and skills that the volunteer will need to have.

It is difficult to write an accurate role advertisement without first having a role description drafted. This is because you will have to include key facts about the role in the advertisement and be ready to answer questions about the role.



Writing role descriptions

It is important to have a role description because it defines the role of the volunteer, outlines what training needs to be undertaken, time commitments, and helps other people in your organisation to know what the volunteer will be doing.

The role description will be discussed and agreed to between a Volunteer Manager and volunteer at the onboarding and induction stage. Read more at ‘Explaining the volunteer role’ later in this handbook.

Key information to include in a role description:

- ☐ The purpose of the role and anticipated outcomes or goals, including both goals for the older person/s receiving support and volunteer.
- ☐ Key tasks and activities that the volunteer will be undertaking.
- ☐ The rights and responsibilities of the volunteer.
- ☐ Expected time commitment, including start and end dates if known.
- ☐ Skills, qualifications, or experience needed. This includes screening requirements.
- ☐ Agreement to adhere to certain behaviours, for example an internal code of conduct.
- ☐ Any supports you provide, including any policy for covering out of pocket expenses and expectations regarding training.
- ☐ Any risks (including health and safety risks) as well as agreed mitigation strategies.
- ☐ Reporting responsibilities, including main supervisor, procedures for emergencies, and methods to maintain contact.

Providing a clear list of rights and responsibilities in the role description is an effective tool to ensure agreement on what a volunteer can expect from you and the organisation, and what you and the organisation can expect from a volunteer. It should be referred to at the onboarding stage, and later if any issues are raised.

The following factsheet can be used as a starting point, but should always be adapted for the specific requirements of each organisation and volunteer role: www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1376971192VAVolunteerRightsandchecklist.pdf

The following table lists resources that provide further detail around how to design volunteer role descriptions. These include sample templates.

Templates provided in these resources should not be used unless they are updated to align with each organisation's program requirements and procedures.

Role descriptions should also be discussed with each volunteer with an opportunity for questions and amendments.

Find more information:

Description	Location	Mode
A guide on how to write a general volunteer role description.	volunteeringhub.org.au/writing-a-role-description/	Factsheet
This is an example of a volunteer role description template. It can be useful to use as a starting point. It is important to tailor a description to each role, organisation, sector and jurisdiction.	volunteering.freshdesk.com/support/solutions/articles/51000310660-volunteer-role-description	Template
This guide takes you through the volunteer role design process in more depth, as well as providing templates for position descriptions.	www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/Volunteering_Australia_Volunteer_Roles_Toolkit+1-1.pdf	Guide
This 1 hour video explains how to write an effective volunteer position description.	www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5EYxN39Zcs	Longer video

Writing effective role advertisements

An effective and accurate advertisement for volunteering roles is important to recruitment and retention. Here are some tips:

Checklist	Tips for advertising for a role
✓	**Use plain English**. If you are using jargon or abbreviations, explain what the word or abbreviation means first. If you are recruiting volunteers who speak other languages, consider presenting your advertisement in that language.
✓	**Use a broader emotional narrative.** Try to embed the values you and your volunteers uphold. Promote the impact that volunteers will have and the benefits of volunteering to the older person and volunteer. Use emotive words and include a call to action.
✓	**Explain what the role will entail**; be accurate and honest about what a volunteer will experience. This includes the tasks and activities they will undertake, expected time commitment asked of a volunteer as well as any experience or qualifications needed. Whilst the role advertisement does not have to include every detail of the role, you could have further information available such as frequently asked questions so that potential volunteers can find clear answers to common questions and make informed choices. **Frequently asked questions** for aged care volunteers are available at www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/frequently-asked-questions-for-potential-volunteers-in-aged-care which you can use as a starting point for each individual role.
✓	**If you are looking for a specific skillset, background or interest, open with this to reach the most interested people.** It may be useful to frame the volunteering role around an interest rather than job. This is because many people may not identify with a volunteering job but may be interested in using certain skills or making an impact in a certain field. For instance, you could put out a call for someone who can play instruments, has an interest in gardening, or shares a mutual interest to the older people they will be engaging with rather than a general role description.

Checklist	Tips for advertising for a role
✓	**Acknowledge key aspects of the application process.** These can differ between roles but could include application forms, screening checks, vaccination requirements, drivers licences, interviews and/or references checks.
✓	**Explain support mechanisms that you offer.** For example, support with filling out onboarding documents, cost reimbursements etc. You may be able to offer a buddy system or trial period for volunteers who may be unsure about whether the role is for them. This is also a good opportunity to explain supports that are provided if a volunteer encounters a distressing or challenging experience while volunteering. For example, that a contact person will be available to receive any reported concerns or to provide advice, that volunteers will be supported to understand their role and responsibilities in the organisation's incident management system, and that further training is available if interested.
✓	**Let potential volunteers hear from current volunteers.** This could be from a written testimony, case study, video, or opportunity to meet current volunteers.
✓	**Recognise the importance of community.** Volunteering is part of a collective effort to help others in our community. Volunteering also has wider benefits for the community, including strengthening ties and building new connections.

Find more information:

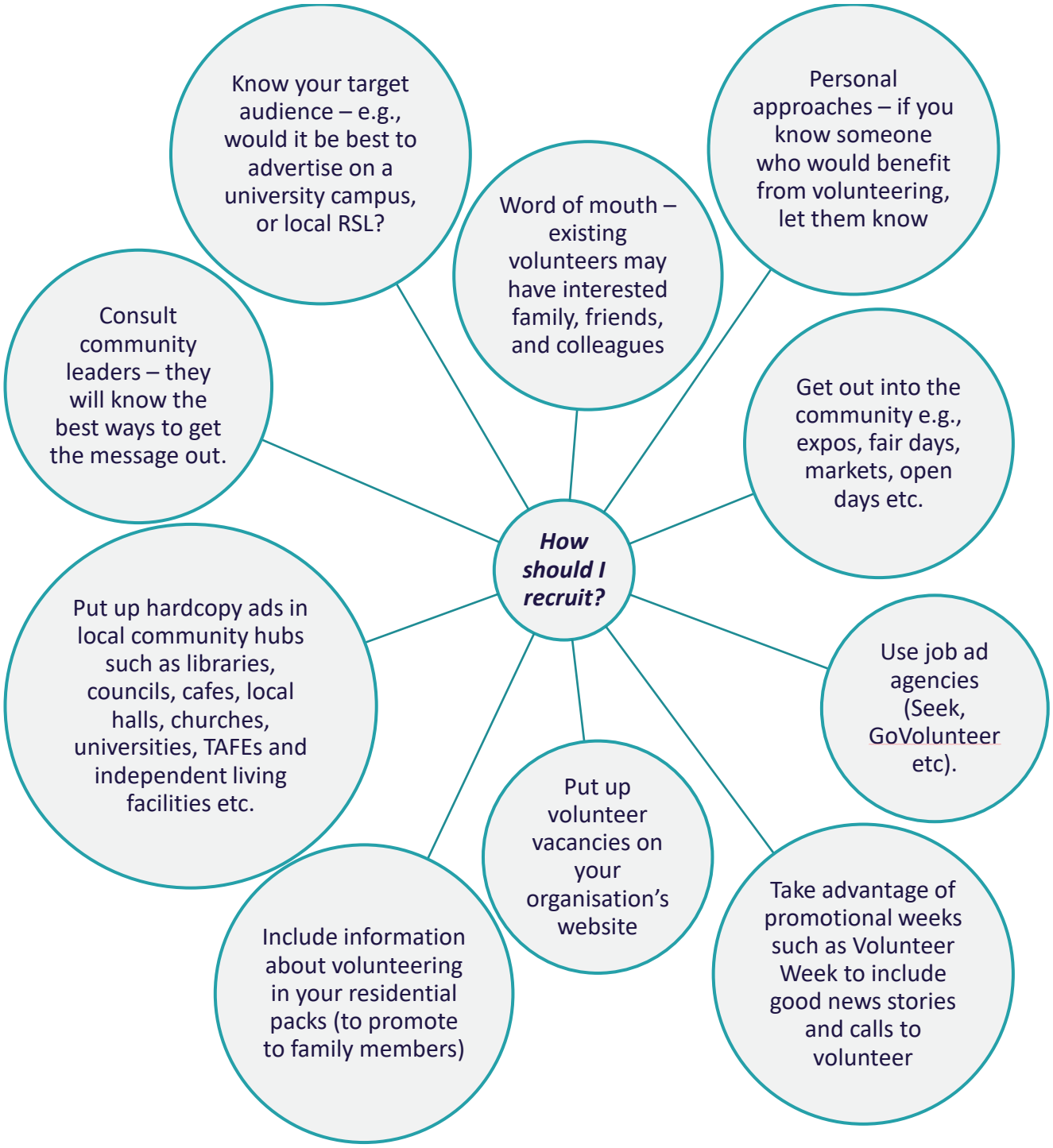
Description	Location	Mode
Volunteer West has created some factsheets on recruitment and writing role descriptions (style similar to role advertisement).	www.volunteerwest.org.au/organisations	Factsheet
GCF Global has self-paced tutorials about common media platforms with no login required. You can explore simple instructions on using platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.	edu.gcfglobal.org/en/topics/socialmedia/#	Webpage

Sample role advertisement

Sample text	Annotations
It can take as little as 2 hours a week for you to make a real difference in an older person's life.	Time is a significant perceived barrier. This addresses it early.
At [organisation name], we are looking for enthusiastic volunteers to help us support older people in [location].	Values of the volunteer and organisation
There are roles available to suit lots of interests, including helping in our community garden, transport to and from [name of local community centre], and assisting with arts and crafts activities.	What roles are available.
You can get active and meet new people while knowing you're giving back to the community and bringing some happiness to someone in your community.	The benefits of volunteering, including the community aspect.
You just need to be over 18. We will help you complete the necessary screening checks and basic training. If you decide to help in a transport role, you may need a current [state/territory] drivers' licence. You will be supervised by our volunteer manager and can be matched with a volunteer buddy.	Key criteria and supports. Training
Come down to meet the team between 9-5pm Tuesdays to Wednesdays at [physical address] or call [phone number]. We will be able to talk you through the roles available and what you will need to get started, including a short application form.	Call to action and how to contact the organisation.
You can learn more about what we do, including hearing from some of our current volunteers, at [site name]. We look forward to meeting you!	Link to further information

Recruitment avenues

The most effective recruitment is often tailored to your local community. Here are some ideas:



Inclusive volunteer engagement

Volunteers can be diverse, from a variety of backgrounds, life experiences, cultures, and characteristics. These can include, but are not limited to:

- people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people from LGBTQIA+ communities (this includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual people as well as other diverse gender identities and sexualities)
- people who live in rural or remote areas
- people who are financially or socially disadvantaged
- veterans
- people living with disability
- people who are Deaf or hard of hearing
- people who are blind or have low vision
- people living with cognitive impairment, including dementia
- Forgotten Australians and Care Leavers

Quick tip:

Empower volunteers and communities to lead you in what they share about themselves, what they can offer in their roles, what their strengths are and what supports they might need. The best way to do this is by fostering trust between yourself, the volunteer, and community, including by:

- avoiding assumptions or stereotypes
- ensuring the volunteer environment is safe and comfortable
- maintaining respectful conversations.

Inclusion occurs when people feel valued, respected and have equal or equitable access to participate as a volunteer.

Here are some ideas for inclusive volunteer engagement:

Check	Volunteer engagement ideas
✓	**Approach communities:** If you are unsure about how to involve a particular community, existing community leaders or local groups can help you in getting the word out and adapting your approach.
✓	**Signal inclusion:** Show that you are inclusive and welcome volunteers from all backgrounds. Public perceptions can be an early barrier to recruitment. For example, people may assume that organisations are only looking for young volunteers and may be worried about being too old for a role. In this case, you could clarify the age requirements and include a testimony from an older volunteer. Other ways to signal inclusion includes using community flags, inclusive language, share stories of diverse volunteers, have an inclusive volunteer statement on your website etc. The important thing is to be genuine.
✓	**Address barriers:** People can often experience barriers that make becoming a volunteer more difficult. Having an awareness and understanding how these barriers affect people from certain groups can help address and overcome them and communicate any supports you can offer. Questions that you can ask yourself here include: • are applications explicitly encouraged from people of all backgrounds and lived experiences? • is the process to apply accessible? • is support provided to those who may require it? • are volunteers provided with an effective opportunity to identify if they need support or adjustments throughout the application, onboarding, and beyond?
✓	**Match appropriately:** Consider the motivations and skillsets of your volunteers. Match them to roles that are best suited for them and benefit the older person receiving volunteer support, and regularly check-in about whether the role still suits them. Where possible, tailor volunteer roles to the individual.

Find more information:

Description	Location	Mode
The Department of Health and Aged Care offers a free translation service to help eligible aged care providers and peak bodies communicate with older people in their preferred language.	diversityagedcare.health.gov.au/	Webpage
Anglicare Southern Queensland has created an 'Inclusive Engagement' toolkit that could be a good place to get started. You can access short downloadable factsheets in multiple languages that include: • an introduction to inclusive care • inclusive communication • short factsheets on: ○ LGBTQIA+ people ○ People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds ○ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ○ Diverse older people Videos are also available in several languages.	anglicaresq.org.au/about-us/inclusive-engagement-toolkit/#	Webpage factsheets, videos
Volunteering Australia's Knowledge Base contains information on a range of topics, including engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.	volunteering.freshdesk.com/support/solutions	Webpage
Volunteer West has a Culturally Inclusive Volunteer Toolkit to help Volunteer Managers looking to implement culturally responsive practices.	www.volunteerwest.org.au/culturally-inclusive-volunteer-toolkit-1	Factsheet
Volunteering Victoria has a guide on how to involve volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It covers	volunteeringhub.org.au/managing-volunteers-	Factsheet

Description	Location	Mode
critical stages of the volunteer management cycle, including recruitment, induction, and training.	from-a-cald-background/	
Volunteering Australia has a guide on how to involve culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers, covering recruitment tips, motivations and addressing common concerns organisations may have.	volunteeringhub.org.au/involving-volunteers-from-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-backgrounds/	Factsheet
Volunteering Victoria has a factsheet on how to create a safe and inclusive volunteering environment for LGBTQIA+ volunteers.	volunteeringhub.org.au/lgbtiq-volunteers-inclusive-practice/	Factsheet
Volunteering Queensland has a factsheet on the main considerations when involving older volunteers.	volunteeringhub.org.au/working-with-older-volunteers/	Factsheet
The 'Every WORD Counts' guide provides helpful tips on how to avoid ageism in your language. Explore the resources on the campaign materials page or scroll down to access the guide directly.	www.everyagecounts.org.au/campaign_materials	Factsheet
Volunteering Victoria (for the Victoria ALIVE project) has a factsheet on how to involve older volunteers living with disability.	volunteeringhub.org.au/aged-friendly-volunteering/	Factsheet
Victoria ALIVE has a checklist to assist organisations be accessible to volunteers living with disability.	volunteeringhub.org.au/is-your-organisation-accessible/	Factsheet

Onboarding

The onboarding process can be the most difficult part of a volunteering experience, often taking months to complete. Keep in touch with volunteers throughout the process to ensure their continued engagement and enthusiasm.

Key stages of onboarding

A checklist can help organise the various onboarding elements. The below list covers key stages you should consider. However, it is not a full list and should only be used to begin thinking about all the stages in each program.

- ☐ Check that the volunteer meets the program's eligibility criteria. For example, age, location, and availability.
- ☐ If the volunteering role is with another organisation, check that the role is still available and for any additional onboarding requirements.
- ☐ Confirm and undertake the screening checks a volunteer will need or may already have. For example, a National Police Check or NDIS Worker Screening Check.
- ☐ Undertake any additional screening requirements, such as interviews or qualification checks (e.g., driving licences).
- ☐ Discuss and agree to a volunteer role description.
- ☐ Prepare an on-site onboarding plan, training plan, list of key contacts, and Frequently Asked Questions.

Quick tip:

Explain the reasons for screening checks, training, and other onboarding processes, not just that they are required. For example, screening and reporting is important to protect older vulnerable people, while work health and safety procedures are important to protect the safety of the volunteer.

Find more information:

Description	Location	Mode
VolunteeringACT has created a comprehensive guide to onboarding volunteers, covering planning, policies and procedures, induction, training and evaluation. This guide provides information, checklists and templates relevant to both volunteers and employees. The resource is for volunteers generally. You should always consider the needs of each particular aged care volunteer and program. This includes taking note of aged care regulatory requirements (see next section).	volunteeringhub.org.au/guide-to-onboarding/	Guide and supporting resources.
Not-for-Profit Law has created a guide on some legal obligations involved in engaging volunteers. You can find information on volunteer safety (negligence, work health and safety, managing risk, insurance etc), and unlawful workplace behaviour (for example, sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying and victimisation).	www.nfplaw.org.au/free-resources/managing-people/managing-volunteers#owe	Webpage

Regulatory requirements for onboarding aged care volunteers

Volunteers in aged care are considered part of the workforce. Under the *Aged Care Act 1997*, an aged care worker includes a volunteer engaged by an approved aged care provider. You can also read the definitions of 'volunteer' and 'workforce' in the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's glossary at: https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/about-us/corporate-documents/aged-care-quality-and-safety-commission-glossary

Description	Location	Mode
The Department of Health and Aged Care issued Worker Screening Guidelines, which applies to volunteers.	www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/aged-care-worker-screening-guidelines?language=en	Guidance
This website will introduce you to the responsibilities of approved aged care providers. Where a provider has responsibilities that relate to staff and the care and services those staff deliver, these also extend to volunteers.	www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/providing-aged-care-services/responsibilities#record-keeping-in-aged-care	Webpage
Approved aged care providers must comply with the Aged Care Quality Standards. There are 8 Standards. Standard 7 covers workforce training (including volunteer training). Guidance on the Standards is available.	www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/standards	Webpage
The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission has created a resource package for volunteers and Volunteer Managers on the Code of Conduct for Aged Care, the Serious Incident Response Scheme, and their complaints handling process. It includes videos, factsheets, and online learning modules (no certificates). Approved aged care providers have a responsibility to train and support staff, including volunteers, on the Code of Conduct and information management systems.	www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/volunteers-aged-care	Webpage

Interviewing and selecting applicants

If your organisation has a policy that applicants for volunteer roles need to be interviewed, it is a good idea to have clear procedures so that all interviews are conducted fairly and effectively.

Key considerations for interviews:

- ☐ Explain to the applicant that an interview will be taking place. Agree on a time and place that works for both of you.
- ☐ Ask if they will need any adjustments made to ensure accessibility such as time, location or format of the interview.
- ☐ Explain to the applicant the purpose of the interview. Consider letting the applicant know what questions will be asked so that they can be prepared and less worried. Interviews can be a stressful experience for many people.
- ☐ Prepare the questions you will be asking to ensure consistency between interviews. You could prepare a list of criteria to assess each applicant against, split between 'essential' and 'desirable' attributes. Ask yourself what it would take to pass or fail an interview, and what the key things you are looking for in an interview.
- ☐ Check that the interview questions and selection criteria relate to the responsibilities, and requirements written in the prepared role description.
- ☐ On the interview day, be punctual and polite. Use everyday language and avoid acronyms. Ensure you set aside enough time for the interview so that you are not rushed or interrupted.
- ☐ Allow time for the applicant to ask questions about the role and organisation. This is a good chance to see what questions they may have and any worries they may want to raise.

Find more information:

Description	Location	Mode
A brief guide on how to conduct an interview with potential volunteers	volunteeringhub.org.au/guide-to-interviewing-volunteers/	Factsheet

Advising on the outcomes of applications

Regardless of the outcome of each application, it is important to always follow up in a timely manner. Ensure you set aside some time after an interview to adequately review your interview notes, reflect on the interview and record the results with an outcome and reasoning.

How to advise an applicant if they are found suitable for a role

- ☐ Advise them in a timely manner and provide them with some time accept or decline the offer. An offer may be conditional on their completion of screening checks and training.
- ☐ Explain what the next steps would be if they did accept the offer, including time expected to complete the onboarding process. This includes potential delays around screening and administrative processes.
- ☐ Agree on the next steps, for example the next meeting or the review and completion of paperwork.

How to advise an applicant if they are not found suitable for a role

- ☐ Advise them in a timely manner. Thank them for their interest in the role. Be clear, polite and respectful.
- ☐ Provide the reasons why they were unsuccessful. It is useful to have your records on hand so that you can refer to the interview notes made against each selection criteria.
- ☐ If appropriate in the circumstances, you may be able to refer them to another organisation or volunteering role.

Explaining the volunteer role

It is important that volunteers understand their role. Sometimes they will have clear, straightforward duties. However, sometimes the lines between a volunteer's and paid staff's duties may become blurred. It is important to be prepared for grey areas. Guidance should be provided to a volunteer early on.

Here are some things to consider when you are onboarding volunteers.

Checklist	Things to consider
✓	**Explain the volunteer role and put this in writing.** Give the volunteer a copy of their role description and give them an opportunity to raise questions or adjust their duties. Explain what they can and cannot do in the aged care setting as a volunteer, and their rights and responsibilities. As explained in the volunteer role description section, these should be written clearly as well as explained verbally.
✓	**Explain the boundaries between the volunteer role and paid staff.** Volunteers do not replace paid staff. Instead, they complement the work of paid staff and work together to raise the quality of life for older people receiving volunteer support.
✓	**Explain the role of the volunteer in the aged care provider's incident management system and complaint management system.** The volunteer must understand their responsibilities in these systems, and who to report relevant information to in the organisation. They may also be provided with the key contacts for clinical questions or changes they notice (aged care provider staff such as registered nurses, lifestyle coordinators etc.)
✓	**Give the volunteer the contact details of key organisations.** This can help them provide advice if an issue arises beyond their set role or which they may want to pass on to older people receiving volunteer support. This could include the details of the Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN) (advocacy services), and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission (complaints and incidents).

Quick tip:

Give a clear explanation of who is responsible for what in the organisation. This will help a volunteer understand who to talk to in certain circumstances. It could look like an organisational flowchart and in-person introductions.

Other people who may need information about the volunteer role:

The following groups should also understand the volunteer's role and boundaries:

- ✓ The older person receiving volunteer support
- ✓ Any other organisation that supervises the volunteer
- ✓ Aged care staff
- ✓ An older person's legal family, carers, and/or family of choice

Complaints, concerns, and incident reporting

Communication is not just from an organisation and/or manager to a volunteer. It is also from a volunteer to their manager, care staff, nurses, general practitioners, and family carers.

A volunteer is often well positioned to notice changes in an older person's health, mood and living circumstance. They may want to raise concerns or discuss changing care needs.

Aged care providers must have procedures in place to provide a clear process for staff, including volunteers, to raise and escalate concerns (of their own, or on behalf of the older person). It must be clear to a volunteer that appropriate reporting is within their role as part of an organisation's incident and complaint management systems.

Find volunteer and Volunteer Manager resources on complaints and reporting requirements, including the Serious Incident Response Scheme, at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/volunteers-aged-care

Other ways to facilitate effective communication could be:

- Providing briefings or advice from care staff familiar with an older person receiving volunteer support.
- Guidance on the provider's processes for raising concerns, changes, or issues. This could be a mechanism (like forms, a centralised register) or a contact person (a manager, a clinical staff member).
- Looping back with updates on actions taken when a volunteer raises any issues or concerns.

It can also be a good idea to be aware of the advocacy and complaints pathways open to people engaged in the aged care system, such as:

- the Older Person's Advocacy Network (OPAN)
- the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.

Training

Formal training is important to safe and effective volunteering in aged care. However, training can be overwhelming for new volunteers and seen as unnecessary for long-time volunteers or those with clinical backgrounds. Any training provided should be in line with the role that the volunteer is undertaking. Here are some quick tips:

Checklist	Quick tips for formal training
✓	**Prepare your training approach.** To avoid confusing a volunteer, have a pre-prepared template of required training and any extra training you can offer. This can be used to list training, record whether it has been provided or completed, and be flexible to changes.
✓	**Split mandatory training from optional training.** Some topics such as workplace health and safety, the Serious Incident Response Scheme, the Code of Conduct for Aged Care and basic knowledge of older people may be mandatory within your organisation. Ensure that volunteers understand which training they must do, and which training is encouraged but not required.
✓	**Training should be matched to roles, volunteers' existing skills, and the circumstances of the older person.** Many volunteers come to their roles from long careers in nursing or social work. It is important to know the background of a volunteer and to apply that when you provide training or additional resources. On the other hand, some volunteers will want more intensive training to help them prepare for an unfamiliar environment. Some older people receiving volunteer support may have backgrounds that make particular training more important, such as dementia or trauma.
✓	**The mode of training should be suited to the volunteer.** Some volunteers will prefer to complete online training, while others may prefer offline, printed copies of training or resources. Others may prefer in-person training or group sessions. Where possible, provide training in a mode which suits their needs and situation.
✓	**Prepare for on-the-job training.** It is likely that a part of training will be on-the-job. Recognise this and apply strategies to ensure it is a good experience. For example, by briefing staff who will be providing this training, and/or by setting up a formal buddy system.

How much training should I give? To begin with, you may prefer to adopt a light-touch training program requiring volunteers to only undertake core training topics. Then, you may choose to provide them with further training that they would benefit from or that they show an interest in.

The onboarding stage may take some time. To maintain engagement, training in core topics can be useful. However, you should assess each situation and only require training if it is likely that a volunteer will ultimately be placed in a role.

At this early point, broad background information about aged care and the role may be appropriate.

Once a volunteer is established, you can encourage them to undertake further training if they express an interest in or that you believe they would benefit from.

Informal training happens when volunteers can connect as a peer group. The ability to meet with other volunteers undertaking similar roles is important as it can help them share both positive and challenging experiences and compare approaches. It can also help volunteers feel less overwhelmed and develops a valued aspect of volunteering: social connection.

The Department of Health and Aged Care has created a volunteers in aged care training and resource kit to help managers in training volunteers.

Core training bundle

This online core bundle is recommended and in total takes approximately 2 hours. The core bundle should be relevant to all aged care volunteers. Any additional training that is needed in the volunteering role can then be added on to the core bundle.

Core bundle: volunteers in aged care training:

Mode	Minutes	Topic	Learning provider
	10	The Australian Aged Care System	
Learning modules	10	Person-centred care	Wicking Institute Aged Care Modules
	10	Falls prevention	
	10	The Role of the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and the Code of Conduct for Aged Care – volunteers	
Learning modules and factsheets	10	The Serious Incident Response Scheme – volunteers	Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
	10	The complaints process – volunteers	
	60	Advocacy training	The Older Person's Advocacy Network
Webpage	n/a	Infection control and hand hygiene	Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

Training programs – template

You may choose to plan a training schedule using a table such as the one below, customised to your needs. For example, you could specify proof of training (certificates), due date, and follow-up strategies.

Template training schedule – for optional use, intended to be customised:

Volunteer: Click or tap here to enter text.

Date commencing: Click or tap to enter a date.

Pre-commencement training:

Broad topic	Title	Completed?	Date completed
		☐	
		☐	
		☐	
		☐	
		☐	

Insert notes: (questions raised, follow-up strategies, schedule for later discussions etc.)

Post-commencement training:

Broad topic	Title	Completed?	Date completed
		☐	
		☐	

Retention

The volunteer-manager relationship

Volunteers often say that their relationship with a direct supervisor is a key reason they either became involved in volunteering or remain in their volunteering role. A good relationship also encourages the early identification of any issues and provides an opportunity for effective feedback.

Here are some quick tips for setting up and maintaining a good volunteer-manager relationship:

Checklist	Quick tips on setting up good relationships
✓	**Identify yourself or someone else as a volunteer's direct supervisor and main contact.** This should happen as soon as you know who the direct supervisor, manager or coordinator will be. Volunteers should know who they will be reporting to and should not feel isolated or left to their own devices. Provide contact numbers or emails that they can use in an emergency or to discuss issues (for example if they cannot attend a volunteering session).
✓	**Set up regular meetings between a volunteer and their manager or direct supervisor.** These can be formal or informal, online or in-person. Regular contact means a volunteer has an opportunity to raise any questions or concerns and has an easy way to get in contact with their supervisor.
✓	**Give feedback to volunteers.** Feedback should include whether the volunteer has completed their duties well. Sometimes this goes unsaid and volunteers can be left uncertain. Feedback can also be a way to suggest changes without becoming too negative, or a chance to give positive feedback, recognition, and gratitude.

Supporting volunteers

It is important to look out for both the physical and mental safety of volunteers. Sometimes, volunteers can face challenging situations. They must understand who and where they can go to for support in these situations.

Some situations where a volunteer may need extra support and/or supervision include where an older person that they support:

- has experienced trauma and could behave in unexpected ways.
- is experiencing health conditions that require different supports.
- has passed away.

Volunteers can also have challenges in their personal lives that affect their mental and physical health.

Ensure that volunteers know they can speak to you, or another key contact person, if any issues arise or if they want to discuss something.

Depending on your organisation's policies, you may be able to connect a volunteer to your Employee Assistance Program or a similar service.

End of Life Directions for Aged Care (ELDAC) has a virtual 'self-care room' for aged care workers (including volunteers) with opportunities to:

- pause and reflect,
- learn about self-care,
- cope with death and dying,
- create a self-care plan.

You can encourage volunteers to explore this room at www.eldac.com.au/tabid/7117/Default.aspx.

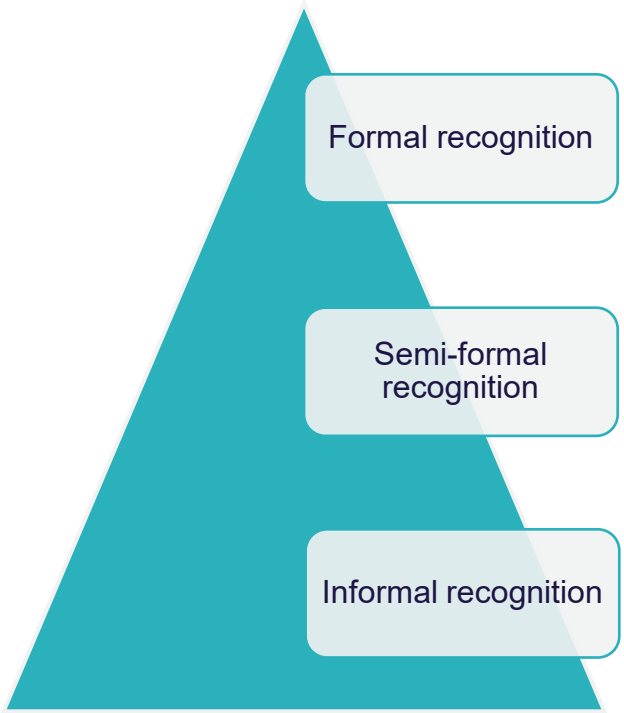
Head to Health can connect volunteers to mental health support and resources. Explore information, resources, and links to services at www.headtohealth.gov.au/

More self-care resources, mental health supports, and training in several topics including trauma and dementia are available at https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/volunteers-in-aged-care-training-and-resource-kit-for-volunteers-and-volunteer-managers.

Recognising volunteers

While many volunteers give their time without expectations of recognition, they always appreciate gestures of thanks from their manager, the organisation, and older people receiving volunteer support.

Recognition can happen on an everyday basis or as a one-off formal event and can come from many different people. People can say thank you to volunteers in simple ways every day to show appreciation. Here is a simple breakdown of recognition types:



Formal recognition looks like official award nominations, certificates of appreciation and written articles in newsletters or websites.

Semi-formal recognition includes morning teas, lunches, coffee, volunteer dinners, small gifts, and gift vouchers. This can also include badges, pins and uniforms.

Informal recognition includes everyday expressions of gratitude such as verbal thanks, greeting volunteers by their names and including them in staff meetings or communications.

How have you been going with your duties?

Is there anything you would like to change?

What questions do you have at this point?

My personal circumstances have changed, can we accommodate this in my duties?

An incident occurred last week, who should I talk to about that?

I've been feeling really burnt out recently.

Is there any information you can give me about dementia?

Genuine recognition also relies on a volunteer's feelings of belonging in an organisation. Volunteers want to be recognised and respected by their organisation, manager, staff, older people receiving volunteer support and their families. Here are some quick tips:

Checklist	Quick tips for recognising volunteers
✓	Ensure the organisation (top management) understands the importance of volunteers and takes actions to show this appreciation. Culture comes from the top.
✓	Ensure staff are aware of volunteers, know what a volunteer's duties are, and who the volunteers are (names, responsibilities, days volunteering, support needed etc.) Looping in staff will stop potential tension between staff and volunteers.
✓	Ensure older people receiving volunteer support know who volunteers are and that they are not paid staff. Volunteers sometimes report that older people they are supporting treat them like paid staff and request things beyond their role. This should be avoided.

Find more information:

Description	Location	Mode
Volunteering Australia has a comprehensive list of ways to recognise volunteers.	volunteeringhub.org.au/101-ways-to-recognise-your-volunteers/	Factsheet
Volunteering Victoria has a high-level guide on best practice volunteer management to support higher retention rates.	volunteeringhub.org.au/managing-volunteers-for-retention/	Factsheet

Communicating changes

Effective communication is critical to volunteer management, from the onboarding process, the beginning of a volunteering role, through to the end of a volunteering role. Here are some quick tips:

Checklist	Effective communication tips
✓	**Check how your volunteers would like to be contacted.** Some people would rather be sent emails, while others may like to be contacted by phone or text. Alternatively, you may have a group Facebook or WhatsApp chat. Where reasonable, it is best to check and keep records of preferred contact methods. This is particularly important in emergency or unexpected situations such as last-minute roster changes.
✓	**Notify volunteers of changes in your availability and contact preferences.** If you will be unavailable for a period of time or prefer to be contacted by email only etc., let your volunteers know. Where possible, let them know an alternative contact person who they could reach out to.
✓	**Ensure volunteers are on relevant email distribution lists.** For example, the organisation's email distribution list for staff that could include updates on service delivery, one-off training events, recognition events etc.
✓	**Notify volunteers as soon as possible if there are changes to their volunteering role.** For example, if an aged care service is experiencing a shutdown period or quarantine and the volunteer may have reduced hours of visitation, changed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) procedures etc.
✓	**Notify volunteers as soon as possible if an older person they volunteer with regularly or provide support to has rapidly deteriorating health conditions or has passed away.** Offer support and let them know if there is an opportunity to visit (or attend the funeral in the case of a death). In all circumstances, consider factors such as whether it is appropriate and whether the family consents etc.

Public health events: volunteer activities and visitor restrictions

Outbreaks of infectious illnesses, like COVID-19, in residential aged care homes or in the community, can be a risk to the health and wellbeing of older people, volunteers, staff and families. If an outbreak occurs volunteer activities could be restricted.

In the case of residential aged care, **The Sector Code for Visiting in Aged Care Homes** ('the Code') includes volunteers as Essential Visitors; a volunteer may be a Named Visitor where an aged care resident does not have a Partner-in-Care.

The Code can be read at cota.org.au/policy/aged-care-reform/agedcarevisitors/

Residential aged care providers should familiarise themselves with guidance on screening and managing visitors, available at www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/managing-covid-19/prevent-and-prepare-in-residential-aged-care#screening-and-managing-visitors.

Both providers and volunteers should familiarise themselves with COVID-19 advice for visitors to residential aged care homes, available at www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/managing-covid-19/for-older-people-and-carers/for-people-in-residential-aged-care-homes-and-visitors#advice-for-visitors.

Home care providers can read corresponding COVID-19 advice for in-home aged care at www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/managing-covid-19/for-in-home-providers.

Find more information:

Description	Location	Mode
This factsheet summarises key COVID-19 takeaways for Volunteer Managers and provides tips for communicating with and engaging volunteers. Similar guides for volunteers, potential volunteers, and staff working alongside volunteers is available on Volunteering WA's website.	www.volunteeringwa.org.au/resources/aged-care	Factsheet
Volunteering WA has published a basic excel template for record keeping of volunteer details.	volunteeringhub.org.au/volunteer-database/	Template

Meeting volunteer motivations

When you are managing volunteers, remember that while they are there to help older people, they are likely to have other needs that have motivated their choice to volunteer. For example, many volunteers join up because of the social side to volunteering. Others join because of an interest in building professional skills or a career. It's important to keep these different motivations in mind when managing a volunteer group. This is important because if volunteer needs are not met, your organisation risks losing them.

	Needs include:	How you could meet them:
	Emotional: the volunteer wants to do good and give back to the community.	Give feedback on how their volunteering has affected older person/s or the community. This could be an update, good news stories, statistics etc.
	Social: the volunteer wants to become part of a community or create friendships.	Create opportunities for volunteers to meet and interact with each other regularly. This could be morning teas, lunches or group chats.
	Intergenerational interest: the volunteer wants to connect with people from another generation or people who are different from themselves.	Design roles and match volunteers based on their expressed interests or motivations.
	Professional: the volunteer wants to develop their professional skills, practice their skills or is undertaking a study placement.	Create opportunities for volunteers to upskill or use existing skills. Understand the vocational requirements for students.
	Financial: the volunteer needs to volunteer in order to receive a welfare payment (or believes they have to).	Understand the regulatory framework and processes in these situations, and keep in mind their interest levels may be apparent to older people receiving volunteer support. Match volunteers to their interests. Learn more about mutual obligations at Services Australia.

Reviewing volunteer needs

It can be helpful to have a regular review of volunteer progress and needs. This could be annual, quarterly, or monthly depending on the volunteer and role.

Reviews can provide a space for volunteers to raise topics of concern. For example, volunteers may want:

- More information or training on subjects that were not included in their orientation. A training and resources kit is available at https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/volunteers-in-aged-care-training-and-resource-kit-for-volunteers-and-volunteer-managers
- To explore a career in aged care. It could be useful to:
    - provide certificates for completed training they can add to a resume.
    - direct them to job opportunities available in the organisation or sector.
    - connect them to more information about working in aged care, available at www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care-workforce

When to discuss concerns with a volunteer

Sometimes you will need to initiate a discussion with a volunteer. It is important to have a timely and respectful conversation if any concerns arise. Also keep in mind the need to carefully balance the safety and rights of the older person receiving volunteer support and those of the volunteer.

Circumstances when a conversation may need to happen include where:

- a volunteer may be acting beyond their role
- the safety of an older person receiving volunteer support has been or is likely to be placed at risk
- there has been a complaint made about a volunteer
- a volunteer may be unable to fulfil their volunteer duties

Remember that aged care providers must comply with their obligations under the *Aged Care Act 1997* and the Quality Standards.

Volunteers engaged by aged care providers must comply with the Code of Conduct for Aged Care.

What you should do if an issue arises:

- ✓ Respond in a timely manner.
- ✓ Have a respectful conversation, allowing all involved parties to communicate their perspectives.
- ✓ Identify all current and anticipated risks.
- ✓ Document and implement risk management strategies.
- ✓ Reiterate their role, rights and responsibilities. Ensure they understand what is expected of them and the steps forward.

Exiting volunteers

When a volunteer exits from a role, there is an opportunity to learn from any lessons and improve the experience of existing and future volunteers.

Checklist	Exit tips
✓	**Thank the volunteer for the time and help they have given.** Volunteers are valuable members of an aged care team.
✓	**Undertake exit interviews with volunteers who leave.** Ask for the reasons they leave a role, program or organisation. Ask what could have been improved. An alternative to an exit interview could be a survey, feedback form or informal chat.
✓	**Assess whether any reasons given for leaving could be preventable and whether there can be anything done to address them now.** Where appropriate, let the exiting volunteer know of any action being undertaken. This helps them feel heard and may help community support through word of mouth.
✓	**Record and plan for longer term and/or organisational improvements.** These could include volunteer role design, organisational resourcing, recruitment strategies or relationships between staff and volunteers. Keep a record of how any large issues are being raised and make a practical plan for how improvements could be implemented.

Find more information:

Description	Location	Mode
A template for recording and evaluating data from exiting volunteer interviews.	volunteeringhub.org.au/exit-interview-spreadsheet/	Template

Administration

Business basics

business.gov.au is a whole-of-government website for the Australian business community. It is a simple and convenient entry point for information, services, and support to help businesses succeed in Australia. Key pages of interest are provided below:

Description	Location	Mode
The '*Financial tools and templates'* page provides concise information to help you manage, understand, and keep track of your business finances. It includes pages on key financial terms and how to's on setting up a balance sheet, profit and loss statement, cash flow statement, budget and finance checklist. You can find instructions and downloadable excel templates as well as links to more information.	business.gov.au/finance/financial-tools-and-templates	Webpage
The '*Finance'* page is a broader page with information on finance basics, payments and invoicing, funding, taxation and yearly financial tasks.	business.gov.au/finance	Webpage
The '*Marketing'* page provides basics of business marketing, and how to's to identify your target market, research your market and develop a marketing plan, advertise your business and find the right tools and software to undertake marketing activities.	business.gov.au/marketing	Webpage
The '*Grants and programs finder'* page can be a useful tool for finding grants, funding and support programs from across government.	business.gov.au/grants-and-programs?resultsNum=10	Webpage

Reporting tips

Description	Location	Mode
Volunteering Australia has a factsheet on how to include the contribution of volunteers into the narrative and budgeting of grant applications.	volunteeringhub.org.au/including-volunteer-contributions-in-grant-applications/	Factsheet
The Centre for Volunteering (NSW) has a 'cost of volunteering calculator' that is easy to use and can help in communicating the financial impact of volunteers.	www.volunteering.com.au/resources-tools/cost-of-volunteering-calculator/	Webpage
Volunteering Victoria, Queensland, and Tasmania have a guide to business continuity planning during a pandemic looking at the impacts of volunteer involvement as well as operations, communication, finances and social impact. It can be applied beyond COVID-19 to other extreme events such as climate and health emergencies.	volunteeringhub.org.au/covid-19-business-continuity-planning/	Factsheet
This guide on how to demonstrate the impact of volunteer involvement to your organisation has been created by Volunteer Scotland and may provide some useful tips.	volunteeringhub.org.au/so-what-volunteering-impact-measurement-top-tips-to-get-you-started/	Factsheet

Keeping up to date with news

You may find it helpful to keep informed about news in the aged care sector and the volunteering sector. This can be done by joining networks discussed earlier in this handbook and by subscribing to key newsletters

- Aged care newsletters from the Department of Health and Aged Care include Your Aged Care Update and EngAged, providing news and updates to aged care providers, the aged care sector, and the public. They include information on new programs, training, grant opportunities, reforms and ageing well. You can learn more and subscribe here: www.health.gov.au/using-our-websites/subscriptions/subscribe-to-aged-care-newsletters-and-alerts.
- The Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission publishes a Quality Bulletin and Regulatory Bulletin. Learn more and subscribe to their newsletters at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/news-centre.
- Volunteering Australia has a monthly newsletter that provides information about the volunteering community and developments in the sector. Learn more and subscribe here: www.volunteeringaustralia.org/news-events/.
- Volunteering Australia peak bodies in each state and territory may also have newsletters. To learn more and subscribe, visit the relevant website in your state or territory.