

Community Group Organisation Kit



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SWAN HILL RURAL CITY COUNCIL ORGANISATION KIT



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1. UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering is a fundamental building block of civil society. It brings to life the noblest aspirations of humankind – the pursuit of peace, freedom, opportunity, safety and justice for all people. In this era of globalisation and continuous change, the world is becoming smaller, more interdependent and more complex. Volunteering – either through individual or group action – is a way in which:-

- Human values of community, caring and serving can be sustained and strengthened;
- Individuals can exercise their rights and responsibilities as members of communities, while learning and growing throughout their lives, realising their full human potential; and
- Connections can be made across differences that push us apart so that we can live together in healthy, sustainable communities, working together to provide innovative solutions to our shared challenges and to shape our collective destinies.

Volunteering is an essential element of all societies. It turns into practical, effective action the Declaration of the United Nations that “We, the Peoples” have the power to change the world.

This Declaration supports the right of every woman, man and child to associate freely and to volunteer regardless of their cultural and ethnic origin, religion, age, gender and physical, social or economic condition. All people in the world should have the right to freely offer their time, talent and energy to others and to their communities through individual and collective action without expectation of financial reward.

We seek the development of volunteering that:-

- Elicits the involvement of the entire community in identifying and addressing its problems;
- Provides a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves;
- Enables others to participate as volunteers;
- Complements but does not substitute for responsible action by other sectors and the efforts of paid workers;
- Enables people to acquire new knowledge and skills and to fully develop their personal potential, self-reliance and creativity;
- Promotes family, community national and global solidarity.

We believe that volunteers and the organisations and communities that they serve have a shared responsibility to:-

- Create environments in which volunteers have meaningful work that helps to achieve agreed upon results;
- Define the criteria for volunteer participation, including the conditions under which the organisation and the volunteer may end their commitment and develop policies to guide volunteer activity;
- Provide volunteers with appropriate training, regular evaluation and recognition;
- Ensure access for all by removing physical, economic, social and cultural barriers to their participation.

Taking into account basic human rights as expressed in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, the principles of volunteering and the responsibilities of volunteers and the organisation in which they are involved, we call on:-

All volunteers to proclaim their belief in volunteer action as a creative and mediating force that:-

- Builds healthy sustainable communities that respect the dignity of all people;
- Empowers people to exercise their rights as human beings and, thus, to improve their lives;
- Helps solve social, cultural, economic and environmental problems; and
- Builds a more humane and just society through worldwide co-operation.

THE LEADERS OF:-

- All sectors - to join together to create strong, visible and effective local and national volunteer centres as the primary leadership organisations for volunteering;
- Government - to ensure the rights of all people to volunteer, to remove any legal barriers to participation, to engage volunteers in its work and to provide resources to promote and support the effective mobilisation and management of volunteers;
- Businesses - to encourage and facilitate the involvement of its workers in the community as volunteers and to commit human and financial resources to develop the infrastructure needed to support volunteering;
- The media - to report the stories of volunteers and to provide information that encourages and assists people to volunteer;
- Education - to encourage and assist people of all ages to volunteer, creating opportunities for them to reflect on and learn from their service;
- Religion - to affirm volunteers as an appropriate response to the spiritual call to all people to service;

- To create organisation environments that are friendly to volunteers and to commit the human and financial resources that are required to effectively engage volunteers.

THE UNITED NATIONS TO:-

- Declare this to be the “Decade of Volunteers and Civil Society” in recognition of the need to strengthen the institutions of free societies; and
- To recognise the “red V” as the universal symbol for volunteering.

The International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE) challenges volunteers and leaders of all sectors throughout the world to unite as partners to promote and support effective volunteering, accessible to all, as a symbol of solidarity among all peoples and nations. IAVE invites the global volunteer community to study, discuss, endorse and bring into being this Universal Declaration on Volunteering.

Adopted by the International Board of Directors of IAVE –
The International Association for Volunteer Effort at its 16th
World Volunteer Conference, Amsterdam, The Netherlands,
January 2001, the International Year of Volunteers.

2.0 HISTORY OF NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK & INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

2.1 *National Volunteer Week*

The need for a National Volunteer Week to celebrate volunteering was determined in 1988 by the Australian Association for Volunteering. The inaugural National Volunteer Week, as it was so designated, took place in December 1989 and was the first collaborative effort to promote volunteering nationally.

The dates and themes for National Volunteer Week are determined by the national peak body for volunteering, Volunteering Australia (VA). The annual theme is to be used for both National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day.

National Volunteer Week is in May. It runs from the Monday after Mothers Day through to the following Sunday and has been designated as a week for promotion and recruitment.

2.2 *International Volunteer Day*

December 5th was declared as International Volunteer Day by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985. The first International Volunteer Day was celebrated in 1986 by dozens of countries. Activities ranged from clean-up campaigns, round table conferences, competitions and exhibitions.

In Australia, International Volunteer Day has been designated as a day for the recognition of volunteer involvement, a day on which organisations can thank their volunteer staff.

If you would like to participate in the activities during National Volunteer Week or International Volunteer Day, please contact the Volunteer Support Officer at the Swan Hill Rural City Council on (03) 5036 2380.

3.0

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers give of their time, experience, skills and enthusiasm to help others and their communities for no financial gain.

3.1 *What is Volunteering?*

Formal volunteering is an activity, which always takes place through a 'Not-For-Profit' organisation or project and is undertaken:-

- To be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment; and
- In a designated volunteer position only.

To facilitate a greater awareness of the issues affecting volunteers, Volunteering Australia, the national peak body for volunteering in Australia developed a set of 'Principles of Volunteering'. These principles were developed in consultation with the volunteering sector, unions and government.

3.2 *Who is a Volunteer?*

A volunteer is anyone who provides a service of his or her own free will for no expectation of monetary reward – except reimbursement of personal expenses. Many members of ex-service, sporting clubs and community organisations offer their services to fellow members or to the community by taking on responsibilities such as; welfare visits, serving meals, or organising events. These activities can be considered as volunteering.

3.3 *Why Volunteer?*

- Enjoy the social interaction;
- Maintain skills and develop new skills;
- Get on the job training;
- Learn about a workplace;
- Increase confidence;
- Meet new people;
- Enjoy the challenge;
- Feel needed; and
- Feel good about helping others.

3.4 What can I do as a Volunteer?

How about:-

- Administrative work
- Reception
- Caring for Animals
- Working on Committees
- Driving
- Gardening
- Coaching
- Promotional work
- Caring for children
- Caring for age frail
- Reader

4.0

DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEERING

4.1 *Definition of Formal Volunteering*

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place in 'Not-for-Profit' organisations or projects and is undertaken:-

- To be of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
- Of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
- For no financial payment; and
- In designated volunteer positions only.

4.2 *Principles of Volunteering*

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.
- Volunteer work is unpaid.
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of individuals and groups.
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pensions or government allowances.
- Volunteering is a legitimate way in which citizens can participate in the activities of their community.
- Volunteering is a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs.
- Volunteering is an activity performed in the "Not-For-Profit" sector only.
- Volunteering is not a substitute for paid work.
- Volunteers do not replace paid workers or paid positions nor constitute a threat to job security of paid workers.

4.3 *Values of Volunteering*

Volunteering is based on certain key values:-

- Responsibilities and accountability
- Consultation
- Community and volunteer initiative
- Democratic
- Informal
- Motivation based

5. DEVELOPING A VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

In developing a Volunteer Program, good planning is essential. Before starting the planning, a good understanding of where your business is now and where it is heading in the future, is also essential.

Step one in planning a Volunteer Program is to determine the organisation's Mission Statement and develop a written Vision and Values Statement for the Volunteer Program. The Values Statement sets out the principles which are important to the organisation, which will guide the activities of the Volunteer Program.

Step two is to identify the objectives followed by the particular strategies for the program.

An Action Plan outlining how the strategies will be put into practice is the next exercise. Finance and marketing of the program should be carefully considered along with an evaluation process following the program's success.

Volunteers are generally attracted to an organisation because they support the organisation's purpose and consider that their values match those of the organisation. The culture of an organisation, needs to be supportive and appreciative of volunteers' contribution, so that the volunteers feel genuinely welcome and that their work is worthwhile.

Following 2001, the 'International Year of Volunteering', Volunteering Australia developed the 'National Standards for Volunteering Involvement in 'Not-For-Profit' Organisations,' as guidelines, for "best practice" in the management of volunteers.

A Volunteer Management Plan encapsulates the various aspects of managing volunteers including the organisation's policy, procedures, checklist and templates.

Policies and procedures provide the basis on which the organisation conducts its activities and decision-making once the management of the organisation has endorsed them.

A policy can be written for a number of areas relating to the management of volunteers and the organisation including:-

- Volunteering Rights and Responsibilities
- Recruitment and Training
- Induction
- Pre-Placement Checks
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Equal Opportunity
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Grievance Procedures
- Volunteer Recognition

6. VOLUNTEER POLICY

Introduction

The Swan Hill Rural City Council promotes the principal that volunteering is always a matter of free choice and that volunteering is not a substitute for paid work. The Volunteer Support Officer within the Swan Hill Rural City Council provides support to non profit organisations in the community through the referral of individuals wishing to offer their services as volunteers.

Guidelines for Community Agencies are as follows:-

1. Empower volunteers to meet their own needs.
2. Offer volunteers work opportunities appropriate to their skills, experience and aspirations (where possible).
3. Provide volunteers with clear duty statements and arrange orientation to their work, and will encourage participating agencies to provide appropriate duty statements and orientation for volunteer positions at their agency.
4. Offer training and support for volunteers to help them achieve personal and work goals. Training may be arranged with other agencies to which volunteers are referred.
5. Where possible, offer reimbursement or other compensation to cover out of pocket expenses. This may need to be negotiated with other agencies to which volunteers are referred.
6. Implement procedures to safeguard volunteer safety and well being and consult with other agencies regarding these issues.
7. Recognise volunteers as valuable members of the team and provide them with opportunities to participate in relevant agency decisions.
8. Provide mechanisms to acknowledge the contributions made by volunteers.

7. POLICY & PROCEDURES CHECKLIST

Listed below is a suggested Policy and Procedures Checklist which may assist your organisation with setting up a Volunteer Program.

Overview

- Organisation's goals
- Vision and Mission
- Volunteer Policy Statement
- Scope of volunteer involvement
- Definition of Formal Volunteering
- Principles of Volunteering
- Code of Practice for
volunteer - involving organisations
- Rights & Responsibilities
- Duty of Care
- Volunteer Management

Supervision, Evaluation & Recognition

- Supervision
- Time Sheets and leave
- Debriefing
- Recognition of service
- Feedback
- References
- Volunteer retirement/
resignation
- Grievance/
Dismissal of a volunteer

Recruitment & Selection

- Identifying volunteer positions
- Position Descriptions
- Advertising for volunteers
- Applications for volunteer positions
- Interviewing
- Equal opportunity
- Pre-placement checks
- Appointment
- Orientation
- Probationary period
- Training
- Right of refusal

Operational

- Administration systems
- Access to information
- Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Privacy & Confidentiality
- Insurance
- OH&S, Accident and Incidents
- Reimbursement

Other

- Driving
- Gifts
- Uniforms
- Minimum/maximum time commitments
- Volunteer project team

8. CODE OF PRACTICE

In order to enhance the volunteers' experience and comply with legislation and duty of care the organisation will:-

- Develop and maintain a Policy for involving staff, which covers all aspects of staff involvement within the organisation.
- Differentiate between paid and unpaid roles.
- Define volunteer roles and provide clear Job Descriptions.
- Ensure that the work of volunteer staff complements, but does not undermine the work of paid staff.
- Provide volunteers with orientation to their work and to the organisation.
- Provide adequate training to enable a volunteer to perform their work effectively.
- Offer volunteers opportunities for professional development.
- Provide volunteers with a safe and healthy workplace.
- Reimburse volunteers for personal expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation.
- Provide volunteers with appropriate and adequate insurance coverage.
- Provide appropriate levels of support and management to volunteers through the appointment of a suitably qualified manager or other designated person.
- Provide volunteers with a copy of the organisation's Policy.
- Provide volunteers with information on the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures of the organisation.
- Ensure that volunteers are not coerced or pressured into taking up additional work during an industrial dispute or staff shortage.
- Recognise volunteers as valuable team members and advise them of opportunities to participate in the organisation's decisions.
- Acknowledge the valuable contributions made by volunteers.
- Interview and employ volunteer staff in accordance with anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation.

9. STANDARDS

9.0 *Minimum Standards*

Volunteering Australia, the national peak body for volunteering in Australia, has developed the 'National Standards for Volunteering Involvement in 'Not-for-Profit' Organisations' as guidelines, for "best practice" within the sector. The Swan Hill Rural City Council encourages the adoption of these standards.

These Minimum Standards are:-

- Registered Not-for-Profit organisation;
- Insurance coverage;
- The Volunteer position does not replace a paid position;
- Reimbursement of approved personal expenses;
- Orientation and relevant training;
- A Manager or Supervisor of volunteers, or designated contact person exists; and
- 16 hours per week is the recommended maximum.

9.1 *Memorandum of Understanding*

It is suggested that the organisation uses the following 'Memorandum of Understanding for Volunteers' or a similar type of 'Confidentiality Agreement' for volunteers. This document needs to be signed by the volunteer and countersigned by management. A copy to be given to the volunteer and original kept on file.

9.2 *Memorandum of Understanding for Volunteers*

As a Volunteer, I realise I am subject to a Code of Ethics similar to that which binds other professionals in the field in which I work.

- I will assume responsibility for the tasks I undertake and will keep private information about the Organisation and its users confidential.
- I understand Volunteer to mean that I have agreed to work without compensation in money except for any agreed reimbursement of personal expenses.
- Having been accepted as a Volunteer I undertake to do my tasks in a professional manner, with an attitude of open-mindedness and genuine interest.

- In order to achieve my full potential, I will consider information and training programs available.
- I accept that I have an obligation to my work, to those that direct it, to other colleagues, to the recipients with whom I am involved and to the community.

I have read and accept the Code of Ethics, agree to follow it mindfully and attentively.

I have received and read the Volunteer Information Kit and agree to abide by the Policy and Procedures of the Organisation. I agree to work within the boundaries of the Position Description and respect the Privacy and Confidentiality of all personnel associated with the Organisation.

10. VOLUNTEER RIGHTS

Unlike paid staff, volunteer staff are not covered by award conditions or work place agreements. Volunteers, however, do have rights, some of which are enshrined in legislation and some of which are the moral obligations of an organisation involving volunteers. The following list is the basis of your rights as a volunteer.

As a Volunteer you have the right:-

- To work in a healthy and safe environment (refer to Occupational Health and Safety Acts);
- To be interviewed and employed in accordance with the equal opportunity and anti discrimination legislation;
- To be adequately covered by insurance;
- To be given accurate and truthful information about the organisation for which you are working;
- To be given a copy of the organisation's volunteer policy and any other policy that affects your work;
- Not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker;
- Not to do the work of paid staff during industrial disputes;
- To have a Job Description and agreed working hours;
- To have access to a Grievance Procedure;
- To be provided with orientation to the organisation;
- To have your confidential and personal information dealt with in accordance with the principles of the Privacy Act 1988; and
- To be provided with sufficient training for you to do your job.

11. VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

As a Volunteer you need to:-

- Be reliable;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Carry out the specified tasks defined in the Job Description;
- Be accountable;
- Be committed to the organisation;
- Undertake training as requested;
- Ask for support when you need it;
- Give notice before you leave the organisation;
- Value and support other team members;
- Carry out the work you have agreed to do responsibly and ethically;
- Notify the organisation as soon as possible of absences; and
- Adhere to the organisation's Policies and Procedures.

12. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Policy Statement

Volunteers have the right to fair, equitable and timely action in order to resolve grievances or complaints arising from their involvement in programs and activities with the organisation. This policy applies to genuine grievances or complaints where the volunteer perceives that the organisation, management, paid or other volunteer prevent the volunteer from effectively carrying out his/her role.

Suggested Grievance Procedure

It is expected that grievances or complaints are resolved by management where ever possible, e.g. by the aggrieved person and their immediate supervisor.

- Informal discussion to be held between the aggrieved person and the other party (where appropriate).
- Where resolution is not achieved through the informal processes, a written grievance is lodged with the manager of volunteers. If the grievance is between the volunteer and their manager, the grievance should be lodged with another senior person or equivalent manager. The manager will establish and maintain a grievance file for the duration of the process.
- The manager of volunteers (or equivalent) endeavours to resolve the issue through mediation or conciliation.
- Where resolution is not achieved at this level, a grievance committee is convened comprising of
 - (a) 2 nominees of the organisation's CEO and
 - (b) 2 nominees of the aggrieved person (also from within the organisation).
- The grievance committee establishes the cause and nature of the grievance or complaint, establishes the desired outcomes of all parties, and endeavours to resolve the issue through reaching agreement between parties.
- The grievance committee makes a recommendation to the CEO of the organisation for final determination.
- Relevant records should be maintained in secure and confidential files. Records may be kept or destroyed upon conclusion of the process.
- Volunteers should be confident that lodging a grievance or complaint will not disadvantage them, regardless of the outcome.

13.0

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

13.1 Health and Safety

All volunteers have the right to work in a safe and healthy environment. Organisations are encouraged to develop policies, and be committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment free from the health hazards and discomfort associated with passive smoking.

Organisations must recognise the detrimental effects that alcohol and drugs may have in the safety of the organisation's operation and on the general health and well being of a person.

Organisations are encouraged to develop a policy which provides practical steps so that all persons reporting for duty have a zero level of alcohol and illicit drugs and are also not impaired by other prescription drugs.

13.2 Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is endorsed and accepted at all levels. The Code of Conduct outlines the following expectations:

- Rights and Responsibilities of volunteers;
- Principles for involving volunteers and responsibilities of the organisation regarding volunteer participation;
- Confidentiality and Privacy;
- Conflict of interest resolution;
- Public relations;
- Intellectual property/copyright;
- Dealing with breaches of the Code of Conduct;
- Punctuality;
- Appropriate and polite language;
- Dress Code; and
- Appropriate protection for the position, e.g. for outdoor activities the organisation will provide sunscreen, hat etc.).

14.

ORIENTATION

Once the volunteer has been appointed to the position they will need to undergo orientation to familiarise them with the important aspects of the organisation.

Orientation should include:

- The organisation's Mission Statement.
- The organisation's commitment to the 'Definition and Principles of Volunteering', the rights of Volunteers, 'Code of Practice', and the 'National Standards for Involving Organisations'.
- Confidentiality and clients rights.
- Occupational Health and Safety procedures.
- Emergency response and site evacuation procedures.
- Sign on/off and time-sheet procedures.
- Organisational structure.
- Building layout including kitchen and amenities areas.
- Procedures relating to the volunteer work.

Job Handover Briefing

Where a volunteer is taking over the role from another volunteer it can be helpful for a volunteer to receive a briefing by either the current volunteer or someone who is familiar with the role, e.g. the supervisor.

15. ORIENTATION/INFORMATION KIT CHECKLIST

An orientation kit is an important way of making new volunteers feel welcome, as well as providing them with a range of information they need to perform their new role.

A well designed kit is a useful resource that volunteers can turn to in future as a reference and source of information. It could contain such things as:

Welcome letter and relevant Forms

- A letter of welcome €
- Volunteer details Form €
- Police Check Form €
- Signed copy of the volunteer's position description €
- Signed copy of the Memorandum of Understanding €
- Reimbursement of Expenses Form (if applicable) €
- Time Sheets/Attendance records €

Information about the organisation

- The latest Annual Report of the organisation €
- A list of staff positions and names €
- An organisational chart €
- A map of the work site (if needed) €
- Emergency Procedures and Site Evacuation Plan €
- Details of operating hours, public holidays etc. €

Volunteer Program Policies

- A copy of the organisation philosophy on using volunteers €
- A statement of the volunteers rights and responsibilities €
- The location of the Volunteer Police and Procedures Manual €
- Reference to relevant procedures and Policies €
- Grievance procedure €
- Volunteer insurance details €
- Instructions for reporting critical incidents, injuries or accidents €
- Training Schedule €
- Information on upcoming important events e.g. National Volunteer Week, recognition/social events €

16.0 INSURANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT & DUTY OF CARE

16.1 Insurance

Organisations have varied degrees of understanding of risk management and insurance issues relating to volunteering activities. Volunteer involving organisations are encouraged to have Voluntary Workers-Personal Accident Insurance. This cover is to insure your volunteers whilst they carry out voluntary work on behalf of your organisation.

AON Risk Services have developed Insurance Cover for Charitable, Not-for-Profit, voluntary organisations and organisations who involve volunteers. The insurance policies organised by AON Risk Services were finalised after consultation with Volunteer Australia. AON's insurance policies are designed to cover and protect the insured organisation, directors, employees and volunteers.

AON Risk Services

Contact: Gavin Deadman

Phone: (02) 9253 7000 Toll Free: 1800 806 584

Email: gavin.deadman@aon.com.au

16.2 Risk Management

A Not-for-Profit organisation is responsible for the actions of its volunteers and paid staff. Inappropriate behaviour can seriously harm and prevent a Not-for-Profit organisation from achieving its Mission. Volunteers, like employees, are a valuable resource to your organisation and should be part of any risk management system. Including volunteers in your risk management system will help protect both your organisation and the volunteers. The various Volunteer Protection Acts do not reduce the need for appropriate risk management strategies.

16.3 Duty of Care

All Not-for-Profit organisations across Australia have a Duty of Care to their volunteers and the public. 'Duty of Care' is an organisation's obligation to exercise reasonable care of any persons who may be involved with or affected by its day to day activities. Duty of Care involves finding a balance between managing risk and insuring against any consequences. The definition of 'reasonable' depends partly on the relationship between the organisation and the volunteers as well as an appropriate amount of common sense and correct guidelines.

For Management, this involves:

- Identifying and reducing the risks involved in volunteering activities;
- Providing training to help volunteers work safely; and
- Obtaining adequate insurance cover.

One strategy to control risk is to provide adequate training for all volunteers. This training should include clear information about a volunteer's duties, rights and responsibilities, as well as insurance. It should also cover First Aid and Occupational Health and Safety procedures, i.e. manual handling techniques, safe operation of tools and equipment and clear communication and reporting processes.

17.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Central to the successful recruiting of any agency is the development of job descriptions that will attract the right people into the organisation – and help keep them there. The carefully constructed job brief ensures that the aims and objectives of the program are being met. It also protects the rights of the volunteer.

Unlike paid workers, volunteers do not work under an award system, neither do they enter into an agreement based upon the provision of labour for a prescribed payment which is protected by law. However, they often do enter into a contract with an agency where they agree to perform certain tasks which are of benefit to the agency. Unless these tasks are formally written into a clear and concise job description, the agreement between agency and volunteer is open to misinterpretation.

The benefits to both agency and volunteer are manifold. Bring a group of managers of volunteers together in a workshop, and within minutes they can develop a list of a dozen or so reasons why job briefs are pivotal to successful volunteer involvement. It sets minimum standards for the program and it will be a reference point for the volunteer who may be subjected to the demands of a busy agency.

A volunteer who is supported throughout their involvement with an organisation by written material will be in a position to make informed choices, and have redress if something goes wrong. A volunteer job description will protect the rights of the client/consumer group and also allow for consumer input into the volunteer program. The agency is also protected from criticism of exploitation or discrimination. As an outcome of proper program planning and assessment, the job description can be a useful tool that brings into the agency the skills that will ensure the program can meet its objectives.

The job description need not be burdened with huge amounts of information, but should include the following basic elements:

- A description of the position (position objectives)
- Skills/qualifications; mandatory and desirable
- Key areas of responsibilities; a list of duties

It should also clarify organisational relationships, answering questions such as:

- Who is the volunteer supervised by/accountable to?
- Does the volunteer supervise other volunteers?
- Does the volunteer liaise with others in the organisation?

The job brief should also spell-out the conditions of the position:

- Days and time required
- Training requirements

In summary, the job description should be a concise document that is compatible with the overall aim of the program. It should, as its focus, be written to protect the agency and the volunteer.

Furthermore, volunteer job descriptions must comply with the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act* and other relevant anti-discrimination Acts. (For more information on these Acts, refer to the VCOSS publication, Legalities Victoria.)

18.0 PRE-PLACEMENT CHECKS

Some volunteer positions require personal contact between volunteers and clients and agencies must demonstrate that the duty of care for clients is not comprised. Criminal Record/Police Checks and Working with Children Checks are undertaken to verify the identity of potential volunteers and to minimise possible risks arising from engaging volunteers in providing client services. Depending on the nature of the volunteer's role and the level of supervision provided, Pre-Placement Checks may include Referee Checks and/or Police Checks and/or Working with Children Checks.

The Co-Ordinator/Manager of Volunteers will undertake Pre-Placement Checks on volunteer applicants as required. Police Checks will be undertaken for volunteers working directly with clients. The cost of the Police Check will be covered by the organisation. The Working with Children Check is cost free for all volunteers.

A satisfactory Policy Check and/or Working with Children Check should not be regarded as a guarantee of being offered a position. Likewise, an unsatisfactory Police Check and/or Working with Children Check will not automatically preclude a person from being offered a position. Potential volunteers who do not agree to a Police Check and/or Working with Children Check may not be accepted as volunteers.

18.1 Police Checks

As a volunteer you may be asked to undergo a check for one or more of the following reasons:

- *Legislative Requirement:* Some volunteers (often working with children and the elderly) are required by law to undergo Police Checks.
- *Funding Requirement:* Some government departments require volunteers to undergo Police Checks to satisfy conditions for funding organisations.
- *Duty of Care:* Organisations need to do all that is reasonable to avoid harm to clients, volunteers and the organisation. Failure to do so results in a liability issue.
- Some insurers require Police Checks for staff and volunteers as a condition of providing insurance to the organisation.

By incorporating the Police Checks process, risks to the organisation will be minimised, two examples of such risk are:

- A new volunteer handling money without supervision.
- The potential abuse of an elderly citizen.

18.2 Working with Children Checks

The Victorian Government introduced a new checking system that will affect many adults who work or volunteer with children (under the age of 18 years of age).

The WWC (Working With Children) Check helps to protect children from sexual or physical harm by checking a person's criminal history for serious sexual, serious violence or serious drug offences and findings from certain professional disciplinary bodies.

A unique feature of the WWC Check is the ongoing monitoring of the criminal records of those who hold a WWC Check Card. When the Department of Justice is notified that a person with a WWC Check Card has been charged or found guilty of a relevant offence or had a finding against him/her made by a relevant professional body, that person's suitability to hold a WWC Check Card would be reviewed.

The introduction of the WWC Check creates for the first time in Victoria, a mandatory minimum standard for a range of child-related industries. Not everyone who has contact with children is required to undergo a WWC Check however this process will be phased in over the next five years, industry by industry.

As a volunteer you may be asked to undergo a check for one or more of the following reasons:

- *Legislative Requirement:* Some volunteers (often working with children under the age of 18 years) are required by law to undergo Working with Children Checks.
- *Funding Requirement:* Some government departments require volunteers to undergo Working with Children Checks to satisfy conditions for funding organisations.
- *Duty of Care:* Organisations need to do all that is reasonable to avoid harm to clients, volunteers and the organisation. Failure to do so results in a liability issue.

Some insurers require WWC Checks for staff and volunteers as a condition of providing insurance to the organisation. By incorporating the WWC Checks process, risks to the organisation will be minimised. Should you require more information on WWC Checks the following options are available:-

- Visit your local Post Office;
- Visit www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren; and/or
- Call the WWC Check Information Line on 1300 652 879

19. RECOGNISING VOLUNTEERS

When volunteers are recruited to your organisation it makes the utmost sense to make every effort to retain them. It is a costly proposition to recruit and train replacement volunteers. Moreover, the time lost in recruiting replacement volunteers can result in lengthy periods where an organisation may not be able to deliver the additional quality of service that a volunteer may bring to the organisation.

One important way of encouraging your volunteers to remain with your organisation is to give them adequate recognition. Recognition to be effective should be consistent and ongoing. Volunteers can quickly lose motivation if they feel that their work is not valued.

Volunteer managers should be aware that the way volunteer efforts are recognised is of importance. This is because one volunteer may regard one type of recognition as valuable whilst another volunteer may feel it has little worth. If a Volunteer Manager is aware of the volunteer's motivation in working for the organisation then this will provide a good indication for the type of recognition that the volunteer is seeking. For example if a volunteer is hoping to obtain paid employment, they will value opportunities to receive training and obtain a Certificate of training recognition or they may value a referee for their Resume.

In many cases volunteers that are motivated by helping the community will see their work as reward and will only require support from their volunteer organisation. The support of paid staff and the Volunteer Manager can be shown in many ways. The enthusiasm of paid staff to the aims of the Volunteer Program is very important because it will naturally engender within the organisation the recognition that volunteers are important.

Some ways that volunteer organisations may give recognition to their volunteers are:

- Adequately orientate volunteers.
- Volunteer Co-ordinators are readily accessible to volunteers.
- Encourage volunteer participation in team planning.
- Encourage volunteer participation in planning that effects their work.
- Give additional responsibility.
- Provide training.
- Enable volunteers to 'grow' on the job.
- Include volunteers in special events.
- Include volunteers in coffee breaks.
- Recommend volunteers to prospective employers.
- Maintain Occupational Health and Safety standards.
- Take the time to explain and listen to volunteer's ideas and concerns.
- Recognise and accommodate personal needs and problems.

- Celebrate achievements and efforts.
- Keep volunteers informed via newsletter.
- Provide letters of reference.
- Send Birthday and Christmas cards.
- Allocate notice board space to applaud volunteer achievement.
- Organise awards with Certificates or plaques or medals.
- Honour volunteers on International Volunteers Day, December 5th, with a planned activity such as an afternoon tea or lunch.
- Celebrate National Volunteer Week.

20. TIPS FOR RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

Apart from helping a new volunteer settle into their position and giving them encouragement, there are many other things that can be done to help retain volunteers including:-

- Developing short term “one-off” projects that can be completed by people with limited or variable time restraints.
- Encouragement of holidays and leave to prevent burnout.
- Managing the interaction between paid staff and volunteers by showing the same respect to all members of the team.
- Providing food and refreshments at volunteer events which may be donated from local community organisations and businesses.

21. VOLUNTEER RESIGNATION/EXIT

It is recommended that the organisation has a policy regarding the resignation/exit of volunteers.

- Provide their Manager/Supervisor with written or verbal notification of their intent to end their involvement in the Volunteer Program.
- Give as much notice as possible. Unless circumstances are unavoidable, a minimum of two weeks notice should be given.

The Manager provides a letter of acknowledgement to the volunteer. If required this letter may also provide acknowledgement of the volunteer's service, including period of involvement with the program and the nature of duties undertaken.

- The Manager or an appropriate member of the management team should conduct an exit interview.
- The notes of the exit interview should be lodged in the volunteer's personal file.

22.0

TRAINING VOLUNTEERS

22.1 *Getting Started*

Responsible organisations ensure their staff are properly trained. When developing a Volunteer Program, an organisation must take into consideration the time and costs associated with training volunteers.

The need for training varies, of course, according to the complexity of the work the volunteers will be doing. Some organisations may need only to provide an orientation program, whilst for others more extensive training may be needed.

22.2 *Position Analysis*

A simple way to determine the training requirements of a volunteer position, in the first instance, is to conduct a position analysis.

Step 1 Develop a list of tasks you would like to volunteer to undertake,

Step 2 Develop a description of how each task should be performed,

Step 3 Outline the required quality level for the above tasks,

Step 4 Write the volunteer job description.

22.3 *Three Stages in Volunteer Training*

Having completed a position analysis for each volunteer position, an organisation may then design a training plan. The training plan should cover three stages of volunteer training.

Stage 1 *Orientation*

Orientation acts as an introduction to the organisation and its staff.

Stage 2 *Pre-Placement Training*

Pre-Placement training should cover the skills needed to commence volunteer duties. The information gained in the position analysis will be particularly useful at this stage.

Stage 3 *Continuing Education or Professional Development*

This is training provided to established volunteers. The organisation might carry out a training needs analysis (TNA) surveying the volunteers, paid staff and clients (if relevant) to determine the training topics which will enhance the work of the volunteers.

23.

EXIT INTERVIEW

Volunteer's Name _____

Interviewer's Name _____

Commenced Date _____ End Date _____

Volunteer Position _____

What are your reasons for leaving?

What did you most enjoy about your volunteering?

Is there anything you think we could have done better Yes € No €

What would you change?

Do you feel you received adequate support in your role?

Any other comments?

Letter of Appreciation sent by _____

Date letter sent _____