

Best Practice for Volunteer Programs Guide

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (the National Standards) represent best practice in volunteer management. Volunteering is a two-way opportunity. There are important benefits including time, skills and experience that volunteers provide to an organisation to pursue its programs and activities. Volunteer involvement can contribute to, and extend the capacity of organisations to meet its aims and goals, whilst contributing to community outcomes.

What are the Standards?

The National Standards were initially established by Volunteering Victoria, then later revised and compiled by Volunteering Australia from contributions by volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers across Australia.

They are guidelines that can help everybody (volunteers, organisations and communities) develop a framework to get the most out of volunteering, whilst reflecting the diversity of our growing sector.

The Standards comprise a set of ideal practices in the following areas of volunteer program management:

- Leadership and Management
- Commitment to Volunteering Involvement
- Volunteer Roles
- Recruitment and Selection
- Support and Development
- Workplace Safety and Wellbeing
- Volunteer Recognition
- Quality Management and Continuous Improvement

The National Standards are not mandatory. Rather, they help inform organisations to make use of simple, practical standards across their own volunteering program to evaluate, improve or create volunteer programs. Benchmarking what you do against the National Standards can benefit your organisation and your volunteers.

Raise your head

Many people who manage volunteer programs do so in isolation, with few chances to look around and see how others might be doing it. The National Standards offer a structured way of doing so – whether you are setting up a new program or evaluating an existing one.

The National might give you new ideas for working with volunteers or identify important gaps in your policies and procedures. They may well save you time and effort in the long term, by streamlining your administrative systems. Involving the team in the goal of meeting the standards can be rewarding and motivating.

The status of volunteering within your organisation benefits from the collective and nationally recognised approach the National Standards represent. Likewise, volunteer-involving organisations benefit from public recognition of the professionalism, organisation and effort required to effectively engage, support and empower volunteers.

Make them work for you

The National Standards are comprehensive and designed to be useful to a broad range of organisation and program types.

It is therefore unlikely that every Standard will be relevant to your organisation. While some organisations choose to work through all the Standards, you may wish to identify the areas that are of most relevance and importance to your program right now and focus on those.

More information

National Standards for Volunteer Involvement:
volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Standards-Documents-FINAL_Web.pdf