

Managing volunteers from a CALD background

Guide

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds make up a large part of the Victorian community. Almost half of Australians were either born overseas, or had one or both parents who were born overseas (2016 Census of Population and Housing).

The term 'culturally and linguistically diverse' is commonly used to describe people who have a cultural heritage different from that of the majority of people from the dominant Anglo-Australian culture, replacing the previously used term of people from a "non-English speaking background".

Benefits of working with people from CALD backgrounds

Managers of volunteer groups will find themselves managing people from CALD backgrounds, so it is important to understand the special considerations needed to manage this group effectively, as well as the benefits people from CALD backgrounds can bring to your organisation and projects.

Benefits – people from CALD backgrounds can provide:

- Diversity in the workplace.
- International experiences (both professional and social).
- Links to specific cultural groups within your community.

This information guide will provide managers of volunteer groups that include people from CALD backgrounds with a solid basis for effective management. For further information to assist you and your organisation, we recommend visiting the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) website:

www.eccv.org.au

Consulting Organisations:

Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV)
Department of Industry, Innovation and Science

To find out more about translation services visit:
www.tisnational.gov.au

Working with CALD volunteers

Make sure your workplace culture is ready to embrace diversity. For example, you can:

- Develop workplace policies and training that promotes cross-cultural awareness.
- Hold lunches and events that celebrate workplace diversity and encourage employees to share their cultures and experiences.
- Find out when significant cultural and religious events and days are on, so you can anticipate leave requests and plan celebrations in the workplace.

Work Experience

For many people from CALD backgrounds, gaining work experience is a very important goal. One of the most valuable aspects of gain work experience through volunteering is the ability for the person to gain a locally-based referee or reference they can add to their resume. For migrants specifically, work experience acknowledgement and a local referee is very important.

Structures of Support

For longer volunteering placements, a buddy program is good idea, or the establishment of a line of support between the CALD volunteer and the manager.

If you wish to establish a 'buddy' system just make sure the 'buddy' is an approachable person with an interest in the role. One point of contact is ideal for CALD people to understand who they can talk to when they need to ask a question.

Recruitment

Recruiting volunteers from CALD backgrounds should follow the same policies and procedures your organisation uses for recruitment in general, however, consideration should be given to the following key areas:

Seeking out people from CALD backgrounds:

If you are specifically looking to hire CALD people, universities or TAFES are great places to connect. Training institutions generally have online boards, student advocacy organisations and student forums which are specifically for CALD people to engage with each other. These online groups and forums can be used to advertise for volunteering positions.

Similarly, local community migrant resource centres and refugee centres are also good avenues for advertising for volunteering roles. The Victorian Multicultural Commission Community Directory is a convenient and useful online guide to local community associations and organisations in Victoria:

www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/resources/community-directory

During recruitment:

Due to the potential language and cultural barriers that may influence effective communication with people from CALD backgrounds, it is vital that the following areas are covered and understood when you are speaking about possible volunteering roles:

- Make sure they understand the expectations of the role.
- Make sure they understand that it is a non-paying role.
- Set a time-frame on the work.

The definition and concept of volunteering can vary depending on the country and culture. Informal volunteering is typically more common amongst cultures in Asia, Southern Europe, South America and Africa, whereas formal volunteering is more common among Western and Northern European countries. (Volunteering Victoria Issues Paper December 2014)

It is very important that people from CALD backgrounds understand that volunteering roles are non-paid roles. As well ensuring a transparent relationship between you and the volunteer, clarifying the nature of the volunteering position may also avoid potential legal situations for your organisation.

Interviews

It is important that a volunteer's confidence with English is considered when setting up an interview if this is part of the volunteer screening requirements. Consider what you can do to make the interview as accessible as possible for those who are less confident with English. Think about:

- Sending the interview questions in advance to the prospective volunteer to allow them to practice their English.
- Asking the volunteer if they are comfortable in group interviews, if this is your general set up.

People from CALD backgrounds are often attracted to volunteer as a way to improve their confidence with English however it is ok to have a standard of English proficiency for certain volunteer roles, particularly if it is outlined in the position description. Consider the tasks the volunteer would be undertaking and what level of English is required

Training and Induction

The training and induction of people from CALD backgrounds into your volunteering group should follow the same policies and procedures your organisation uses in general. However, emphasis should be given to the following key areas:

- For written training and induction materials, make sure plain language/English is used. Avoid the use of technical or slang terms.
- Make sure there is a single point of contact at the organisation so it is not confusing.

Most importantly, the single point of contact should be approachable and welcome questions. This is a key component of ensuring a mutually beneficial working relationship in any situation.

Translator Services

It is not recommended that managers of people from CALD backgrounds enlist the services of interpreters. In fact, the ECCV encourages CALD people to use English in their work environments. The manager should always remember that for people with English as a second language, it is important to be patient and understand there may be occasional communication difficulties.

In situations where a translation is required, the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) is a service provided by the Department of Home Affairs for people who do not speak English, and for agencies and businesses that need to communicate with their non-English speaking clients or employees.