

Volunteer Management Program

Recruiting Volunteers

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

It is with and through human resources that sport is delivered to communities throughout Australia. The management and delivery of sport and recreation programs and services relies on the involvement and commitment of a large number of volunteers and a smaller but increasing number of paid staff. Volunteers are often described as the 'backbone' of the sport and recreation system and approximately 1.5 million people are involved in voluntary work with sport or recreation organisations throughout the nation. Because volunteers are such an integral part of sport and recreation organisations it is important to make them feel valued and part of organisations. The human resource management model is an appropriate way to understand the processes involved in recruiting, managing and retaining volunteers in sport and recreation organisations.

The purpose of this module is to:

- introduce the human resource management approach to managing volunteers in sport and recreation
- explain the value of volunteers' diversity, motives and roles
- explain the processes of human resource planning, recruitment, selection and orientation.

Human resource management

Human resource management (HRM) is an essential function in the management of sport and recreation organisations. It is a process in which the needs and expectations of individuals (paid and unpaid) are matched with organisational needs

and expectations. Volunteers come into organisations with different needs and expectations, and with a diverse range of backgrounds, interests, skills and experiences. As a result, their motives, level of commitment to and involvement in an organisation, the benefits they seek from their volunteer experience and the amount of time they are prepared to devote to an organisation will vary enormously.

HRM involves planning and organising the recruitment, selection, orientation, training, development and appraisal of volunteers. The two major elements of the HRM process are the acquisition of human resources and the maintenance of them.¹<<Schermerhorn, JR (1996) *Management*, 5th edn. New York: Wiley.>>

Importantly, the performance of volunteers is underpinned by their ability to do the job, the commitment and effort they are prepared to put into the job and the support provided by the organisation. The role of HRM is to bring appropriate volunteers into an organisation, help them develop a sense of commitment to the organisation, provide or plan for training and development opportunities, offer support, and recognise and reward volunteer performance.

Valuing diversity

Australia has a very diverse community. Indeed, multiculturalism is one way in which Australia defines itself. *Valuing* diversity is conceptually different from equal opportunity and affirmative action, which are primarily concerned to reduce racism and sexism. Valuing diversity means behaving in a way that creates community among people and gains benefits from their differences. While diversity is the reality, surprisingly, many people are unprepared to handle it. Many have had little personal experience with other cultures, and their previous experience may not have covered the kinds of situations that arise in today's multicultural settings. Various cultures may have different ideas about volunteering, work habits, communication patterns, social roles and a myriad of other issues, all of which need to be treated empathically.

Diversity within sport and recreation organisations will often enhance the creativity of members. Ideas and experiences that various sections of the community can bring to the table can greatly enhance the problem-solving ability of sport and recreation organisations. Not only does diversity introduce new ideas and experiences, but it also provides a measurable increase in knowledge and skill. New ways of looking at things and doing things gives organisations greater adaptability in a changing environment. A further benefit of diversity is that organisations can make better decisions based on differing perspectives through the generation of a wider range of alternatives and a more rigorous analysis of these alternatives. An organisation that values diversity provides more appropriate services to diverse populations. Diversity can also help develop new markets that might use the services offered by sport and recreation organisations.

Valuing diversity allows you to recruit from a larger pool of potential volunteers. By not being restricted to a certain demographic, sport and recreation organisations are able to recruit from the whole community, using the unique skills and abilities of individual volunteers. In essence, valuing diversity helps create an environment that nurtures the multicultural fabric of the community within sport and recreation organisations.

This module primarily focuses on recruiting volunteers but it also deals with the first four steps of the human resource management model (see Figure 1, page ##) , from human resource planning to volunteer orientation. Some of these topics are dealt with in more depth in other modules in the Volunteer Management Program. Even though this module is about recruiting volunteers, because of its cyclical nature, human resource management does not necessarily begin with recruitment. The process of human resource planning should precede the recruitment of volunteers. Also, it is important to consider what defines a volunteer, why people volunteer, the benefits of volunteering and where volunteers fit into organisations.

What defines a volunteer?

Volunteering Australia defines a volunteer as ‘a person who chooses to contribute their time, skills and experience, for no payment (other than reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses), to benefit the community’.

An important notion in volunteering is freedom of choice. People who feel obligated or coerced into volunteering may not be as willing to contribute their time, skills or

experience as someone who freely chooses to become a volunteer. Table 1 shows a useful way of categorising volunteers. Volunteers may vary in terms of the amount of free choice they feel they have exercised in becoming a volunteer and whether they expect to be reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses. Most volunteering in sport and recreation organisations takes place within a formal structure, but many volunteers are willing to be involved on an informal basis. Depending upon their relationship to other members in an organisation, the intended beneficiaries of their volunteer work may be themselves or close friends or family, whereas other volunteers may not have such a direct connection to an organisation. Volunteer recruitment practices may need to be varied in response to which category of volunteer is needed. For example, people who are obligated to volunteer (eg required court duty at netball) have less free choice than someone who offers to help pack up after a swimming club night. Whether the intended beneficiaries are oneself (eg club member) or strangers (eg volunteering at a major sport event) may also impact on the way volunteers are recruited. Besides being clear about what defines a volunteer, it is necessary to have some understanding of why individuals volunteer and what they see as the benefits of being a volunteer.

Table 1 Dimensions and categories of volunteering<<Cnaan, RA, Handy, F & Wadsworth, M (1996) Defining who is a volunteer: Conceptual and empirical considerations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 25(3): 364-383.>>

Dimension	Categories
Free choice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. free will (ability to voluntarily choose) 2. relatively uncoerced 3. obligation to volunteer
Remuneration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. none at all 2. none expected 3. expenses reimbursed 4. stipend/low pay
Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. formal 2. informal
Intended beneficiaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. others/strangers 2. friends/relatives 3. oneself

Why do people volunteer?

Volunteer work itself is not always seen as fulfilling. The reasons people give for becoming a volunteer and the benefits they feel they gain by volunteering infrequently mention the volunteer work itself (see Table 2). The predominant reasons for becoming a volunteer are to help others or the community (altruism), to be with family or friends (social contact), or to do something worthwhile (personal satisfaction). In order to recruit volunteers effectively, clubs and organisations need to emphasise the opportunities that volunteering provides for social contact, to be

community minded and to do something worthwhile. While an understanding of the work involved in taking on a voluntary position is important, it is not the work itself that motivates volunteers. Similar findings are evident among the reported benefits (outcomes) of volunteering. The most highly rated benefits of being a volunteer are personal satisfaction and social contact (see Table 3). What motivates people to volunteer and what they see as the rewards or benefits of volunteering are usually beyond the control of sport and recreation organisations, but need to be taken into account when designing volunteer recruitment plans.

Table 2 Reasons for becoming a volunteer

<<Australian Bureau of Statistics (1995) *Voluntary Work Australia*, Cat. 4441.0.
Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.>>

	%*
Help others/community	41.5
Personal/family involvement	33.5
Personal satisfaction	26.6
To do something worthwhile	23.3
Social contact	15.7
Felt obliged/just happened	12.9
Use skills/experience	11.5
Gain work experience/reference	11.5
To be active	11.0
Religious beliefs	9.3
To learn new skills	6.4
* volunteers could give more than one reason	

Table 3 Personal benefits gained through volunteer work for sport and recreation volunteers

<<Australian Bureau of Statistics (1995) *Voluntary Work Australia*, Cat. 4441.0. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.>>

	%*
Personal satisfaction	60.5
Social contact	44.3
Helped others/community	25.0
Personal/family involvement	21.9
Do something worthwhile	20.4
Learned new skills	18.2
Have been active	13.1
Used skills/experience	12.5
Gained work experience/reference	6.8
No benefits	4.7
* volunteers could give more than one benefit	

Volunteers managing volunteers

Volunteer administrators in many instances have uncertain roles because they are simultaneously owners, workers and clients of their organisations. In larger organisations, volunteers are sometimes managed by paid staff or at the board level are responsible for managing paid staff. Not only are volunteer administrators responsible for the overall management of sport and recreation organisations, volunteers themselves are often managed or supervised by other volunteers, and are

sometimes unclear about the lines of responsibility and authority within their organisation. Table 4 gives an overview of some of the many formal positions that volunteers fulfil in sport and recreation organisations. Volunteers can be found at either the operational level or at the policy/management level of sport and recreation organisations. In many instances the same volunteer can hold a position on the committee or board (policy/management level), but also hold a position such as Group Leader or Coach (operational level). At the policy level a volunteer may be required to supervise a staff member, however at the operational level that volunteer may be supervised by the same staff member. Some positions are an ongoing and permanent part of the organisational structure of an organisation (eg President, Secretary, Coach), whereas other positions are short-term or one-off appointments made to complete a specific task (eg State Championships Convenor). These factors have implications for the human resource planning and recruitment processes that are discussed in this module.

Table 4 Examples of volunteer positions at operational and policy/management levels in sport and recreation organisations

Organisational level	Volunteer positions	
Policy/management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board or committee member • President / Chairperson • Vice-president 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary • Treasurer • Club patron • Volunteer Coordinator
Operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official, Umpire, Referee • Coach • Team Manager • Bus Driver • Fundraising Convenor • Presentation dinner organiser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canteen Supervisor • Equipment Manager • Group Leader • Building and Grounds Coordinator • State Championships

Human resource planning

Human resource planning, which precedes the recruitment process, analyses current needs and projects future needs for volunteers in relation to existing and planned programs, services and events (see Figure 1). As a starting point, the person responsible for HRM develops and maintains an inventory that details the qualifications, education and experience of individual volunteers and the positions that they hold. The inventory should be updated regularly, as people move from one position to another or leave the organisation. The Volunteer Coordinator or someone with basic database management skills could set up an index card or simple computer based system to store and update the inventory. This enables an organisation to identify where it has an actual or projected shortage or surplus of volunteers. Where a need for a new volunteer is identified, a job analysis is used to construct a job description. Through consultation and observation a description of the job requirements is prepared by the person responsible for HRM. A job description specifies the title, supervision (who the person supervises and by whom the person is supervised), duties, conditions (eg days, hours, frequency) and specialist skills or qualifications required (eg coaching accreditation). A job description enables potential volunteers to understand what is expected of them before taking on a position. More details about human resource planning and preparing job descriptions are dealt with in *The Volunteer Coordinator* module.

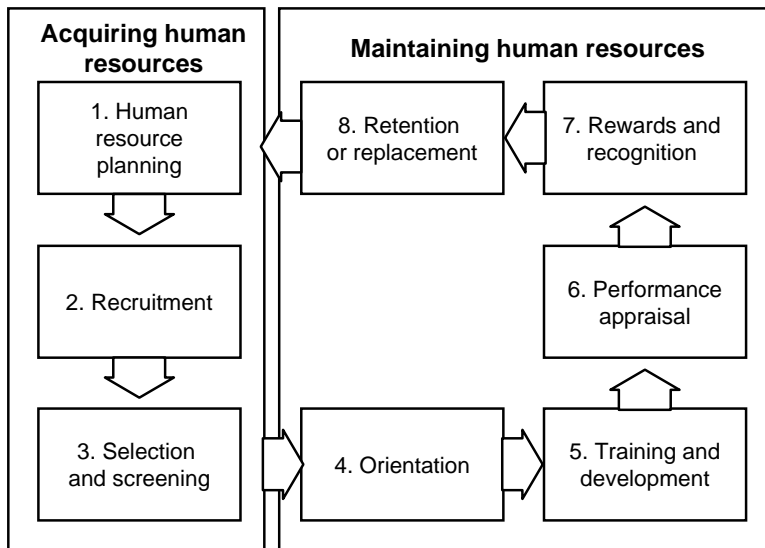


Figure 1 A traditional view of human resource management¹

<<Cuskelly, G & Auld, CJ (1999) People management: the key to business success.

In L Trenberth and C Collins. *Sport Business Management in New Zealand*.

Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 164-183.>>

Job description for volunteer positions

- Job title
- Purpose of the position
- Immediate supervisor's name and contact details
- Benefits for the volunteer
- Qualifications and specialist skills required for the position
- Main responsibilities and tasks
- Hours, frequency and days volunteer is required, or to be negotiated
- Start and end date for position

A limitation of the traditional approach to HRM is that it is modelled on work organisations in which labour demands are estimated and staff are recruited. In contrast to recruiting paid staff members, volunteers are often elected to a position, particularly at the policy level. They may not necessarily have the qualifications, skills and experience to fulfil the particular role to which they are elected. In other circumstances, a volunteer might be recruited rather than elected because the organisation needs an extra 'pair of hands' and not because they have particular skills or abilities. Such situations are difficult to manage and exacerbated by an under-supply of volunteer labour relative to an organisation's plans. Planning can take an organisation only so far and plans need to remain flexible if volunteers are going to be recruited successfully. For example, some sport or recreation organisations traditionally hold their management committee or board meetings at a particular time each month. Being inflexible about negotiating a different meeting

time, may result in well qualified candidates who cannot meet at that time being excluded from the pool of potential volunteers.

The Volunteer Coordinator

The process of human resource planning raises the issue of who should be responsible for HRM. The design and implementation of a human resource plan for volunteers is more likely to occur in sport and recreation organisations that have taken the time to select a motivated and suitably qualified Volunteer Coordinator. Among the Volunteer Coordinator's responsibilities is determining where volunteers are needed, preparing or updating job descriptions and planning a recruitment campaign. They may also be required to analyse training needs and to keep the human resource inventory up to date. At a club level the Volunteer Coordinator would be a volunteer. Sporting organisations or sport events with sufficient financial resources might consider appointing a paid person to the position of Volunteer Coordinator because of the strategic importance of recruiting and matching volunteers to appropriate positions. Volunteer Coordinators usually hold policy level positions within organisations because they need to be fully aware of strategic plans and objectives. See *The Volunteer Coordinator* module for more detail about the coordinator's role.

Recruiting volunteers

Recruitment is the process of attracting new volunteers to sport and recreation organisations. An important question to ask is 'Why do people want to volunteer for our organisation?' The personal benefits of volunteering are outlined in Table 3. For

voluntary positions, the recruitment process is often informal and being able to attract a pool of qualified applicants can be a difficult task. For some voluntary positions, organisations do not have the constitutional power to recruit individuals.

Organisations are bound in most instances to elect board or committee members or to appoint some members on an ex-officio basis. The reasons (motives) that people volunteer and the benefits they gain from being a volunteer were discussed earlier.

When recruiting volunteers for the first time, it is important to know something about how they first become involved in organisations (see Table 5). Personal contact with potential volunteers, whether through friends, family or individuals already involved in an organisation are among the most frequently cited ways that volunteers first became involved in voluntary work. Some volunteers seek volunteer opportunities but relatively few volunteers are recruited through advertising or publicity. Clearly, people need to be asked to volunteer if an organisation is going to be successful in recruiting volunteers. Few people come to organisations seeking voluntary work opportunities. Most people join sport and recreation organisations to participate in leisure activities, and in the early stages of their involvement, they may appear uninterested in volunteering.

Table 5 How volunteers first became involved in voluntary work

<<Australian Bureau of Statistics (1995)>>

	%
Asked to volunteer by someone	30.0
Self or family involved in the organisation	28.1
Knew someone involved	21.6
Sought out volunteer activity on my own	13.0
Saw an add or report in the media	4.1

Once asked, the recruitment process should provide potential volunteers with a realistic preview of what a job entails. Volunteers need to be know the size and nature of the task ahead of them before deciding to commit their time and energy to a position. This is where an adequately prepared job description is very helpful. Details should include things like meeting times, major tasks and average weekly or monthly time commitment for the position. Benefits and conditions need to be clearly specified so applicants are in a position to make an informed decision about whether a job might suit their skills, experience and availability.

When recruiting volunteers it is important to emphasise the benefits for volunteers rather than the needs of the organisation. Many volunteers give up their leisure time to help sporting organisations and may not be attracted by work-like recruitment

campaigns. Volunteers need to feel valued by sport and recreation organisations and not feel as though they are being recruited to fill a position that no one else wanted. See the *Retaining Volunteers* module for further information.

Selecting and screening volunteers

The selection process involves choosing the individual who best meets the requirements of a position. Depending upon the level of the position (policy/management or operational) the selection process can involve a number of steps which may include screening (see **###box**), formal interviews, testing, reference checks and a physical examination. However, it is not often that community based sport and recreation organisations are in a position of working through a formal volunteer selection process, because the number of positions to be filled is usually greater than the number of people prepared to volunteer.

Screening volunteers at Little Athletics <<<(Potts 1999)

Because Little Athletics deal with children aged five to 15 they realised that they could be the target of paedophiles. In November 1998 Little Athletics launched their Personal Protection and Intervention policy to deal with this potential problem. The policy was not in response to any instances of abuse within the association. Under the policy, all adults involved in Little Athletics NSW must provide two referees and must agree to a confidential police check. The CEO of Little Athletics hoped that the new screening process would 'weed out' anyone who might have used Little Athletics for paedophilia. A positive outcome of the policy is that people are less suspicious of coaches and officials.

(see also 'Child protection legislation' in the *Legal Issues and Risk Management* module)

An important consideration in the selection process is whether a position is one that is usually appointed or one that constitutionally must be elected. Club or association members usually elect committee or board members to a position, which makes the HRM selection process largely redundant. In contrast, appointing individuals to operational level positions, such as a group leader in a community recreation centre, may involve a formal selection process. Whether an individual has the required accreditation or is prepared to undertake a relevant course, has some experience in working with others in a positive way, and is of good character are important considerations. Reference checks are advisable when appointing individuals to a position that involves close contact with children. Criminal history checks may also be

necessary if a reference cannot be verified or a reference raises any questions about the character or integrity of a potential volunteer. Appointing a person to a volunteer position as a 'last resort' may be more harmful in the long term than temporarily leaving the position vacant and starting the recruitment process again.

Volunteer recruitment and selection checklist

- Appoint volunteer coordinator
- Prepare projections for human resource needs
- Conduct a job analysis
- Prepare a job description
- Develop a recruitment plan
- Implement recruitment plan
- Screen applications and select (shortlist) volunteers to be interviewed
- Conduct interviews and select successful volunteers
- Where appropriate check volunteers' references
- *Important:* For volunteers who will have close contact with children (ie, any person under the age of 18 years) there may be statutory requirements under child protection legislation to run a criminal history check or for the applicant to provide a written declaration that they are not a 'prohibited' person (eg someone who has a conviction for a sex offence)
- Notify successful volunteers and set up a time for orientation
- Notify unsuccessful volunteers

Orientating volunteers

Orientation is the final step in the recruitment process. New members are welcomed to the organisation and given details about their position, the day-to-day operation of the organisation, and introduced to key people. Taking up a new position is a critical period for new volunteers and for the organisation. Volunteers are making a transition from being an outsider to an insider or moving from a peripheral to a core position within an organisation. New recruits cannot be expected to understand the requirements of their new position or how the organisation functions on a day-to-day basis. For example, a newly appointed Group Leader needs to know where the equipment is stored, how to access it, what times the facility opens and closes, what to do in case of an emergency and so on. A well designed orientation process reduces stress on new volunteers, makes them feel welcome and may reduce the likelihood of turnover.<<Cuskelly, G (1995) The influence of committee functioning on the organisational commitment of volunteer administrators in sport. *Journal of Sport Behavior* 18(4):254-269>>

Orientation is based on the process of socialisation, which is about influencing the expectations, behavior and attitudes of a new volunteer in a manner considered desirable by the organisation.<< Schermerhorn, JR (1996) *Management*, 5th edn. New York: Wiley, p 293.>> Socialisation begins with orientation to key aspects about the organisation and its policies and procedures, the position, supervisors and co-workers, and day-to-day routines. Some organisations run formal orientation programs as a prelude to more detailed training and development programs. In many

sport and recreation organisations, the orientation process is less formal, but not less important if volunteers are going to perform their new roles successfully.

Orientation program checklist

- Provide an orientation guidebook or kit
- Provide copies of current newsletter, annual report and recent marketing/promotional material
- Provide a copy of the constitution
- Enter the name, address and contact details of each volunteer into database
- Gather and file copies of qualifications and accreditation certificates from each volunteer
- Introduce the organisation's culture, history, aims, funding, clients/members and decision-making processes
- Introduce key volunteers and/or staff (and organisational chart)
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of key volunteers and staff
- Detail the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the volunteer in their new position
- Familiarise volunteers with facilities, equipment and resources
- Explain and 'walk through' emergency and evacuation procedures
- Familiarise volunteers with the organisation's day-to-day operations (safety and risk management, telephone, photocopier, keys, filing system, tea/coffee making, office processes and procedures, authorising expenditure)

Summary

This module introduced the human resource approach to managing volunteers in sport and recreation organisations and detailed the first four of eight steps (planning,

recruitment, selection and orientation). The remaining four steps (training, performance appraisal, recognition and rewards, and retention or replacement) are discussed in the *Retaining Volunteers* module. Primarily, the goal of recruitment is to acquire the human resources necessary for organisations to function effectively and deliver their services. Recruitment is more effective when those responsible for bringing new volunteers into the organisation understand what volunteering is, why people volunteer and what benefits are gained through volunteering. The Volunteer Coordinator was identified as the person who should be responsible for the volunteer recruitment process. Human resource planning and the preparation or updating of job descriptions should precede the recruitment process. Selection and screening help to ensure that the most appropriate volunteers are appointed to the positions available. Orientation symbolises the point at which new volunteers move from outside an organisation to inside or from the periphery to its core. The importance of personal contact should not be overlooked in planning effective recruitment campaigns in sport and recreation organisations.

¹ Cuskelly, G. & Auld, C.J. (1999). People Management: The Key to Business Success. In L. Trenberth and C. Collins. *Sport Business Management in New Zealand*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 164-183.

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