

## MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers can play an important role in the effective running of a venue. They reinforce community engagement, introduce specialist skills to the venue, provide audience development opportunities and help reduce stress and staff burnout.

According to Volunteering Australia, volunteering is an activity which takes place through 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.

Please see the attached Volunteer Charter as an executive summary to be used a ready reckoner for staff and shared with volunteers.

To ensure both volunteers and the venue benefit from volunteering, certain procedures and policies should be adopted by the venue. This will have the added advantage of repeat volunteering and word of mouth recommendations to other community members.

If the venue is part of a larger organisation, there may be legal policies and procedures to follow before engaging with volunteers – check with direct line managers for this information. For smaller, stand-alone venues, advice should be sought on any legal issues – the Volunteer Charter may form the basis of a policy to adopt.

Managing volunteers effectively involves the following steps:

- Recruitment
- Induction
- Supervision
- Evaluation

Volunteer management also needs to take into account broader human resource factors such as insurance, occupational health and codes of conduct. In essence, the same energy and resources put into hiring staff should also be invested in managing volunteers.

### **Recruitment**

All volunteers should be subject to the screening, approval, and probationary procedures as used by the venue in the recruitment of staff. Recruitment of volunteers should also take into account the venue's commitment to access and equity in alignment with general cultural diversity guidelines.

Volunteer Recruitment is entirely dependant on the specific positions and tasks required of the volunteer. It is important before any recruitment takes place that venue management has identified these tasks and has clear

position descriptions written for them. A number of questions should also be answered at this point:

- Is there an appropriate age range?
- Is there a minimum time commitment required?
- Is the volunteering need ongoing or just for one specific time period?

A call-out for Volunteers can then occur in community newsletters, radio stations, local newspapers, Facebook posts and notices in selected shops. Consideration should also be given to entering into a partnership with any existing community volunteer groups.

It is worthwhile at this point to ask potential volunteers to register their interest through a formal process by completing a Registration Form (please see attached example). They should also be given a copy of the position description.

### **Induction**

All volunteers should be offered appropriate information, training and resources to carry out their position description.

This induction and training should consist of:

- A guided tour of the venue
- A walkthrough of the tasks involved
- Introduction to a mentor or buddy
- Reading of the Induction Kit (similar to new staff)
- Signing of the venue's Code of Conduct
- Discussion and agreement on rosters
- Agreement on a review process

### **Supervision**

All volunteers should have access to proper levels of supervision in the carrying out of their tasks. This needs to be either in the form of a paid member of staff, or an experienced mentor/buddy volunteer.

It is important to also remember that because volunteering is a matter of choice, personal demands on volunteer time may mean there is a greater chance of volunteer rosters not being filled – sometimes at short notice. The supervisor should always be on standby to take over the volunteer role in this case.

In respect to any serious issues or concerns raised by volunteers, they should be given the opportunity to take part in the same due process available to staff in the airing of grievances or complaints.

### **Evaluation**

All volunteers are entitled to an appraisal of their performance and be given the opportunity to feedback about their role and volunteer conditions.

The evaluation process allows both parties to assess the role and tasks, look for improvements in process and delivery and offer formal thanks to the volunteer for their time and input.

For ongoing volunteers, this most easily takes the form of an annual survey. For one-off events or short-term volunteer positions, a simple evaluation form and feedback interview will suffice.

Please see attached Volunteer Survey as an example and template.

### **Occupational health and safety**

Volunteers should receive the same level of safety and environmental conditions as venue management.

On arrival, volunteers should sign in to begin work, and then sign out on departure or the end of a shift.

Footwear and clothing appropriate for the volunteer position must be worn at all times. Particular attention should be paid to any positions requiring outdoor duties. At a minimum, hats, water and sunblock should be provided by venue management.

Appropriate guidelines should be given around technical concerns and clear lines of communication provided to the relevant staff.

Emergency procedures should be made readily available and an annual emergency procedure drill should be held for all staff and volunteers.

### **Insurance**

Venue management should ensure current Insurance policies include the use of volunteers.

### **Reimbursement**

Consideration should be given to ensuring all volunteers can be reimbursed for any pre-approved expenditure incurred in the exercise of their volunteer tasks. Whilst volunteering is carried out for no financial payment, no volunteer should be incurring expenses to carry out their position.

### **Dispute resolution**

All volunteers are entitled to appeal to venue management through an agreed complaints and concerns process. This includes the identification of a range of venue management personnel to ensure reduced conflict of interest.