

Human Impact of Volunteering

A pathway to growth and wellbeing

Volunteering is not only about giving time – it is also about gaining confidence, capability, and connection. This guide explores how volunteering creates meaningful opportunities for individuals to build skills, confidence, and pathways toward employment, while also strengthening community organisations and local connections.

Volunteering to Build Personal Growth

Confidence and self-esteem:

Volunteers often discover new strengths, develop communication skills, and gain confidence through contributing to meaningful activities. Selecting the appropriate volunteer role is essential to ensure a sense of purpose and a fulfilling contribution to the activities.

Learning through experience:

Volunteering provides hands-on opportunities to develop leadership, teamwork, customer service, digital literacy, event coordination, and problem-solving skills.

A sense of purpose and belonging:

People who volunteer frequently report feeling more connected to their communities and more engaged in social and civic life.

To implement this, organisations can design volunteer roles that give people early wins, clear responsibilities, and regular encouragement. Simple onboarding, buddy systems, and reflective check-ins can help volunteers recognise the growth they are making in confidence, communication, and problem-solving over time.

Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment

Volunteering should be treated as a structured pathway rather than an informal extra. Organisations can map volunteer tasks to employability skills, offer short training modules, provide supervisors who can act as referees, and create visible next steps into further volunteering, training, internships, or paid work.

Work-ready skills:

Volunteering helps people develop transferable skills that employers value, including communication, time management, reliability, teamwork, and initiative.

Building resumes and references:

Volunteer experience can strengthen a resume and provide valuable referees who can speak about a person's reliability and capabilities.

Pathways to training and employment:

Many volunteers gain clarity about career interests, access mentoring opportunities, and build professional networks that support future employment.

Development of transferable skills:

- » **Communication** – Volunteers learn to interact with a wide range of people – including staff, other volunteers, and service users – building confidence in both verbal and written communication.
- » **Teamwork and collaboration** – Working alongside others toward a shared goal helps develop the ability to cooperate, problem-solve, and contribute effectively within a team environment.
- » **Time management and reliability** – Volunteers often commit to schedules and responsibilities, helping them build strong organisational skills, meet deadlines, and demonstrate dependability.

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Volunteer-Involving Organisations as Community Spaces

Welcoming and inclusive environments:

Organisations can create safe and supportive spaces where people feel valued, included, and encouraged to participate.

Building social connection:

Volunteering reduces isolation by creating opportunities for people to meet others, build friendships, and strengthen community ties.

Supporting lifelong learning:

Organisations that provide mentoring, training, and flexible volunteering opportunities help volunteers continue learning and growing.

Organisations can bring this to life by intentionally designing volunteering spaces as community hubs. That might include accessible recruitment processes, flexible shift options, inclusive language, culturally safe practices, and shared spaces where volunteers can connect, learn, and contribute ideas as part of the wider community.

Volunteering as a Two-Way Value Exchange

In practice, this means making the exchange of value visible and intentional. Organisations can define what volunteers contribute, what they receive in return, and how both sides benefit. This could be supported through learning plans, recognition practices, feedback loops, and regular conversations about skills, goals, and impact.

Value for Organisations	Value for Volunteers
Access to community skills and lived experience	Build practical skills and confidence
Increased community engagement and capacity	Gain social connection and belonging
Fresh ideas and diverse perspectives	Develop pathways to education or employment
Stronger local networks and partnerships	Explore interests and future opportunities

Practical Ways Organisations Can Support Volunteer Growth

- » Offer flexible volunteering opportunities that suit different life stages and abilities.
- » Provide training, mentoring, and skill-building opportunities.
- » Recognise and celebrate volunteer contributions regularly.
- » Create inclusive and welcoming environments for diverse volunteers.
- » Support volunteers to identify personal goals and pathways toward employment or further learning.
- » Encourage volunteers to reflect on the skills they are developing.

These supports are most effective when they are built into day-to-day practice, rather than offered occasionally.

A simple implementation approach is to –

1. Assign a volunteer coordinator
2. Set a consistent induction process
3. Schedule mentoring and feedback points
4. Track volunteer goals, so support can be tailored to each person's stage and aspirations

Recommended Actions to Strengthen the Volunteer Experience

To translate these ideas into practice, organisations can focus on a small set of clear actions that strengthen volunteer experience, support inclusion, and create pathways for learning and employment.

- » **Embed volunteering in organisational planning** by defining leadership responsibility, resourcing coordination, and aligning volunteer roles with community and organisational goals.
- » **Design meaningful and flexible roles** that match different interests, abilities, and life stages, including options for short-term, project-based, and ongoing participation.
- » **Strengthen recruitment and induction processes** so volunteers understand expectations, feel welcomed early, and receive the information they need to succeed safely and confidently.
- » **Provide structured support** through mentoring, regular check-ins, skills development, and access to supervisors who can offer feedback and act as referees where appropriate.
- » **Create deliberate pathways to employment and further learning** by helping volunteers identify transferable skills, document experience, and connect with training or job opportunities.
- » **Build inclusive and culturally safe environments** by reviewing barriers to participation, using accessible communication, and ensuring diverse volunteers feel respected, represented, and supported.
- » **Recognise volunteer contributions consistently** through informal appreciation, formal recognition, and opportunities for volunteers to share ideas and shape program improvement.
- » **Review and improve volunteer practice regularly** by gathering feedback, tracking outcomes, and using simple measures to understand what is working and where changes are needed.

Successful volunteering programs do not happen by accident. They are implemented through intentional design, inclusive practice, and ongoing support so that volunteering becomes a practical platform for growth, participation, and stronger local communities.

Volunteering creates stronger communities by building confidence, skills, and social connection. When organisations intentionally support volunteer development, volunteering becomes more than service — it becomes a shared exchange of value where both the organisation and the individual grow together.

Outcome

Volunteers understand tangible benefits of their contributions, while organisations can attract, engage, and retain motivated individuals through meaningful development opportunities.

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 *The Human Impact of Volunteering*.

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

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>Resource Library: Developing Policies and Procedures</p>	 <p>Induction and Onboarding for New Volunteers</p>