



Volunteering and Youth Development

Making
a positive
difference

Good Practice: An implementation guide

VOLUNTEERING AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Making a positive difference

GOOD PRACTICE: AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

July 2002

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT
Office of Employment and Youth



A Commonwealth Youth Initiative



The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Australia
SA Division Young Australian Challenge

Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to this publication by willingly sharing their knowledge and expertise through their participation in discussions, forums and other dialogue with Ausyouth over the past year.

In particular, a number of Ausyouth National Advisory Committee members, National Provider Reference Group members and other individuals provided useful feedback and thoughtful comments on drafts of various sections and earlier versions of this publication.

This publication was written by Christine Sanders, with significant contributions by Nicole Gilding and Jan Patterson, Ausyouth. The contributions of Stuart Boyd, Roz Averis and Pam Metcalf are also acknowledged.

Front cover design by: Graphic Language Design

Printing by: Rainbow Press

ISBN 1865064270

Foreword

Ausyouth is a national project providing a range of services to promote, coordinate and facilitate youth development as an approach and practice across Australia. The project is funded by the Commonwealth Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and contracted through the Youth Bureau, Department of Family and Community Services. Ausyouth's role is to work with and assist provider organisations to advance understanding of the youth development concept and approach, with the aim of broadening the base and expanding the opportunities for young people.

Two groups — the National Advisory Committee and the National Provider Reference Group — are regularly convened by Ausyouth. Together these two groups encompass a broad cross-section of youth development constituencies. They assist the project by providing guidance and advice, engaging with stakeholders, and examining issues of common interest and concern. Issues related to volunteers were discussed in a number of key forums, including the Second National Youth Development Conference in Adelaide in March 2001.

Following the release of the framework of principles for good practice in 2001 Ausyouth undertook to produce a series of practical resources on key aspects of good practice. The intent of this first publication is to provide assistance to youth development provider organisations in implementing good practice in volunteering and youth development. The companion pieces to the Ausyouth publication, *Good Practice in Youth Development*, are a means of elaborating upon that earlier work.

The term youth development is used to capture the concepts and applications described throughout Ausyouth publications. It is not used in the generic sense, which refers to the developmental processes that all young people experience between childhood and adulthood. Rather, the intent is to convey and reinforce the strengths based and community benefit focus of a youth development approach to programs and activities for young people.

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Volunteering and youth development

Introduction

Good practice in volunteering and youth development recognises that the way we do things (the process) can be just as important as the outcomes (learning, skills).

Young people are Australia's most valuable resource, now and in the future. Opportunities for learning and skill development are critical if young people are to take their place in the community and be active citizens in all aspects of their lives. Realising the full potential of the youth development approach requires community commitment and the support of enthusiastic volunteers.

*young people are
Australia's future*

Like youth development itself, volunteering is too important to be left to chance. It must be actively and consciously planned for and managed. The involvement of volunteers in provider organisations calls for leadership and the commitment of management. Any organisation working with young people can improve outcomes for young people by adopting youth development principles, thus maximising the contribution to social capital and connectedness.

*too important
to be left to chance*

Currently in Australia a vibrant hub of youth development activity is represented either by a number of non-profit organisations with a specific youth program focus, or through community voluntary activities providing opportunities for youth involvement. Youth development programs and activities exist because volunteers make them possible and sustain their operation.

*programs
and activities*

Volunteering and youth development builds on Ausyouth consultations and conversations with major stakeholders across Australia. These included a range of voluntary agencies working with young people, youth development provider organisations and volunteering and youth development stakeholders.

development process

focus of publication

The focus of the publication is on drawing on the excellent work that is available both nationally and internationally on good practice in volunteering and applying it to a youth development environment. The publication also draws on relevant principles of good practice in disciplines related to the topics covered. The application of the framework of principles for good practice in youth development to the task of attracting, engaging and sustaining volunteer contribution has been a primary consideration.

intended audience

The publication is intended for use primarily by youth development program coordinators and managers to support successful outcomes for all program participants - paid workers, volunteers, the community and most importantly young people. A selection of references and resources are provided to facilitate further exploration and learning in the quest to achieve good practice in volunteering and youth development.

The youth development approach

One of the most important undertakings for Australia is providing all young people with positive experiences and opportunities which enhance their strengths and capacity and which affirm them as valued contributors to their communities and shapers of their own future. The concept of youth development provides a framework for achieving this outcome.

*valuing young
people's contribution*

The idea of positive youth development has emerged over time as common shorthand for a philosophy asserting that problem free is not fully prepared, that remediation and prevention services alone are not enough, and that schools have to be supported and complemented by broader options in the community¹. The term positive youth development is used to reinforce a strengths based and community benefit focus.

*positive
focus*

By adopting the positive youth development approach we are able to reflect on the way we value young people and on the way we include them in society. Youth development is an approach which benefits all young people, whatever their starting points or circumstances. Youth development is about providing young Australians with opportunities to enhance their development.

paradigm shift

A range of structured opportunities and broader relationships is needed to promote a healthy lifestyle, a sense of personal pride, responsibility and purpose, and to foster positive social relationships. These opportunities and relationships complement and strengthen formal educational processes. Importantly, they also consolidate the position of young people as members of the broader community.

*diverse, planned
opportunities*

Youth development activities offer the chance for adults, communities and young people to work together with a shared purpose and enterprise. Through youth development, communities are able to recognise, value, support and encourage young people's contribution. These supportive social networks enhance interconnection between young people and their communities.

*community
connections*

¹ National Academy of Sciences (2002) *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, page 24, available <http://www.nap.edu/openbook/0309072751/html/19.html>, Pitman & Irby (1996) and Pitman et al (2000)

Good practice in youth development

*continuous
improvement*

Youth development demands the creative, enterprising best of all those who contribute to it. The identification of good practice is critical for quality outcomes in youth development. By engaging in a process of continuous improvement and reflection on good practice, youth development in Australia will be enhanced.

*framework of
principles*

Principles and indicators provide a framework for thinking about and discussing good practice in youth development (see Appendix 1).

aspirational

Good practice in youth development calls for a commitment to the framework of principles. Aspiring to best practice through a process of continuous improvement is often a more realistic goal. Good practice processes are responsive to the changing environment, the lives of young people and a growing youth development knowledge base.

*overarching
principles drive*

Good practice in youth development requires the consistent application of the two overarching principles of empowerment and conscious enterprise. Participants in youth development programs need to come away from the activities empowered. Because youth development is too important to be left to chance, programs and activities must be consciously planned and structured, while allowing for spontaneity, innovation and fun.

*underpinning
principles sustain*

These two overarching principles are embedded in a set of fourteen underpinning principles. The underpinning principles and related indicators encourage reflection on current practice. The principles and indicators also facilitate learning in three key environments - policy, organisation and program. Each of the three environments provides different opportunities for good practice.

indicators guide

Good practice indicators in these three environments provide examples of the commitments and actions that can be taken to realise the principles of youth development. These environments provide an important focus for strategic work in implementing good practice in volunteering and youth development. It is essential that issues relating to volunteering be considered in each environment, as the quality of involvement of volunteers in programs requires initiative at policy and organisational levels.

Outcomes for young people

Youth development provides opportunities, experiences and challenges young people would not otherwise have and thus complements and strengthens formal education processes and outcomes. By providing positive opportunities communities are consciously assisting young people to reach their potential and to develop the skills and competencies to support them through adolescence. The enrichment of young people's lives now also increases the likelihood of improved well being throughout adult life.

life-long benefits

For every young person who participates in the process, youth development provides enhanced opportunities for:

- active, empowered citizenship
- enhanced self identity and self efficacy
- commitment to voluntary action and the responsibilities of choice
- enhanced self esteem, self reliance and self confidence
- acknowledgment and acceptance of differing views and ways of doing things
- effective membership and leadership of team and group
- enhanced skill development
- participation in different and challenging activities and experiences
- connection and contribution to the community.

*extending
existing capacities
and capabilities*

Community recognition of accomplishments is important because it reinforces the sense of achievement for young people. Young people can see the immediate impact of their desire to contribute to their communities and their commitment to being involved in efforts that contribute to the greater good. Tangible benefits also flow into other spheres of young people's lives if employers recognise the transferability of skills such as leadership and teamwork to the work environment.

*community
recognition*

Directions in volunteering

*changing
and expanding*

In response to a widespread perception that our sense of community has been lost, there is broad interest in resurrecting the spirit of community through citizen participation in voluntary activity in the community. Volunteering is also presently high on the agenda of governments in many countries of the world. The effectiveness, efficiency and suitability of volunteers in their respective roles is therefore receiving greater public attention.

*traditional
understanding*

Traditionally, volunteering has been seen as giving time to help those less fortunate than oneself. There was no expressed expectation of anything in return other than the satisfaction gained from helping others. This gave volunteering strong historical links to the ideals associated with charitable work with the deserving poor. A substantial amount of voluntary activity was thus traditionally undertaken in religious or faith-based organisations. However, volunteering is changing and expanding in scope and diversity.

*expanding
opportunities*

Stereotypes about volunteering being associated with mainly women and charity work are challenged by the realities in Australia². Opportunities now exist for volunteers from diverse backgrounds to work in a variety of sectors. These include health and welfare, emergency services, heritage, arts and culture, education, recreation and sport, environment and conservation, overseas aid, animal welfare, human rights, faith-based organisations and youth development.

new meanings

In recent years volunteering has assumed new meanings and understandings in response to these expanded opportunities. Volunteering is expanding beyond the traditional service or philanthropic approach to embrace approaches based on community activism, self-help and mutual aid³. Communities often see a need for action prior to the public sector or governments identifying and responding to the need. Through voluntary activism community needs are transformed into successful cutting edge activities.

² Research reveals equal contributions from women and men - Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) *Voluntary Work, Australia, June 2000* Catalogue 4441.0, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra ACT, available <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/ABS@.nsf/>

³ Cane, Terry (1996) Introduction, *Time to Volunteer?* A collection of articles reprinted from Young People Now magazine, National Youth Agency, UK

An increasing number of for-profit organisations also encourage a form of corporate volunteering where staff contribute services without charge in the community⁴. Another feature of contemporary volunteering is often termed virtual volunteering because the voluntary contribution is made using the internet rather than via personal contact. In North America a trend in family volunteering has also emerged in which family units are encouraged to spend time together while making a meaningful voluntary contribution to the community.

*emerging
characteristics*

Closer government engagement with community based organisations in the delivery of contracted government services and the mandating or optional use of community service to acquit social obligations or expiate minor misdemeanours has blurred the boundaries between volunteering and community service. Volunteers now tend to make a contribution for shorter periods of time rather than making a life-long commitment. Volunteering has thus become episodic in nature, creating new challenges for volunteer recruitment, training and management.

episodic contribution

Although the definition has varied over time and within communities⁵, a number of core elements remain integral to the contemporary notion of voluntary activity, *First*, it has mutual benefits to both the volunteer and the community. *Second*, it is carried out freely and without coercion. *Third*, it is not undertaken for financial payment. And *lastly*, it is undertaken in positions designated for volunteers only.

*contemporary
understanding*

⁴ Holroyd, Carl & Silver, Anthony (2001) *Corporate Volunteering: Helping to Build Business and Community Sustainability. A handbook for corporations and business*, Volunteer South West, Western Australia

⁵ The Volunteering Australia *Definitions and Principles of Volunteering* are reproduced in Appendix 2.

Communities and volunteering

community voice

The declaration of 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers by the United Nations provided an international focus for celebration of the work of volunteers. Within Australia over 300 national organisations were invited to join a National Community Council of Advice to ensure a strong and influential community voice in management of the Year⁶.

active citizenship

The notions of community strength through voluntary endeavour and the benefits of civic engagement early in life have broad international support. Volunteer activity can help with social inclusion, life-long learning, healthy living and active ageing. A strong and vibrant democracy requires active citizens participating in their communities.⁷ Strong communities exhibit solid traditions of civic engagement evidenced by many active community organisations which value solidarity, civic participation and integrity⁸.

vibrant communities

A strong volunteering presence can signal that the community is taking responsibility for its own well being. Increasingly, rebuilding a sense of community through encouraging voluntary involvement in community activities is being seen as central to the concept of responsible citizenship and to restoring well-being to our communities. A vibrant, engaged community is better able to provide mutual support for its members as well as utilising volunteering as a force for social or environmental change⁹.

government support

In Australia, the impetus for building stronger communities through voluntary contribution is coming from several areas of government — education and training, defence services, family and community services, environment and health. The Australian Federal Government *Stronger Families and Communities* initiative recognises that families at risk in disadvantaged communities need strong leaders, skills and knowledge, and partnerships between diverse sectors¹⁰.

⁶ IYV National Community Council of Advice (2001) A National Agenda on Volunteering: Beyond the International Year of Volunteers, available <http://www.iyv2001.net>

⁷ UK Home Office (1999) *Giving Time, Getting Involved*. A strategy report by the Working Group on the Active Community, Active Community Unit, page 9

⁸ Putnam, Robert (1993) *The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life*, The American Prospect, v4 i13, available <http://www.prospect.org/>

⁹ Bell, Margaret (1999) *Volunteering: Underpinning Social Action in Civil Society for the New Millennium* Kumarian Press Inc., available <http://www.iyv2001.org/infobase/articles/VolUnderpinSocAction.pdf>

¹⁰ Emerson, Lee (2000) *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*, *Family Matters*, No.57 Spring/Summer, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Likewise, the recently released report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce stresses that we must invest in community support systems as well as training and education to equip all young people with the capacity to participate in the social and economic life of their community. Failure to do so condemns some people to life on the margins. It diminishes their quality of life and deprives the community of their contribution¹¹.

social investment

A community development or positive early intervention focus is characteristic of international and Australian approaches to building stronger communities. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Blair has argued for a change in public involvement in community life and a change in attitudes towards community activity¹².

changing attitudes

This convergence of ideas provides opportunities for collaborative ventures or partnerships between government, community based organisations, the business sector and volunteers¹³. Successful partnerships depend on the availability of committed volunteers.

*partnerships
approach*

Youth development programs and activities strengthen the connections between young people and their communities. Volunteer contribution has a vital part to play in building and strengthening these connections. Without committed volunteers youth development programs and activities cannot occur.

voluntary contribution

Making these connections is of critical importance to young people and fundamental to the process of civic engagement and community capacity building. Using a youth development approach, schools can make a significant contribution to civic engagement by building links between young people and their communities.

building links

¹¹ Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001) *Footprints to the Future*, page 11, available <http://www.youthpathways.gov.au/documents/fullreport.pdf>

¹² Speech to the Annual National Conference for Voluntary Organizations in 2001

¹³ This topic is the subject of a forthcoming Ausyouth publication *Business Partnerships in Youth Development*.

Good practice in volunteering

framework

The philosophy of volunteering is reflected in a number of principles or ideals. These concepts have a significant influence on the volunteering policy adopted by an organisation, as well as the ways in which this policy is reflected in practice. The core purpose, philosophy, size and culture of the organisation, and the type of work undertaken by volunteers, creates a unique volunteering environment in each organisation.

philosophy

Proponents of volunteering believe that volunteering makes a difference and should be inclusive. Volunteers encompass people of all races, ages, genders, backgrounds or capacities. Volunteer activity empowers individuals and enriches society by promoting a more democratic, caring, cooperative, cohesive and informed society, thus adding to a country's social, economic and political capital¹⁴.

aims

The aim of volunteer involvement in an organisation should be to work in partnership with paid staff (where they exist) to initiate, enhance and extend service provision, add a community perspective, increase community awareness and involvement, and bring about necessary change¹⁵. These sentiments may be expressed in a number of ways, for example, as objectives in the organisation's constitution, mission statement or volunteering policy.

good practice

Good practice in volunteering is underpinned by the philosophy, aims and guiding principles of volunteering (see Appendix 2). Striving to achieve good practice in volunteering enhances the volunteering experience and contributes to community building. It also enables an organisation to meet its legislative and common law duty of care obligations. Indicators of good practice in volunteering may be expressed in a number of ways, including having a Code of Practice for organisations involving volunteers in their activities¹⁶.

¹⁴ Noble, Joy & Rogers, Louise (1998) *Volunteer Management: An Essential Guide*, Volunteering SA Inc., Adelaide, page 8

¹⁵ Noble, Joy & Rogers, Louise (1998) Appendix Three: Example of Document Relating to Volunteer Policy and Practice Guidelines, *op cit*, page 158

¹⁶ Volunteering Australia (2002) *Model Code of Practice for Organisations Involving Volunteer Staff*, available at <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/>

Key indicators of good practice in volunteering extracted from the many available excellent resources include:

- Volunteers are treated as valuable team members, advised of and afforded an opportunity to participate in organisational decision making.
- The rights and contributions of volunteers are acknowledged and volunteers are provided with a copy of policies pertaining to volunteer activity.
- The work of volunteer staff does not replace that of paid staff and complements but does not undermine paid work or industrial work provisions.
- The roles of volunteers and paid staff are clearly defined and differentiated and explicit job descriptions are developed.
- Volunteer staff are interviewed and employed in accordance with equal opportunity and anti discrimination legislation.
- Orientation and training is provided, the opportunity for professional development is offered and an appropriate level of support and management is provided.
- A safe and healthy workplace and appropriate and adequate insurance coverage is provided.
- Information on grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures is available and provided.
- Out of pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation are reimbursed.

*key indicators
of good practice in
volunteering*

This list is not exhaustive but nevertheless illustrates the themes present in current thinking in relation to good practice in volunteering. Good practice in volunteering and youth development share many common indicators. These are identified and discussed in the topics covered in the second part of this publication.

Volunteering in youth development

understanding context

Youth development provider organisations need to become familiar with and responsive to emerging concepts and trends in volunteering in their communities. Surveying the context in which youth development programs and activities operate allows organisations to develop an understanding of community voices and identities. This respect for community values and beliefs needs to be reflected in both program development and volunteer management activities.

identifying requirements

As opportunities for volunteers to make a difference in their communities have broadened, volunteering has also become increasingly specialised. This trend is reflected in youth development programs and activities, which require volunteers with a quite specific range of skills and aptitudes. Achieving positive outcomes for young people demands the recruitment, training and retention of committed volunteers able to adopt a youth development approach to working with young people.

consolidation and growth

If youth development is to maintain its momentum the imperative is to build a critical mass of young people who are engaged in youth development activities¹⁷. Volunteers are central to achieving this goal. In order to secure the future growth in the number and availability of volunteers it is critical that the needs of adults who wish to volunteer their experience, skills, time and knowledge as contributors to youth development are considered.

volunteer role models

An American study *Engaging the Next Generation* found that, for many young people, there was no-one to encourage their participation in voluntary activity¹⁸. Further, one of the differences between volunteers and non-volunteers, which may help to explain the latter group's non-engagement with volunteering, is the apparent lack of volunteer role models in the non-volunteers' lives.

¹⁷ Pitman, Karen, Irby, Merita and Ferber, Thaddeus (2000) Unfinished Business: Further Reflections on a Decade of Promoting Youth Development, in *Youth Development: Issues, Challenges and Directions*, Inter-national Youth Foundation, Public/Private Ventures <http://www.ppv.org/content/reports/youthdevvolt.html>

¹⁸ Advertising Council (undated) *Engaging the Next Generation: How Nonprofits can Reach Young Adults*, supported by a grant from the PEW Charitable Trusts, New York, page 16, available <http://adcouncil.org>

The services of volunteers in provider organisations are significant to the delivery of programs and they are also role models for young people. Through their contribution to youth development programs and activities, volunteers have an opportunity to provide an example of leadership that empowers young people and challenges them to try new things - including undertaking a leadership role themselves.

adult role models

By drawing on the framework of principles for good practice in youth development, and ensuring an inclusive ethos underpins their programs and activities, provider organisations can make a positive difference to the lives of young people and their communities. Conscious planning, ongoing reflection on practice and rigorous evaluation of programs and activities enables provider organisations to identify opportunities to strengthen and extend the reach of youth development¹⁹.

extending the reach

¹⁹ See discussion in forthcoming Ausyouth publication *Youth Development, Service Learning and Schooling*.

Young people as volunteers

young people and communities

Volunteering is becoming increasingly recognised, both in Australia and overseas²⁰ as a means of increasing young people's involvement in their local community. Volunteering is a powerful individual development tool that contributes to a young person's sense of purpose and self-esteem and may extend their skills and range of social contacts.

reciprocal benefits

For some young people volunteering can also provide a route to paid employment. Involvement in youth development programs and activities can give young people an edge, as the multiple skills they learn are readily transferable to school, training or the paid work environment. Young people have an increasing awareness of the reciprocal benefits of voluntary contribution. Participation in voluntary activities is an investment in their future and the future of their communities.

contribution and leadership

A strategic approach to promoting and expanding young people's volunteering and fostering a lasting commitment is required. Young people contribute significantly to youth development provider organisations and programs. Young people's participation in youth development programs and activities provides opportunities to encourage young people to extend their contribution by considering volunteer and volunteer leadership roles.

partnerships

Youth development programs and activities build upon and strengthen our education and training systems. Schools are in a unique position to influence the future direction young people take in life by developing partnerships with young people and community groups. The knowledge, values, vocational skills, attitudes and general experience gained at school will influence young people well beyond the years they spend there²¹.

service learning

Service learning is seen by its advocates as a powerful strategy that fosters young people's commitment to participation in the community, promotes engagement in schooling and engages young people in exercising civic responsibility (see forthcoming discussion paper). Service learning places equal value on the contribution made and the consequential learning that occurs.

²⁰ see for example Roker, Debbie, Player, Katie and Coleman, John (1999) *Challenging the Image: Young People as Volunteers and Campaigners*, National Youth Agency, Leicester

²¹ Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001) *Footprints to the Future*, page viii, available <http://www.youthpathways.gov.au/documents/fullreport.pdf>

*increased voluntary
contribution*

As with volunteering and youth development, service learning enhances connections between young people and communities. Moreover, enhanced connection with the community is likely to have lasting results, given that volunteering as a young person is a strong predictor of volunteering later in life²² and volunteering itself is one indicator of engaged citizenship and strong communities.

²² Commission for Social Development (2001) *The Role of Volunteering in the Promotion of Social Development*, summary of panel discussion, available <http://www.iyv2001.org>

Policy, organisation and program environments

Through consistent application of the framework of principles for good practice in youth development, provider organisations can ensure that their programs and activities reach as many young people as possible. Young people and their communities will benefit most from youth development programs and activities where there is sustained attention to the three environments of policy, organisation and program. The interrelationship of these environments provides opportunities to advance and enhance good practice in youth development.

3 strategic environments

The development of a volunteering and youth development policy, and associated operational policies and processes, strengthens provider organisations and programs. Importantly, strong policies increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for both young people and their communities. Young people's involvement in policy formation is critical if young people are to be involved in shaping their own development, their communities' development and their futures.

policy

Innovative and stimulating activities and experiences can be offered by provider organisations in a community context. These organisations may have a focus on youth development as their core business or as a specific area of business within a broader field of activity. Young people offer a diversity of views and bring fresh ideas to youth development provider organisations. Resourceful and creative individuals and organisations can use these strengths to enhance youth development opportunities for young Australians.

organisation

Youth development programs and activities are important elements of any comprehensive approach to community capacity building. Youth development programs incorporate a creative range of activities and experiences that depend upon input from high quality committed volunteers. This is essential if these programs are to involve young people in activities that challenge and stretch them in an organised and supportive learning environment.

program

Through consistent application of the framework of principles for good practice in a process of continuous improvement, provider organisations can ensure that their programs and activities are accessible and relevant to young people. Reflecting on good practice also provides opportunities to strengthen, extend and advance the youth development approach to working with young people.

reflect on and enhance practice

Implementing good practice

Youth development programs and activities exist because committed volunteers make them possible and sustain their operation. Volunteering in youth development requires a specific range of aptitudes and skills of volunteers.

This second part of this publication provides guidance in the development of policy and processes in strategic areas with the potential to influence and shape good practice in volunteering and youth development. In keeping with the framework of principles for good practice in youth development, the indicators of good practice in volunteering and youth development in this section are intended to stimulate thinking and foster continuous improvement.

Good practice principles in volunteering and youth development have been applied in an integrated discussion in the designated topic areas. The exploration of each topic highlights the key principles which need to be considered, identifies the processes to be undertaken and identifies the key elements to be considered in order to maximise opportunities for good practice.

The youth development framework of principles for good practice has been used as a primary resource to provide the youth development context for decision-making. Good practice principles in volunteering have been extracted from the key resources available on volunteering. This publication also draws on relevant principles of good practice in disciplines related to the topics covered.

The focus on good practice provides a means of articulating and linking the key features of volunteering and youth development by providing a framework for:

- reflecting on policies and practices
- contributing to increased consistency and coherence in youth development practices, and
- providing a common foundation for potential collaboration in considering improved practice.

The application of good practice principles to the delivery of youth development programs and activities is also fundamental to the development of shared understanding and common language amongst providers about the outcomes for young people.

Volunteering policy

Working with youth development volunteers in your organisation

Like youth development itself, volunteering is too important to be left to chance. It must be actively and consciously planned for and managed.

A well-prepared policy is critically important given the fundamental role volunteers play in the delivery of youth development programs and activities. A volunteering and youth development policy is more than an expression of the organisation's rationale for using volunteers. The policy provides a public statement about the youth development approach, the organisation's commitment to it and the way volunteers uniquely contribute to this philosophy.

A volunteering and youth development policy needs to be developed if a provider organisation does not already have one. The principles and commitments described in the policy also need to be evident in related policies and practices covered by the other topics in this publication. If a provider organisation already has a volunteering and youth development policy it is important to review the policy and related policies regularly.

Evaluating the effectiveness of policies is part of striving to achieve good practice in youth development. It is also an important first step if a provider organisation wants to change its organisational culture and adopt a youth development approach to working with young people.

Key principles

- Youth development overarching and underpinning principles drive the vision.
- The expressed values and beliefs are consistent with the inclusive ethos of youth development.
- Objectives and intended outcomes are clearly stated systematically monitored and evaluated.
- A participative ethos is reflected through the use of a collaborative policy development process which involves all stakeholders.

Things to consider

Why do we need to write a volunteering and youth development policy?

Youth development principles should be evident in all three environments of policy, organisation and program. A volunteering and youth development policy:

- expresses a provider organisation's commitment to the youth development approach, goals and methodology in a visible, accessible and meaningful way
- acknowledges the fundamental importance of volunteers to its youth development programs and activities and explains this simply and clearly
- provides the basis for developing shared language and understanding among staff, volunteers and young people about youth development
- guides strategies and actions within the organisation.

What should the policy include?

A volunteering and youth development policy should include elements such as:

- a brief description of the youth development approach as it applies in the organisation - philosophy, values and goals
- a statement of commitment to youth development
- how the policy and the organisation's mission statement work together (particularly where youth development is not the organisation's core business)
- why volunteers are involved, what kind of roles they play and what volunteers can expect from the organisation
- an acknowledgment of the value of volunteer staff to the organisation and how they complement any paid staff
- A Code of Conduct (standards for ethical behaviour, including confidentiality, privacy, security and reporting).

A volunteering and youth development policy may also include the following elements or refer to other policies that cover these:

- recruitment and selection

- conditions of employment
- induction, training and accreditation
- equal opportunity and sexual harassment matters
- occupational health, safety and welfare
- industrial, grievance and disciplinary matters

It is important where volunteers are covered by policies written for paid staff that these policies are amended to incorporate specific statements about volunteers.

Are there budget implications?

Consideration needs to be given to the financial implications for the provider organisation when engaging volunteers. Matters to be considered include:

- volunteer management or coordination
- training
- volunteer travel allowances, uniforms and out-of-pocket expenses
- additional rent, equipment, insurance and utilities (electricity, gas, water, telephone).

Do we need a volunteer coordinator or manager?

Depending on the number of volunteers to be recruited provision will need to be made for a staff member (paid or volunteer) to manage volunteers.

- The responsibilities, time commitment, skills and knowledge required of the manager need to be considered and incorporated into a new or existing position.
- The position will be responsible for promote volunteering and youth development, managing volunteers, and monitoring and evaluation of the volunteer policy.

This topic is covered in detail in the next section.

Where should we start?

Provider organisations and programs adopt a variety of approaches. Good ways to get started include:

- looking at the policies of other organisations, particularly those using the youth development approach

- obtaining resources on volunteering and youth development — these often contain sample policies (refer to resources at the end of this publication)
- consulting with as many staff, volunteers and young people in your organisation as possible in developing the policy - discuss why you want to involve volunteers, what they might do and any issues arising from their involvement.

Once you are clear about what will be included you need to:

- write the policy in clear, plain English and keep it as brief as possible
- distribute the policy widely within the organisation and make clear the organisation's expectations regarding compliance
- arrange to review and evaluate the policy regularly to ensure that it continues to meet the organisation's needs and amend as appropriate.

Having developed the organisation's volunteering and youth development philosophy, values and goals, and defined these in a policy, you need to develop a Code of Conduct.

Why have a Code of Conduct for volunteers?

Volunteers occupy positions of trust requiring standards of behaviour that reflect provider organisation and community expectations. A Code of Conduct defines these expectations.

Three broad elements underpin ethics and standards of behaviour.

- Integrity (the intent or meaning of your actions).
- Respect (how you treat other people).
- Accountability (responsibility for your actions and decisions).

What does a Code of Conduct need to include?

Standards for ethical behaviour need to be expressed consistent with provider organisation philosophy, business and culture.

This means that a Code of Conduct may look different in each provider organisation or program.

However the content will always be underpinned by three key principles - integrity, respect and accountability.

A model Code of Conduct for volunteers typically includes sentiments such as:

In acknowledgment of the position of trust I hold as a volunteer in (provider organisation name) I will:

Integrity

- always endeavour to give my best to meet the organisation s standards and requirements
- ensure my behaviour reflects youth development principles and provider and community standards

Respect

- treat staff, other volunteers and young people with courtesy and regard for their dignity
- value diversity - avoid direct and indirect discrimination and harassment, and comply with related legislation
- protect my own and others health and safety

Accountability

- use resources efficiently and effectively to optimise benefit to the organisation and young people
- maintain the privacy of individuals - respect the confidentiality of written and verbal information (with the exception of child protection issues which must be reported)
- strive to continuously improve the services I provide

I will discuss any concerns I have as early as possible with (manager, supervisor or provider identified contact person).

Do organisations need a Code of Practice?

In order to enhance the volunteering and youth development experience and meet legislative and duty of care obligations, it may be helpful to summarise provider responsibilities in a Code of Practice.

This could be, in essence, a summary of the volunteering and youth development policy in dot point style.

Management or coordination

Guiding and supporting volunteers in your organisation

The provision of youth development opportunities for young people is dependent upon voluntary contribution. Recognising the interests of all stakeholders draws people in the provider organisation together in productive youth development partnerships.

Like youth development itself, volunteering is too important to be left to chance. It must be actively and consciously planned for and managed. Leading and supporting volunteers in provider organisations plays a critically important part in securing and retaining committed volunteers.

Culture impacts on every aspect of an organisation's operation and hence its success in achieving outcomes for young people and their communities. It is essential that the volunteer manager have a clear understanding of the philosophy, values and mission that create an organisation's distinctive culture and expression of youth development.

Quality management and support is needed if volunteers are to feel valued and be productive. Satisfied volunteers are more likely to be retained in the organisation over the longer term. Effective management policies and practices for volunteers are needed to maximise the energy, skills and knowledge that volunteers bring to youth development programs and activities.

Key principles

- Leadership vision draws on the youth development framework of principles.
- Volunteer involvement in programs and activities for young people is strategically planned.
- A positive, healthy and safe environment is created.
- Management of volunteers is fair and equitable, and adequate training and practical resources are provided.
- Material resources are used in effective, transparent and accountable ways.

Things to consider

Does the organisation support having a volunteer coordinator or manager?

Obtaining organisational support requires the development of persuasive strategies and actions. The approach used will depend upon factors specific to the provider organisation, such as:

- whether youth development is the organisation's core business or only a part of it
- organisational size, structure and the number and type of paid staff and volunteers
- the organisational culture and predominant leadership/management styles
- how the organisation is governed and the composition of the Board, Council or Executive

To obtain support you will need to consider approaching a range of people at different levels in the organisation (the Board, Council, senior executives and staff) and other key stakeholders, including volunteers and young people.

Considering the following questions may assist in developing a case to present to key people.

Why have a dedicated person to manage volunteers?

To achieve good practice outcomes for organisations and programs, provider organisations using volunteers need:

- strategic input regarding the best use of voluntary contribution
- someone to lead, effectively manage, support and train volunteers
- systems and managed processes which ensure a positive, healthy and safe work environment for volunteers.

A coordinator/manager needs the support of the organisation at all levels to undertake their role effectively.

What are the position requirements?

The management style of the volunteer manager/coordinator is important. A good leader and manager:

- has a vision for the future
- fosters and recognises creative ideas
- develops the knowledge and skills of volunteer staff
- works collaboratively with paid and volunteer staff
- includes volunteers and young people in the decision-making processes
- ensures the use of financial physical resources is effective and efficient
- uses the organisation's structures, policies and processes innovatively
- acknowledges the interests of and strives to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Importantly, the volunteer manager/coordinator applies the framework of principles for good practice in youth development.

Will there be any additional costs?

The extent of additional cost to the provider organisation will depend upon whether the role is to be undertaken by:

- an existing paid staff member
- a new paid position to be created
- an experienced volunteer.

Consideration of the size of the organisation, its core business, resources available and the number of volunteers will assist in evaluating the best approach to adopt.

What are the organisational benefits?

The benefits flowing to a provider organisation investing in a volunteer coordinator/manager vary but could include:

- well developed continuous improvement processes, higher quality programs and improved outcomes for young people

- increased credibility in the community leading to greater kudos for the Board, Council or senior executives
- making a more potent contribution to community capacity building
- demonstrating leadership amongst provider organisations.

Use these ideas as starters and brainstorm a list of benefits appropriate to your organisation.

How can we communicate our ideas and influence the Board, Council or senior executives?

Most people would agree that leaders within their organisation strive energetically to realise the vision that drives their organisation forwards. Strategies to engage these key people could include:

- giving key people opportunities to get out of the Boardroom, experience the program first-hand and interact with volunteers and young people
- focussing on what they can gain (eg reduced exposure to occupational health and safety or public liability)
- lobbying for several young people and volunteers to be members of the Board, Council or Executive
- raising the need for volunteer coordination or management regularly on the Board, Council or Executive agenda
- organising for young people and volunteers to tell their story at Board, Council or Executive meetings
- invite an influential volunteer coordinator/manager from another provider organisation to make a presentation to the Board, Council or Executive.

Be well organised and informed, be innovative and persistent, ask these key people to take on specific roles and be prepared to develop strategies that engage them over the longer term. Remember, Board members are volunteers too and benefit from a raised volunteer profile.

Lobbying for support can also motivate people at the senior level to become advocates for youth development within their broader spheres of influence. Using these networks effectively can contribute to the building of a strong constituency of support for youth development in the 21st century.

Health and safety

Creating a positive, healthy and safe youth development environment

It is essential to have a robust occupational health and safety management system designed to protect the well being of all volunteers.

A volunteer health and safety statement defines the organisation's obligations and the obligations of volunteers. The organisation needs to have a written plan, actions and procedures. The aim needs to be to create a positive environment in which volunteers can feel confident about their rights and responsibilities. Encourage a climate of assessing and addressing hazards but one that does not discourage innovation.

The policy needs to cover issues such as creating and maintaining a safe work environment and practices, communication processes, child protection, and managing programs and activities for young people safely. The policy should refer to other organisational policies and clearly state where these can be accessed.

This important area will be covered in greater depth in the forthcoming Ausyouth publication *Creating the Youth Development Environment - Positive, Healthy and Safe*. This topic focuses on the creation of effective health and safety management systems.

Key principles

- A health and safety management system comprising a plan, actions and procedures covers all volunteers and creates a safe work environment.
- Health and safety, industrial and equal opportunity legislation is observed for volunteers and paid staff.
- Appropriate insurance cover is maintained for staff, volunteers, young people and the physical resources.
- Legal responsibilities relating to duty of care and child protection are clearly communicated and enforced.
- A health and safety contact person to whom volunteers can refer or discuss any concerns is accessible.

Things to consider

Why develop and implement an occupational health and safety management system?

An occupational health and safety management system is a documented and verifiable set of plans, actions and procedures to systematically manage health and safety. An effective system should aim to achieve the following:

- a safe and healthy workplace
- prevention/reduction of illness and injury equally for all those engaged in the organisation's activities
- identification of workplace hazards, and assessment and control of risks
- active involvement of staff, volunteers and young people
- provision of health and safety information and associated training.

The system can be simple or complex, it can be developed in-house or be based on model used elsewhere or be obtained from a professional provider at cost.

What are the essential components of a health and safety system?

Irrespective of whether the system is developed in-house or adopted from elsewhere, a number of elements need to be evident:

- explicit commitment from and clear identification of responsibilities of management, staff, volunteers and young people
- documented, accessible and well-communicated policy and procedures appropriate to the legal jurisdiction and organisation
- an inclusive approach to system development which reflects the youth development approach to working with young people
- timely, accessible information and training which reflects socio-economic and cultural backgrounds
- hazard identification, assessment and reporting processes

- hazard control focussed on elimination (most effective), moving to solutions, administrative controls and personal protective clothing and/or equipment (least effective)
- monitoring, review and improvement consistent with the aim of developing good practice in youth development
- record keeping encompassing hazardous procedures or incidents where no injury occurs, accidents, training, health monitoring and matters requiring notification.

The things that need to be covered comprehensively will vary according to the nature of the organisation, its size and the context and scope of its programs and activities.

Is the inclusion of health and safety in orientation and induction essential?

Orientation or induction is a critically important part of introducing new volunteers to the organisation. It needs to be conducted in a methodical manner and clearly communicate organisational and volunteer responsibilities. You may find it helpful to:

- develop an organisational checklist of information
- nominate an experienced person in your organisation as a volunteer mentor or contact person for an initial period
- consider having volunteers serve an internship by placing them with effective long-term volunteers
- organise development programs to assist young people without extensive life experience to become effective volunteers.

In some provider organisations it may be possible to provide young people with other structured leadership opportunities.

What other kinds of records do I need to keep?

It is important to set up a confidential record keeping system to provide you with relevant details about your volunteers. The confidentiality of records and sensitivity to volunteers' right to privacy needs to be paramount. Information about volunteers should be accessible to individuals on request in accordance with privacy legislation. Information collected needs to include:

- personal contact details (name, address, telephone number and next of kin)

- appropriate medical information (eg allergies, diabetes, etc.) and emergency contact details
- participation in programs (dates, times, names of programs/activities and attendees).

The importance of confidentiality will be evidenced in locked storage and access limited to agreed and identified people. Personal information used to build a statistical profile of access and participation in your programs (ie demographic data) needs to be used in a non-identifiable way.

Have fire evacuation procedures been incorporated into the health and safety system?

Procedures need to be developed and communicated to staff, volunteers and young people to ensure the speedy and safe evacuation of the premises in the event a fire occurs.

- A fire warden(s) should be appointed to direct an evacuation and communicate successful evacuation to the fire service.
- Exits must be marked in accordance with the relevant fire regulations.
- Floor plans showing a marked exit route and a safe muster location should be strategically placed.

Where programs and activities occur in other premises and locations, a fire evacuation briefing must be provided on arrival.

Does the organisation have adequate property and public liability insurance cover?

An organisation needs to ensure that volunteers are covered by its public liability insurance. It is important that the organisation's insurance cover and compliance requirements are communicated to volunteers, participants in programs or activities, parents and Board or Council members.

What about legal and legislative responsibilities?

To fulfil its legal and legislative responsibilities, an organisation needs to establish and actively promote policies and procedures that clearly communicate what action needs to be taken in certain circumstances.

Organisational responsibilities that need to be communicated in policy and procedures include duty of care; privacy; health and safety; equal opportunity; discrimination; and child protection.

Recruitment

Recruiting volunteers for your youth development initiatives

The nature of the recruitment process used will depend on the number of volunteers and the type of skills and knowledge required but the youth development approach will always be its cornerstone.

The generation of a volunteering and youth development policy will have confirmed the organisation's position on the involvement of volunteers and laid the foundation for recruitment policy and practice. These policies provide a framework for the organisation's work with volunteers and affirm the youth development approach to working with young people as an empowering process and a conscious enterprise.

Before you begin the recruitment process you need a clear understanding of how volunteers are to be included in youth development programs and activities. An organisation needs meaningful work for its volunteers to undertake. The opportunities need to be interesting and worthwhile to attract and retain committed volunteers who are willing and able to embrace the youth development ethos and program obligations.

Be proactive in your recruitment and promote the high regard in which volunteers are held within your organisation and in the broader community. Attracting and retaining suitable volunteers is essential to the sustainability of youth development programs.

Key principles

- Recruitment of volunteers is linked to the organisation's volunteering and youth development policy.
- Recruitment is strategically and collaboratively planned.
- The number of volunteers required is based on identified program or activity needs and the community profile.
- The identified skills, abilities, knowledge and experience required of volunteers are consistent with youth development principles.
- Opportunities for young people to be involved in the recruitment processes are actively sought.

Things to consider

In what context will recruitment occur?

A flexible approach to recruitment consistent with the youth development approach and the needs of young people is required. Considerations include the:

- programs and activities to be supported
- changing and emerging concepts of volunteering at state, national and international levels
- socio-economic structure of the local community
- profile/characteristics of volunteers in your area.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted state and national surveys on volunteering in 1995 and 2000. This provides valuable data on the nature and extent of volunteering in Australia.

Is a needs assessment required?

You need to have a well-organised recruitment plan that takes account of current and future needs in your youth development programs and activities. You may find it helpful to:

- undertake a needs assessment to identify the number of volunteers and the type of abilities, skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications the program(s) require
- review the organisation's current volunteer profile to assess the extent to which it reflects the demography of the community and the profile the organisation is seeking in relation to abilities, skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications
- develop strategies to address any mismatch between requirements and current capacity in your recruitment plan.

Do we need a job description and how do we develop one?

The job description is an important document as it defines the parameters of the job for the provider organisation and volunteers. You need to:

- ensure the job has intrinsic value and provides volunteers with a meaningful role

- review existing or write new job descriptions (the duties to be undertaken and the abilities, skills, knowledge, qualifications and experience required)
- develop an appealing job title and a brief organisational profile (including a statement that it is not intended that volunteers undertake the work of paid staff).

Volunteers will be working with young people and it is imperative that they:

- have a good understanding of the concept of positive youth development
- are respectful of the rights of young people
- have an affinity with and respect for young people
- be prepared to undertake a police offender history check and nominate referees for screening purposes.

Be specific about the time commitment and any other checks required (health, driver s licence and qualifications).

How do I find suitable volunteers?

Research shows many people who volunteer do so because someone asked them or was a source of inspiration. Committed volunteers in youth development programs and activities are most likely to encourage others to become involved.

A range of other recruitment strategies can be used:

- advertise in national, state/territory or local press
- prepare brochures, posters, flyers or a letter box drop
- place notices in local shopping centres, libraries or approach local businesses
- use the Internet, radio or television
- talks or presentations by Board members or volunteers
- come and try days.

How do I write a professional advertisement?

It is important to consider the motivations and interests of the target audience in developing a writing style for your advertisement.

A successful advertisement:

- provides an overview of your organisation and its objectives
- briefly describes the position, the type of person you are seeking and the selection process
- clearly describes how interested people can contribute and make a difference (eg providing opportunities young people would not otherwise have to contribute to their communities)
- develops a persuasive statement about the benefits of becoming involved with your organisation (eg accredited training, developing new transferable skills, personal fulfilment, an opportunity to exercise responsibility, a sense of belonging and enjoyment)
- provides contact details and invites interested applicants to discuss their interest with a contact person from your organisation.

What information should I provide in response to inquiries about volunteer positions?

It is important to prepare ahead to ensure interested applicants have access to information which allows them to consider their suitability for volunteer positions in your organisation. An application form is required to provide you with important information about the prospective volunteer. You need to:

- provide an application form, a copy of the job description and an outline of the selection process to applicants (include a request for any documentation required - qualifications, driver's licence, referees, police check etc)
- have information about the organisation available for interested applicants to read on site, collect or receive by mail (eg the annual report, the business plan, statement of its mission and goals and relevant policies — especially those regarding youth development and volunteering)
- anticipate the questions or concerns an interested volunteer may have and be clear about what the organisation can offer the volunteer (eg safety of volunteers, equal opportunity and the reimbursement of expenses)
- provide information about any training that may be required which is not optional (eg developmental needs of young people, youth culture) and spell out the benefits flowing to the volunteer and any costs likely to be incurred.

Selection

Being accountable for your selection processes and decisions

A provider organisation must be accountable for the quality and fairness of its selection processes. It is sound practice to document the processes for selection no matter how uncomplicated they may appear.

Volunteering is becoming increasingly specialised, as the skills required become more complex. Your recruitment strategy and processes will have made clear the requirement for applicants to participate in a selection process and reasons why. Accountable selection processes need to be developed to ensure fair and equitable selections decisions are made.

The process for selecting volunteers will always be based on the relative merit of the applicants. The job description and the selection criteria developed from it underpin the selection process. Applicants also need to be made aware that the selection process will exclude those who do not meet the specified requirements. Options for suitable applicants who cannot be placed in positions at that time need to be outlined.

A provider organisation may also want to consider developing an extended induction process, mentoring arrangements or internships in order to be able to access and select volunteers with suitable attributes for youth development programs and activities.

Key principles

- Selection is consistent with the organisation's volunteering and youth development policy requirements.
- The inclusion of young people on selection panels is actively considered.
- Selection is based on merit, fairness and equity.
- The selection processes for volunteers meets community standards and is consistent with those for paid staff.
- The process is documented, transparent and accountable and no unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination occurs.

Things to consider

Who will decide which applicants are suitable?

Establish a selection panel to be responsible for selecting the best applicants for the position(s). The panel should:

- include a Chairperson who will be responsible for managing the selection process
- preferably include at least one person who was involved in the development of the volunteer policy and/or the volunteer job description
- actively consider including a young person (or two) on the selection panel.

On what basis will decisions be made?

A statement describing the selection criteria needs to be developed to identify the abilities, skills, experience and knowledge required to perform the volunteer duties.

The criteria should be based on the job description and thus:

- must include a willingness to undergo a police check
- should include an affinity with young people and a commitment to youth development as an approach to working with young people
- should identify the abilities, skills, knowledge and any experience necessary to fulfil the job requirements
- may also include volunteer preparedness to allocate time and attend training
- should group and prioritise the essential and desirable knowledge, skills, attributes and experience you require for your youth development volunteers.

The criteria may have been developed with the job description. If this is not the case one should be written by the panel.

Should each applicant receive identical treatment?

The selection panel should assess each application in a fair and equitable manner to:

- identify those that meet the specified selection criteria

- develop a short-list of applicants to be interviewed
- prepare a set of key questions for all interviewees based on the job specification and selection criteria (the panel may find it useful to identify ideal type or indicative responses that meet the prioritised criteria)
- develop a proforma to assist with developing a consolidated view of indicators that demonstrate an applicant has met the criteria and the degree to which this was evidenced
- contact the short-listed applicants and confirm an interview time.

Should interviews be conducted?

Offering an interview to the short-listed applicants is important because it provides an opportunity for:

- the panel to meet the applicants and assess whether they have the appropriate skills, attitude, knowledge and time to contribute
- the applicant to clarify any queries they have about the organisation or their role and become better informed
- clarification and confirmation of information supplied in written applications
- comparison and ranking of applicants using the proforma suggested above (this is particularly useful where the number of suitable applicants exceeds the number of positions available).

Interviews should be conducted in an environment that allows applicants to feel at ease. This will enable each applicant to provide the best possible information to the panel.

What about referee and other checks?

The need for referee and other checks will have been outlined in the job description and identified as essential or discretionary.

For short-listed applicants:

- mandatory checks should be undertaken prior to the interview (eg police offender history, health, qualifications, or written references requested as part of an organisation's stated screening process)

- referee checks are often undertaken after interviews have been conducted to allow clarification and/or validation of information provided in the written application and at interview (there is some flexibility about when these are undertaken but follow-up of referees is essential).

Remember, mandatory police offender history checks identify convictions, the relevance of the offence needs to be assessed. They are one part of good screening processes (interviews, referees, induction/training and evaluation). Some states have made police checks a statutory requirement and/or have established regulatory processes. Check with the government child protection or community services agency in your state.

Who notifies applicants?

Once the panel has reached agreement, the Chairperson should notify the successful applicant/s and negotiate a starting time and date.

- The initial offer to join the organisation as a volunteer may be provided verbally but should be confirmed in writing as soon as possible afterwards.
- Unsuccessful applicants should then be notified. A similar process should be applied to unsuccessful applicants.
- Suitable applicants unable to be placed may be referred to other agencies or asked if they would like to be placed on the organisation's waiting list.

Is orientation or induction necessary?

An orientation or induction program for new volunteers is important because it:

- welcomes volunteers to your organisation and provides an indicator of how the organisation treats volunteers now and in the future
- introduces volunteers to the new work environment and provides them with the necessary information to do their job effectively and remain with the organisation
- fulfils its occupational health and safety statutory requirements.

In keeping with the importance of induction this issue is referred to in a number of sections and, for practical purposes, more detailed discussion has been included in the training and accreditation section.

Induction, training and accreditation

Supporting, enhancing and formalising volunteer contribution

The volunteer experience provides endless opportunities for broadening of insights, understanding and knowledge as well as the opportunity for the development of new skills related a particular aspect of the job.

Getting new volunteers off to a good start is the first step in the training and development process. Induction is the formal process of familiarising new volunteers with the provider organisation, their role, and roles of other people in the organisation.

Training of youth development volunteers needs to provide practical knowledge underpinned by the youth development framework of principles for good practice. Appropriately structured training needs to engage the interest of adult leaders, stimulate motivation and be an enjoyable learning experience.

Formal recognition of training achievements and recognition of prior learning can then be provided by means of a certificate or award. Where this is not possible, it is important to reward achievements by issuing in-house certificates of attendance at training.

Key principles

- The professional development of volunteers is a high priority, and induction and ongoing training opportunities are offered to volunteers.
- Rigorous training processes reflect the use of volunteers in the provider organisation.
- The key competencies needed by adults and young people are identified and provide the basis for leader training.
- Arrangements are made to seek formal recognition for the existing knowledge and skills of volunteers.
- Community recognition of learning outcomes is sought and training is formally accredited where possible.

Things to consider

Why is orientation or induction important?

Providing an induction program for youth development volunteers is important because it:

- welcomes volunteers to your organisation and ensures that they feel valued and appreciated
- introduces volunteers to the new work environment and provides them with the necessary information to do their job effectively and remain with the organisation
- fulfils requirements for a positive, healthy and safe environment for youth development.

How can we make best use of the induction process?

Orientation needs to be conducted in a systematic way with clear responsibilities for the task. You may find it helpful to:

- develop an organisational checklist of information to be provided, a timeframe for action and responsibilities
- nominate an experienced person in your organisation as a volunteer mentor or contact person for an initial period
- consider having volunteers serve an internship by placing them with effective long-term volunteers (assists young people without extensive life experience become effective volunteers).

What should the induction checklist include?

A checklist needs to provide information about:

- the organisation (youth development philosophy and aims, organisational structure, policies, code of conduct, communication channels, programs and activities offered)
- the volunteer (role, expectations, rights, support, supervision, training, how to relate to paid staff and the community, out of pocket expenses)
- the staff (introduction to senior managers, supervisor, colleagues, support staff and other volunteers, and explanation of their roles)
- young people (introductions and profile of participants)

- internal procedures and housekeeping (health and safety systems and guidelines, parking, transport, facilities, use of telephones and other office equipment).

The orientation program should aim to reduce any anxiety likely to be experienced on the first day and needs to be paced to achieve this outcome.

How do we determine volunteer training requirements?

The training needs of youth development volunteers need to be assessed and reflect:

- how volunteers will be used in relation to paid staff (if any)
- the type of program and activities being undertaken, where they take place and the health and safety considerations
- the circumstances and cultural backgrounds of young people and the local community
- the nature of the provider organisation and availability of organisational material resources.

The framework of principles for good practice in youth development will always be the cornerstone of any needs assessment.

How do we need to structure training?

The professional development of volunteers and paid staff needs to be afforded a high priority. Dependent upon the above training requirements:

- volunteer training may need to be undertaken prior to commencement, on commencement or periodically
- irrespective of the timing of initial training, opportunities need to be offered on an ongoing basis with accredited training offered wherever possible
- the prior achievements and skills of volunteers, needs to be acknowledged and cross-credited where appropriate
- the key competencies needed by adults and young people need to be identified and form the basis for leader training.

A training plan needs to be developed in consultation with all those involved.

Why focus on competence?

Official accreditation of training courses requires that training be conducted to prescribed competency-based standards by registered training providers.

- Competencies, essentially, form a dictionary of standardised descriptions of skills and skill levels required by particular jobs.
- The introduction of competency assessments in Australia was intended to provide formal recognition of skills development in the workplace and portable qualifications.

Performance criteria need to accompany each element of the competency standard.

- The performance criteria or indicators describe in behavioural terms how skills achievement will be evidenced subsequent to training.
- Competency standards for training, the job description and the selection criteria developed to describe the abilities, skills and knowledge required of volunteers need to be consistent.

The performance criteria for training resemble indicators discussed earlier in relation to structured selection processes.

What about recognition of prior learning and accreditation?

Recognition of training undertaken in provider organisations can be provided through the issue of certificates of attendance at training.

The value of certificates is greatest where the competencies acquired are summarised on the certificate, allowing volunteers to demonstrate the transferability of skills to other volunteering or paid positions.

The Australian National Training Authority (the training accreditation body) is currently investigating accreditation of young people's participation in youth development programs.

Formal accreditation training undertaken by young people would potentially flow-on to their participation in youth development programs as adult volunteers.

Recognition and retention

Valuing and retaining your best volunteers

Volunteers leave provider organisations that do not offer satisfying work experiences. Many are well informed, well educated with a great deal of experience, and they expect to be valued and provided with appropriate recognition, support, materials, facilities and training to fulfil their role.

Recognising the contribution of volunteers is important in its own right and it also plays an important part in retaining volunteers in your organisation. The contribution of volunteers to youth development is central to the organisation achieving outcomes for young people.

Creating a volunteer manager/coordinator position allows a provider organisation to make a positive public statement about its commitment to volunteers. A positive relationship between the volunteer coordinator/manager, including regular opportunities for mutual feedback, is an essential part of delivering successful, quality youth development programs and activities.

Volunteers need professional support if they are to feel valued and be productive. Effective induction into the organisation, ongoing opportunities for training and inclusion of volunteers in the decision making is essential and also assists in retaining volunteers. Satisfied volunteers are more likely to be retained in the organisation over the longer term.

Key principles

- Respect for and recognition of volunteer contribution is conveyed in visible and ongoing ways.
- Induction and ongoing training and development opportunities are offered.
- Volunteers are consulted and involved in formal and informal decision making processes.
- Regular opportunities for mutual feedback between the volunteers and the organisation are provided.
- Grievance procedures are developed and volunteers are made aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Things to consider

How can we recognise volunteer contribution?

Appropriate recognition needs to be given to volunteers working in youth development programs if they are to feel a valued part of the organisation. Ways of achieving this include:

- consulting and involving volunteers in formal and informal decision making processes
- valuing and adopting the ideas and perspectives of volunteers regarding youth development programs and activities wherever possible
- fostering positive relationships between volunteers and paid staff through regular team meetings
- developing visible methods of recognition (letters of thanks, acknowledgment by award of a certificate or trophy, organise a dinner or barbecue hosted by the organisation and the young participants, recognition ceremonies)
- providing opportunities for formal recognition or accreditation of training undertaken by volunteers
- promoting the transferability of skills gained to other areas of paid employment.

In some provider organisations it may be possible to create paid employment opportunities within the organisation (eg volunteer manager/coordinator, training officer, communications operative, advisers).

How do volunteers gain a clear understanding of the organisation's expectations?

Organisational policies provide a reference point for managing volunteers and reducing the chances of poor performance issues arising. Three organisational documents provide guidance and extend the policy framework:

- a Code of Conduct defines the boundaries of acceptable volunteer behaviour
- the job description describes the range of duties to be undertaken in broad terms

- a work program describes organisational expectations in terms of volunteer contribution to program delivery.

The first two documents are discussed in the preceding policy and recruitment sections and the third will be discussed below.

Why and how do we develop a work program?

A work program for each volunteer is important so that there is clarity about what is required and the extent of the time commitment.

A work program provides guidance about how volunteers will work with young people in the organisation's programs and activities. It is important that:

- the work program complements the skills, experience and expertise of the volunteer and enables them to be innovative
- volunteers are be involved in the planning and decision-making processes of program development.

An inclusive ethos is fundamental to the successful implementation of a youth development approach in program delivery.

What about performance?

Regular contact or formal meetings between the volunteer and the coordinator/manager provide opportunities to:

- engage in mutual feedback
- consider feedback from young people and parents
- recognise, appreciate and provide feedback on strengths in order to sustain or increase confidence
- identify areas in which learning needs to be fostered and/or opportunities for training created
- extend the volunteer's responsibilities in a timely way to maintain job satisfaction.

A positive relationship between the volunteer manager/coordinator, including regular opportunities for mutual feedback, is an essential part of delivering successful, quality youth development programs and activities. In the absence of such a position, feedback from young people and parents becomes critical to managing the performance of volunteers.

Why do we need a grievance policy and procedures?

A grievance policy and an appeal system are valuable tools for dealing with unresolved issues. The process needs to be:

- transparent (the process is known to all volunteers)
- independent (involves an identified person not directly involved in the matter to be resolved)
- objective (focuses on events and behaviour not personalities)
- consistent (the same process is used in each instance)
- timely (implemented before working relationships breakdown or harm occurs).

The organisation should aim to deal with arising issues within the day-to-day supervisory relationship.

What about reimbursement of expenses?

Consideration needs to be given to reimbursing significant out-of-pocket expenses or paying an honorarium for:

- police checks, special driving licences and training
- travel to and from place of volunteering and transportation of young people
- meals during the course of volunteering
- postage and telephone costs (if working from home)
- clothing or other equipment
- entrance and admission fees.

It is important to develop and communicate a clear policy regarding the expenses that may be claimed.

Are exit interviews useful?

Exit interviews provide an opportunity to inform the organisation of any issues that have not previously been raised or satisfactorily resolved. Information about external constraints volunteers experience may also be provided and prove to be valuable in future recruitment activities. A policy statement and process for managing exit interviews should be developed to ensure an objective and consistent approach.

Succession planning

Ensuring the transfer of skills and continuity of programs and activities

To ensure the viability and longer-term sustainability of youth development programs and activities, planning for the movement of volunteers within and out of provider organisations needs to occur.

Planning is required to ensure continuity of and minimal disruption to programs and activities when volunteers move within and out of organisations and programs. Predictability of ongoing youth development opportunities for young people is also important. An assessment of the key skills likely to be lost and require replacement needs to occur.

An awareness of directions in volunteering and volunteer participation trends is needed to plan for organisational renewal and optimise voluntary contribution. Volunteering tends to be episodic in nature and fluctuates over the lifetime of volunteers as changing responsibilities place time constraints on their capacity to contribute.

The creation of leadership opportunities for young people is an important part of youth development and needs to be consciously considered in succession planning. Informal opportunities allow the development of leadership qualities but formal arrangements legitimise and publicly acknowledge young people's success.

Key principles

- Young people are encouraged and supported in taking on leadership roles.
- Mentoring and support is offered to new leaders.
- Program leaders contribute to and help sustain robust local community networks.
- Policies that increase opportunities for young people to engage with and contribute to their communities are developed and implemented.
- Service is sustained over a significant time and is subject to explicit reflection.

Things to consider

When should we begin planning?

Succession planning needs to become part of the ongoing cycle of recruiting, selecting, inducting, training, recognising and retaining volunteers in youth development programs and activities.

A key consideration in each part of this continuous cycle should be the creation of leadership opportunities for young people.

How can we predict how long volunteers will stay?

Having a good understanding of the needs, aspirations and life-cycle stages of your volunteers will assist in assessing the likely time each will spend with your organisation or program.

Developing a statistical profile from information collected about your current volunteers will provide further insights.

Planned changes to the types of programs and activities offered to young people will also enable an organisation to predict likely changes in the number and type of volunteers needed.

Where do we start?

To begin planning for the movement of volunteers out of the organisation, you need to have clearly identified the abilities, skills, knowledge, qualifications and experience to be replaced.

In organisations where all volunteers undertake similar work this may be easily identified by reference to job descriptions, the selection criteria or training routinely provided.

In other organisations where a range of activities are provided and volunteers are recruited with diverse abilities, skills, knowledge and experience, identifying the key skills to be replaced may require more detailed analysis linked to specific programs or activities.

Evaluation

Ensuring your youth development strategies are effective and consistent

We evaluate all the time. Every time we choose, decide, accept, or reject something we have made an evaluation. It is important we examine our own practices and learn from these experiences. Then we will have trust and confidence in and feel empowered by our successes in the process of continuous improvement.

When we talk about youth development having an inclusive ethos, for example, this needs to be more than simply a statement of principle aimed at conveying good intent. Having made a statement of intent it is important that we ensure our strategies and actions achieve what we set out to do. We need to be able to identify our success in making good practice in youth development a reality in our programs and activities.

Evaluation is a continuous process of asking questions and reflecting on the answers to enable ongoing review of your strategies and actions. The framework of principles for good practice in youth development and the associated indicators provide us with the tools to evaluate how well we are doing. This allows us to celebrate and replicate our successes as well as identify areas in which new strategies can be generated and improved outcomes achieved for young people.

Key principles

- Positive youth development is used as the starting point for program evaluations.
- All policies and practices are subjected to regular and rigorous evaluation as part of the process of striving for good practice.
- Partnership structural and operational arrangements are included in the evaluation process.
- All organisational members participate in self-assessment, reflective practice and/or continuous improvement processes.
- Strategies to address barriers that may unintentionally exclude groups are specifically included in evaluation action.

Things to consider

Why evaluate?

Every time we choose, decide, accept, or reject something we make an evaluation. It is something we do informally every day. The evaluation process allows a provider organisation to:

- gain insight or knowledge (from own programs and activities or from those of other organisations — to assist in the design of new programs or innovative approaches)
- improve how things get done (improve current quality, effectiveness, efficiency or capacity for replication)
- determine what the effects of the program are (the extent to which the program achieves longer-term goals like inclusiveness or increased participation)
- affect those who participate in it (eg empowerment, increased connection with community, professional development, organisational growth or change in organisational culture).

If a comprehensive review of programs and activities is planned, an organisation needs to be clear about why it wants to undertake an evaluation and what it hopes to achieve.

What areas will be evaluated?

Evaluation takes place in three key youth development environments:

- policy
- organisation
- program

It is important we examine our own practices and learn from these experiences. Evaluation is part of the cycle of continuous improvement.

What criteria should be used?

The framework of principles for good practice in youth development and the related indicators need to be applied to assess an organisation's success. The following examples provide ideas on how these could be used in organisation and program environments:

- identifying the extent to which the framework of principles for good practice in youth development is evidenced in recruitment, selection, induction, training, recognition, retention and succession planning initiatives (see Key principles in preceding sections)
- demonstration of a positive youth development approach and an inclusive ethos in the design and delivery of programs and activities for young people.

What happens in an evaluation cycle?

Evaluation is a continuous improvement process with a number of activities that are repeated:

- reflection (thinking about what you have done)
- planning and design (deciding what to do and how to do it)
- researching the information (getting what you need to achieve your goal)
- feedback, analysis and drawing conclusions (consideration of what you have done well and options for change)
- putting results into practice (repeating the parts that work best to achieve good practice in youth development)
- starting all over again (restarting the cycle).

This cycle of activity can be applied to a specific program or an organisational activities such recruitment, selection, induction, training, recognition, retention or succession planning.

How will evaluation be conducted?

Two broad types of evaluation are an audit review (checking that you are doing what you set out to do) and an open inquiry (asking what, why and how you are doing things). These processes may be conducted independently or in tandem. You may find the following helpful in deciding how to proceed:

- conducting a parallel process increases the chances of valid results
- a full audit against objectives is best conducted on an annual basis or even every two or three years to overcome unnecessarily time use
- make public statements about the provisional or developmental nature of the framework for good practice

- work with a range of stakeholders, including young people and parents, to identify issues that are not yet in the public view
- remember that the more innovative the program initiative, the longer it will need to prove itself.

Information from minimum demographic data sets plays an important part in quantifying aspects of program delivery. This supplements the evaluation of qualitative aspects using the framework of principles for good practice in youth development.

What are the indicators of a good evaluation process?

The success and relevance of an evaluation process can be assessed using the following indicators:

- it remained relevant to the framework of principles for youth development
- it respected the views of all stakeholders and did justice to them
- the process used a developmental approach that enabled new learning and broke new ground
- the results proved useful in fulfilling the goal of good practice in youth development
- it produced the desired action and then the evaluation cycle commenced again.

How can we encourage a culture of evaluation?

Suggestions for encouraging an evaluation culture include:

- daily informal personal reflection on practice
- structured time each week for personal review
- weekly team reviews
- monthly team meetings to debate challenges and brainstorm ideas
- annual what-have-we-achieved-to-date and where-are-we-heading-next-year discussions
- specifically target evaluations focussing on particular aspects of practice or activities.

Conclusions

Matching youth development program requirements and the needs and skills of volunteers requires the crafting of policies founded on youth development principles. Sound policies need to underpin volunteer management in provider organisations, programs and activities.

It is important that youth development organisations and programs develop and communicate a sound policy on volunteering and youth development. This necessarily requires a clear understanding of the nature and context of volunteering and how volunteers can best contribute to an organisation or program.

Good practice in volunteer management, health and safety, recruitment, selection, induction and training and in recognising the contribution volunteers make flows from a clear understanding and consistent application of the framework of principles for good practice in youth development.

Visionary leadership and sound management of volunteers is required to ensure a positive, healthy and safe environment for volunteers, paid staff and young people.

Provider organisations and programs successfully meeting these challenges will be rewarded with increased satisfaction among volunteers, higher levels of retention, sustainability of programs and activities, and improved outcomes for young people.

A critically important part of meeting this challenge is the creation of leadership opportunities for young people and the provision of appropriate support, training and visible recognition of achievements and contributions.

Recognition will have greatest meaning where this occurs both in provider organisations and programs, and in the community thus building stronger connections between young people and their communities.

Ongoing evaluation of strategies and actions allows provider organisations and programs to celebrate and replicate successes as well as identifying areas in which new strategies can be generated and improved outcomes achieved for young people.

The process of continuous improvement also provides opportunities to strengthen and extend the youth development approach and make it a new tradition in the 21st Century. This cannot happen without the commitment of volunteers and the enthusiasm of organisations and programs.

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Resources for implementing good practice

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Volunteer Resource Centres

Volunteering NSW

2nd Floor, 228 Pitt Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Ph: (02) 9261 3600 Fax (02) 9261 4033

E-mail: fx@pegapc.org Website: www.volunteering.com.au

Volunteering Queensland

6th Floor, 333 Adelaide Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

Ph: (07) 3229 9700 Fax: (07) 3229 2392

E-mail: volqld@powerup.com.au Website: www.powerup.com.au/~volqld

Volunteering Victoria

7th Floor, 388 Bourke Street, Melbourne Vic 3000

Phone: (03) 9642 5266 Fax: (03) 9642 5277

E-mail: info@volunteeringvictoria.com.au Website: www.volunteeringvictoria.com.au

Volunteering WA

City West Lotteries House, 2 Delhi Street, West Perth WA 6005

Ph: (08) 9420 7288 Fax: (08) 9420 7289

E-mail: community@volunteer.org.au Website: www.volunteer.org.au

Volunteering SA

1st Floor, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide SA 5000

Ph: (08) 8221 7177 Fax: (08) 8221 7188

E-mail: sasvm@camtech.net.au Website: <http://www.volunteeringsa.org.au/>

Volunteering Tasmania

18 Goulburn Street, Hobart, Tasmania 7000

Ph: (03) 6231 5550 Fax: (03) 6234 4113

E-mail: volunteering.tasmania@tassie.net.au

Volunteering ACT

Bradfield Street, Downer ACT 2602

Ph: (02) 6242 1311 Fax: (02) 6255 5566

E-mail: volact@goldweb.com.au

Volunteering NT

Level 4, Darwin Central, 21 Knuckey Street, Darwin NT 0800

Ph: (08) 8981 3405 Fax: (08) 8941 0279

E-mail: volunteering_nt@yahoo.com

So you want to know more?

Further reading

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Useful volunteering websites

Organisation	Web address
Australia	
Australasian Association of Volunteer Administrators	http://www.aava.asn.au
Australian Bureau of Statistics	http://www.abs.gov.au
Australian National University SurfStat statistical concepts	http://www.anu.edu.au/nceph/surfstat
Australian Volunteers International	http://www.unv.org
Community building and volunteers	http://communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/volunteering/
International Year of Volunteers	http://www.iyv2001.net/index.html
Volunteering Australia Inc.	http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/
Volunteering ACT	Email: volact@goldweb.com.au
Volunteering NSW	http://www.volunteering.com.au
Volunteering NT	Email: volunteering_nt@yahoo.com
Volunteering Queensland Inc	http://www.powerup.com.au/~volqld
Volunteering SA	http://www.volunteeringsa.org.au/
Volunteering Tasmania	Email: volunteering.tasmania@tassie.net.au
Volunteering Western Australia	http://www.volunteer.org.au
International	
Association for Volunteer Administration	http://www.avaintl.org

Electronic Journal of Volunteering <http://www.e-volunteerism.com>

International Association of Volunteer Effort <http://www.iave.org>

United Nations International Year of Volunteers <http://www.iyv2001.org>

United Kingdom

National Centre for Volunteering <http://www.volunteering.org.uk>

Henry Stewart Publications and Online Journals <http://www.henrystewart.co.uk>

NetAid Online Volunteering <http://app.netaid.org/OV/index.html>

Action Without Borders volunteering opportunities <http://www.idealists.org>

e-Volunteer Online Volunteering <http://www.evolunteer.co.uk>

Smart Change Volunteering <http://www.smartchange.org>

Home Office UK Government <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

Virtual Promise (how charities use the Internet) <http://www.virtualpromise.net>

United States of America

Bureau of Justice Administration Evaluation <http://www.bja.evaluationwebsite.org>

The Virtual Volunteering Guidebook by Susan Ellis and Jayne Cravens <http://www.energizeinc.com/>

Canada

Volunteer Canada <http://www.volunteer.ca/volunteer/index.html>

New Zealand

Community and Government: Building Strong and Respectful Relationships <http://www.mosp.govt.nz/voluntary/index.html>

Appendix 1

FRAMEWORK OF PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD PRACTICE IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Good practice in youth development calls

*for a **COMMITMENT** to the*

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

of

EMPOWERMENT and CONSCIOUS ENTERPRISE

which are embedded in the

UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES of

1. Strengths based, positive youth development as the foundation for policy and program development.
2. Participation of young people in all levels of planning and decision making.
3. An inclusive ethos.
4. An experiential model of learning that builds on capabilities and skills while maximising opportunities for fun and recognising age and developmental phases.
5. Respecting community voice and identity.
6. Encouraging communities to value and engage young people.
7. Partnerships.
8. Quality outcomes.
9. Encouraging and respecting choice.
10. Recognising the contribution of all stakeholders.
11. Promotion that is ethical, honest and non-patronising.
12. Providing opportunities for service to the community that are meaningful for both young people and the community.
13. Maximising formal and community recognition of learning outcomes.
14. Strengthening the interconnectedness of social networks.

Source: Ausyouth (2001) *Good Practice in Youth Development. A Framework of Principles - A Discussion Document*, Adelaide, Ausyouth,

Appendix 2

DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES OF VOLUNTEERING

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
- in designated volunteer positions only

Principles of volunteering

- Volunteering benefits the community and the volunteer.
- Volunteer work is unpaid.
- Volunteering is always a matter of choice.
- Volunteering is not compulsorily undertaken to receive pension 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, environment 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 nor constitute a threat to the job security of paid workers.
- Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of other.
- Volunteering promotes human rights and equality.

Source: Volunteering Australia (2002) *Definition and Principles of Volunteering*, available <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/>



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An initiative funded by the Commonwealth
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs



A Commonwealth Youth Initiative



The Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Australia
SA Division - Young Australia Challenge