

Flexible Volunteering

Adapting Roles to Increase Participation

Flexibility in volunteering is essential to building inclusive, sustainable volunteer programs. As community expectations, workforce participation and caring responsibilities shift, Volunteer-Involving Organisations (VIOs) must consider how roles can adapt to attract and retain diverse participants.

Flexible volunteering does not mean lowering standards.

It means thoughtfully adjusting when, where and how roles are delivered, while maintaining purpose, safety and impact.

Rethinking In-Person, Shift-Based Roles

Adjusting Time Commitments

- » Change start and finish times
- » Offer shorter shifts
- » Reduce the initial minimum commitment period (adjust your expectations)
- » Allow less frequent shifts
- » Implement a casual or relief roster
- » Adjust shifts for travel breaks or exams – consider retirees and student needs (when communicated upfront)

Adjusting Duties – Consider preferences and availability

- » Offer more or less: screen-based work
- » Offer more or less: phone-based work
- » Reduce manual components
- » Accommodate physical ability or preference
- » Rotate task types to reduce fatigue

Location and Accessibility

- » Consider public transport availability and timetables
- » Offer hybrid or partially remote options
- » Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses, where possible
- » Provide transport support
- » Roster people from similar areas to share travel costs
- » Allow children onsite for suitable activities

Event-Based or 'Blitz' Models

- » One-day working bees
- » Task blitz days
- » Quarterly community events
- » Seasonal project intensives

Flexibility for Different Cohorts

People Who Are Unemployed

- » Offer accredited or informal training
- » Provide skills development pathways
- » Align role descriptions to transferable skills
- » Provide references documenting experience

Women

- » Support caring responsibilities
- » Ensure safe and inclusive environments
- » Create leadership development pathways

Young People

- » Accommodate school holidays and exams
- » Ensure child safety compliance
- » Offer short-term or project-based roles
- » Provide mentoring opportunities

Newly Arrived Migrants

- » Provide language support
- » Offer clear task instructions
- » Recognise overseas skills
- » Establish buddy systems

People with Disability

- » Adjust duties where required
- » Modify environments
- » Provide assistive technology
- » Offer flexible scheduling

First Nations People

- » Prioritise relationship-building
- » Offer flexible time commitments
- » Consider cultural leave
- » Co-design roles with community

Flexible Governance Roles

Structural Adjustments

- » Amending constitution to allow job sharing
- » Split large roles into smaller portfolios
- » Establish working groups to supplement the board
- » Introducing board-share arrangements (constitutional change may be required)

Participation Adjustments

- » Make meetings remote or hybrid
- » Change meeting times
- » Offer shorter terms
- » Create advisory or alumni roles
- » Partner with corporate volunteers

Reducing Administrative Burden

- » Shared administrative support
- » Distribute tasks via working groups
- » Use AI tools to reduce administration workload
- » Implement clear delegation frameworks

Implementing Flexible Practice

- » Review current assumptions
- » Consult with volunteers
- » Pilot changes before full implementation
- » Maintain clear communication and boundaries
- » Monitor impact and adjust as needed

Now for a fresh start

The task ahead is to consider your current volunteers and the future opportunities to engage new volunteers. But where should you start?

Start by rethinking your volunteer roles to meet the needs of both the volunteer and the organisation/group.

- Consider the volunteer roles within your organisation/group.
- Think about one possibility for implementing flexible options in the following areas.

There are no right or wrong answers – just take the time to record your thoughts to reflect on later.

Rethinking In-Person, Shift-Based Roles – *Place your thoughts for each item*

Adjusting Time Commitments

Adjusting Duties – consider preferences and availability

Location and Accessibility

Event-Based or 'Blitz' Models

Identify emerging or underrepresented communities relevant to your work

Consider their unique needs, motivations, and potential barriers to participation

Further information

As Victoria's peak body for volunteering, you can always come to us for reliable resources and advice. Below are some helpful links and resources to continue your understanding of *Flexible Volunteering*.

- » The [Volunteering Victoria website](#) is your go-to resource for all things volunteering, with timely and reliable support, training, resources, and expert advice.

- » There are a number of guides that may be particularly helpful:
 - [Virtual Volunteering – Designing Roles and Projects](#)
 - [Youth Ready Guide](#) provides practical information to enhance opportunities to involve youth
 - [Youth Ready Assessment](#) identifies key priorities to consider and supports you to develop an action plan
 - [Offsite Volunteering](#) identifies some key priorities

Can't find what you're looking for?

Contact the Volunteering Victoria team at info@volunteeringvictoria.org.au anytime with your questions.



Volunteering Victoria website

 <p>Guides for Leading Volunteers</p>	 <p>National Standards for Volunteer Involvement</p>	 <p>Upcoming Training & Workshops <i>(Some offered free of charge)</i></p>
 <p>National Resource Library</p>	 <p>Inclusive Volunteering Resources</p>	 <p>Volunteer Involvement Cycle</p>