

Toolkit Developing Skilled Volunteer Projects and Roles



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Welcome

The purpose of this toolkit is to equip, inspire and encourage your community organisation to create skilled volunteer projects and roles. The toolkit does this by providing:

- information on the why and how of skilled volunteering
- tips on how to scope out and create skilled volunteer projects and roles
- simple tools and templates
- outlining the benefits for your organisation in engaging skilled volunteers.

1. Background

1.1 Volunteering in the Boroondara community

Boroondara has the highest rate of volunteering in metropolitan Melbourne - 26% of residents report that they volunteer (2016 census). This is significantly higher than the Greater Melbourne figure of 17.6%.

Boroondara is also a very skilled community, where over 47% of residents hold tertiary academic qualifications at bachelor degree level or higher (almost double the Greater Melbourne figure of 28%) and over 58% work in occupations that can be described as managerial or professional (compared to the Greater Melbourne figure of 38%).

1.2 The changing landscape of volunteering

The landscape of volunteering has changed considerably in recent years. While traditional volunteer roles that require a regular commitment over a period of time (such as delivering meals to a person in need or tutoring English once a week) still have a place, changes in technology, community demographics and volunteer aspirations mean that people are increasingly interested in short-term, flexible volunteer opportunities which can fit around family, work, travel and other commitments.

Data collected from the BVRC's 2016 Volunteer Survey supports this increasing demand as:

- 71% of respondents indicated that applying or developing professional skills via volunteering was extremely or highly relevant to them.
- 55% of respondents indicated that opportunities to volunteer on an ad-hoc or project basis were extremely or highly relevant to them.
- 52% of respondents indicated that opportunities to volunteer online or outside regular business hours were extremely or highly relevant to them.

For skilled professionals looking for a greater level of responsibility, meaning and purpose in their volunteering, short-term volunteer projects which allow them to offer their skills and experience on a flexible basis from home rather than onsite at an organisation are likely to be of interest.

1.3 The role of the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre

Given the professional profile of the Boroondara community, a huge opportunity exists to harness the skills and experience of professionals who are looking to volunteer.

In response, the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre (BVRC) created two new initiatives: The Boroondara Volunteer Skills Bank and the Skilled Volunteer Meet (refer to Appendix A for details of these initiatives).

Both initiatives involve community organisations like yours taking part to scope and develop skilled volunteer projects and roles.

The BVRC is committed to building the capacity of local community organisations to:

- identify opportunities for skilled volunteer projects and roles
- recruit and manage skilled volunteers who often work remotely and/or outside business hours.

The BVRC also provides regular training workshops and network meetings for volunteer managers, as well as the provision of resources such as this toolkit on how to attract and support skilled volunteers.



2. What is skilled volunteering?

A skilled volunteer can be defined as an individual with training or experience in a specific area who requires no or minimal additional training to complete the volunteer task or project.

Examples of skilled volunteer roles include: managing social media platforms, providing advice or setting up a new database, designing and developing a website, writing a grant application or developing a video.

Many skilled volunteer projects can be undertaken online from home rather than onsite at the premises of your community organisations, and balanced around family, work and other commitments.

3. What are the benefits of skilled volunteering for organisations and volunteers?

While skilled volunteers do not replace staff, they can provide additional resources in an environment characterised by financial constraints.

Skilled volunteering also builds the capacity of community organisations and increases the impact of their programs and services.

Skilled volunteering provides an avenue for people to contribute and make a difference in a meaningful way. Like all forms of volunteering, skilled volunteering strengthens the community by providing opportunities for people to contribute, build connections and participate in the life of the community.

Benefits of skilled volunteering

For the Organisation

Community organisations can:

- make organisational 'must dos' and 'wish lists' a reality.
- build their capacity to complete projects and tasks in a cost effective way.
- be exposed and introduced to fresh perspectives and ideas.

For the Volunteer

Skilled volunteers can:

- meet new people from diverse backgrounds
- develop and expand professional network.
- develop and improve skills and knowledge.
- engage in activities that support the community.

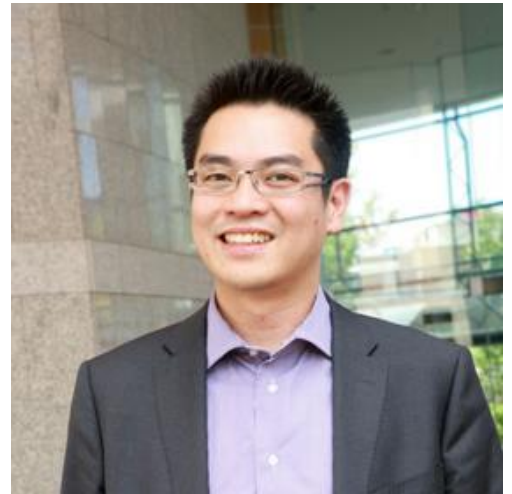
Adapted from Volunteering Qld and Volunteering Geelong

4. Case studies

Ian Wong, business and IT professional

Ian offered his professional skills and experience to Yarra River Keeper Association to develop a draft strategy through a series of workshops and he also assisted Camcare to transition their Broadband For Seniors program.

“Volunteering can be more than just back office duties and delivering services - project driven volunteering is meaningful to people like me who want to use their skills to make a difference locally. As a result of contributing my skills as a volunteer, I feel more connected to the local community”.



Emma Rigby, Master of International Business

Emma offered her grant writing skills to assist Kew home of Chinese with a grant application.

“I liked the idea of skilled volunteering as I wanted to volunteer my time and skills to benefit the community but I wasn’t interested in your ‘typical traditional’ volunteer role. What drew me to this volunteer opportunity was that I could utilise my skills from university and gain practical experience.”

Peter May, business owner

Peter Offered his business development, IT and governance skills to Canterbury Neighbourhood Centre as a chairperson on their Board. He has worked with the Board and the Manager to update the Constitution, set up subcommittees and discuss improvements to the website.

“I want to feel like I am part of a small and connected village, even though I live in a huge city. Offering my skills as a volunteer is one way I am doing this. I have been able to apply my professional experience in business development, governance, IT, finance, management and strategic planning to this role and in the process, to meet some wonderful new people.”



5. Tools and templates

Professionals are seeking to offer their skills and experience - How can my organisation make the most of their offer?

The hardest part is always the start but once you begin the process of identifying the skill gaps within your organisation and brainstorming possible projects skilled volunteers could undertake to address these needs, the rest will follow.

A clearly defined skilled volunteer role can lead to the recruitment of a skilled volunteer whose professional background and expertise builds the capacity of your organisation in ways you may not have thought possible. Given this, it is worth taking the time to get it right. Following the steps below will assist.

Step 1 – What do you need?

Be clear about your needs. Does your organisation need assistance to:

- Update the website?
- Develop and implement social media strategies?
- Set up a new database?
- Manage its committee of governance?
- Revise human resources policies?

Whatever the situation, be clear about what you hope to achieve by engaging a skilled volunteer. If you have a clear understanding of the goal or impact you want the volunteer to have, it will increase the likelihood of you finding the right person for the role.



The table below will assist you to brainstorm your ‘wish list’ of possible skilled volunteer roles.

Questions	Response	Possible Solutions	Benefits of creating a skilled role to achieve the solution
What would you like to do in your program but do not currently have the skills to do?			
What would you like to do in your program but don't have the time and resources to do?			
What tasks or project do you wish you didn't have to do but know someone must do it?			
Which of the above responses would you like to do if you had the time?			

Adapted from Volunteering Qld and Volunteering Geelong

Step 2 - What do you want the volunteer to do?

Now that you have brainstormed your wish list, think about how a volunteer can help you reach your goal. For example, you might have identified that you would like to improve your organisation's online presence by updating your website. This means you are likely to be looking for a website designer or website developer.

Refer to Appendix B for a list of possible roles skilled professionals could complete for your organisation.

QUICK TIP: It is easy to get carried away with the possibilities. Try to keep the project small or break it down into multiple smaller tasks. This will increase your chances of finding the right volunteer.



The below table is designed to assist you to identify the specifics of the skilled role or project you may wish to create.

Role Description: Describe the project - what tasks will the volunteer will be responsible for?

Objectives / Outcomes: What specific outcomes or deliverables is the volunteer expected to produce? Is there a timeframe? Be clear and concise

Required Skills: What specific skills will the volunteer require to complete the role successfully? Do they need a qualification? Consider the skills you are willing to teach

Success Criteria: How will you measure the success of the project? Use the SMART model to ensure the success criteria is measureable: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound

Constraints or assumptions: What will impact the volunteer's ability to successfully complete the role (if anything) and how can this be overcome?

Adapted from Volunteering Qld and Volunteering Geelong

Step 3 – Where and how will the volunteer work?

It is important to consider how you will support the volunteer in their role. If volunteers are not properly supported or provided with the necessary training or guidance, they may lose interest or feel undervalued, which may lead to them leaving before they complete the project or role.

To ensure this does not happen, consider the following questions before engaging a skilled volunteer.

Question	Prompt	Response
Where will the volunteer work and what resources will they need?	Can the role be completed from home or will there be a desk available at the organisation? Are there any physical resources they may need such as access to office equipment or software?	
Who will manage the volunteer's induction and what will the volunteer need to know?	Induction or orientation should include a range of information from the tasks the volunteer will complete, to who is their supervisor or person they can ask for help and organisational structure ie: volunteer policies, including occupational health and safety.	
To whom will the volunteer report?	Is the person who will manage the induction going to be the regular person the volunteer can go to for assistance?	

<p>What is the time commitment?</p> <p>Try to be as flexible as possible to attract a range of skilled volunteers to the role.</p>	<p>How many days or hours a week do you want the volunteer to do? Consider how long you think the project will take. If you think an ongoing role will need more than two days a week it's probably best to think about breaking the role into two roles.</p>	
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Step 4 – Writing your role description

Now you have identified what you would like the volunteer to do and made some decisions about where and how they will work, it is time to write the volunteer role description!

A role description outlines the volunteer's tasks and responsibilities and is a crucial step in involving skilled volunteers in your organisation.

When writing the role description, consider how a professional might respond if they were to read it. It is likely that they will be looking for flexibility in their volunteering so where possible, include in the description whether the role can be undertaken in their own time and fitted around existing commitments. On the other hand, if the role has a large time commitment and can only be undertaken at set times, your ability to attract a professional to the volunteer role may be reduced.

QUICK TIP: A volunteer role description is similar to a job description and should include all the key information involved in undertaking the role. This includes key tasks and responsibilities, training requirements, reporting relationships, where the volunteer work will take place and other relevant information.

Refer to Appendix C for a sample volunteer role description for a Website Design Officer.

Step 5 - Fill in the [Volunteer Role Request Form](#)

Finally, it is time to fill out the Volunteer Role Request Form! The information provided via this form will create the basis of the volunteer role promoted to professionals who receive skilled volunteer alerts in our monthly bulletin, visit the GoVolunteer/SEEKVolunteer website, follow BVRC's social media channels, and access the BVRC's volunteer referral service.

6. Appendices

Appendix A: Council initiatives to engage skilled volunteers

1. Boroondara Volunteer Skills Bank

The [Boroondara Volunteer Skills Bank](#), an initiative of the City of Boroondara launched in late 2018, matches resident skills with volunteer projects, as well as Board and Committee roles with community organisations.



How does the Volunteer Skills Bank work?

For professionals

Professionals who sign up receive monthly alerts of skilled volunteer projects and roles. They can choose to create a short bio of their skills and experience to be promoted to local community organisations that may then create a volunteer project aligned to their skillset.

For community organisations

The BVRC will:

- Promote skilled volunteer projects or Board or Committee roles with community organisations to professionals who have signed up to the Boroondara Volunteer Skills Bank and to prospective volunteers via social media, GoVolunteer and the BVRC's volunteer referral service.
- Promote the skills and experience of professionals registered on the Boroondara Volunteer Skills Bank to community organisations via a monthly email. This email includes a bio of each professional's skills and experience and an overview of the type of opportunity they are looking for.

Hugh Stern, Operations Manager, Burke and Beyond

“The Bank linked us with a photographer to take photos for our new website and marketing material”.



“The Boroondara Volunteer Skills Bank connects community organisations like Burke and Beyond with resources to undertake projects we otherwise would not be able to undertake. There are many professionals looking to give back, contribute locally and who can add so much value - I encourage community organisations to make the most of this great free resource!”

2. Skilled Volunteer Meet

The Skilled Volunteer Meet is an annual networking and ‘speed dating’ event held in October each year. The purpose of the event is to connect skilled professionals with short-term volunteer projects as well as Board and Committee roles with local community organisations.

During the event community organisations:

- pitch their skilled volunteer projects or roles to approx. 100 local professionals
- meet professionals interested in undertaking volunteer projects or roles
- network with 40 other community organisations looking to engage skilled volunteers.

Pari Sanyu, Manager, Community Support, Camcare



“Without initiatives such as the Boroondara Volunteer Skills Bank and the Skilled Volunteer Meet we can be limited in our ability to improve the delivery of our programs and events. Fresh perspectives and new skills are always welcomed - and it’s great to be able to provide opportunities for local professionals to contribute in meaningful ways.”

Appendix B: Professional skills and possible volunteer roles

Accounting - set up accounting systems	Business coaching - assist in building organisations' capacity or business mentoring	Business development - create a business plan	Communications / PR - develop a communications strategy to promote the organisation
Event Project Management - organise and plan an event	Finance - treasurer to assist Committees in understanding their financial obligations	Fundraising - Advise and develop strategies to raise funds	Governance - Committee or Board members
Grant writing - assist in writing a proposal and scoping opportunities	Graphic design - design promotional material including flyers, posters or logos	Human Resources - review human resources policies	Information Technology - Database creation and management
Legal - revise contracts or draft memos, policies and procedures	Marketing - developing a marketing strategy	Mentoring - provide senior mentoring to an organisational leader	Photography - take photos to promote the organisation
Program evaluation - evaluate volunteer services and programs	Process mapping - identify and document processes and procedures	Research - for new projects including market research and surveys and feasibility studies	Social media - create a social media marketing plan or manage social media accounts
Videography – develop a video for promotion of the organisation	Website design and/or development - build a website or updating existing content	Writing and editing - review reports or organisational documents such as marketing material	

Appendix C: Sample volunteer role description – Web Design Officer

Title of volunteer role	Web Design Officer
Organisation	[xxxxxx]
Reporting manager	[xxxxxx]
Location	Role can be completed at home and/or at our Camberwell Office

About the organisation

xxxxxxx

About the volunteer role

(insert name of organisation) is seeking to transform our online engagement with volunteers and community organisations by updating our existing website. The Web Design Officer will be responsible for updating and redesigning our existing webpage to be engaging, functional and user friendly.

The Web Design Officer is required to:

- Assess the current website and scope new design concepts
- Liaise with staff to produce new web pages for events, publications
- Update and redesign the current website to be user friendly and engaging.

Time commitment

The role is a three month project (or until completion of the project). Approximately 2-5 hours weekly will be required, however the volunteer may wish to complete more hours or less per week. We're flexible but it is expected that the role is to be completed within three months.

Support and reporting relationships

Induction, training and ongoing support will be provided by (insert details).

Responsibilities

The City of Boroondara will:

- provide you with a safe and healthy work environment
- provide you with a briefing on your volunteer role on or prior to your first day of volunteering
- provide access to resources and support via the Volunteer Engagement Officer or other Council officers
- reimburse you for out of pocket expenses incurred in the course of your role *agreed in writing prior to expenditure*
- provide you with public liability and personal accident insurance cover.

Web Design Officers are asked to:

- adhere to (insert organisations name's) Code of Conduct

- inform us of any changes to your availability as well as contact details
- undertake the necessary background checks
- follow established safe working practices, procedures and instructions, as per your briefing
- keep all privileged information in relation to Council, staff and customers confidential
- take reasonable care for their own occupational health and safety
- report all hazards, incidents, injuries and risks as soon as practicable to a staff member.

Desired skills

- Good communicator
- Have a can do attitude
- Ability to work in a team environment and autonomously
- Passionate about design and Wordpress
- Be experienced in Wordpress including the front end (design) and back end (customising themes using code and widgets to build pages)
- Be able to effectively manage and prioritise design requirements to meet project deadline.

Specialist skills and knowledge

- Have experience in Adobe Creative Suite (Photoshop, Illustrator & Indesign)
- Have industry experience in web design or tertiary education in web design or relevant field.

Requirements

- National Police Check
- Applicable induction and training.

Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre

This toolkit has been developed by the Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre (BVRC). A service of the City of Boroondara, the BVRC promotes, resources and supports volunteering in Boroondara and surrounding areas by providing a range of free services and events for volunteers and community organisations.

To find out more about our services, contact the BVRC

Website: www.bvrc.org.au

Phone: **9278 4550**

Email: bvrc@boroondara.vic.gov.au

Address: **8 Inglesby Road, Camberwell VIC**