

# Volunteering in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## New ways to recruit volunteers

Our lives and our communities have changed significantly over the past 40 years. With increased technological access and expanded professional and recreational networks, our very understanding of what is “community” has changed. We are more likely to live away from immediate family and the familiar surrounds of our childhood and its known community. We are living longer, and working longer, either through choice or financial necessity. We also have increasing demands on our time and recreational pursuits. These factors impact dramatically on our ability to source and attract new volunteers to help our community groups. Fortunately there are increasingly new ways to source volunteers.

### The role of the internet

Many young people and newcomers to your community use the internet to research a community group they would like to join. The internet provides great opportunities for promoting your volunteer needs and recruiting new volunteers. There are a number of online services where you can detail your volunteer roles including:

**Victoria’s Volunteer Portal:** [www.volunteer.vic.gov.au](http://www.volunteer.vic.gov.au)

**Go Volunteer:** [www.govolunteer.com.au](http://www.govolunteer.com.au)

**Volunteer Match:** [www.probonoaustralia.com.au/volunteer](http://www.probonoaustralia.com.au/volunteer)

The key to successfully utilizing these services is to have a clearly defined position description or project suitable for a volunteer to take on.

### Virtual or Online Volunteering

Most community groups have numerous volunteer roles which do not require the physical presence of the volunteer attending on premises. Many tasks can be done at home or remotely with completed work submitted electronically.

Tasks assigned to virtual volunteers can include creating and/or maintaining your group’s website, writing and editing documents such as annual reports or media releases, performing online research, providing technical assistance, and helping with online marketing and communications.

Other online work can involve writing grant and sponsorship proposals, refining strategic and operational plans, and developing budgets.



### Skilled volunteers

Skilled volunteers are people with qualifications or professional experience who are willing to give up their time and expertise free of charge to assist others. There are a vast number of skilled volunteers in a variety of professions who can assist community groups. Often people look to skilled volunteering because they are retired or part time professionals or they may work for a corporate business which allows staff to undertake skilled volunteering as part of their employment.

Imagine engaging a skilled volunteer to design your webpage, to help establish your annual budget, to design a project brief for a renovation or construction job, to conduct a training session with your Committee of Management. Skilled volunteers are able to assist community groups achieve outcomes otherwise prohibitive due to cost or a lack of available skills.

Skilled volunteers are generally engaged for specific, time defined, outcome driven projects. To maximise the opportunities available and to source a suitable skilled volunteer, community groups need to be very clear about what they are seeking to achieve.

They need to prepare a detailed project brief or job description that will enable the skilled volunteer to undertake the task, often quite independently of the community group. Indeed, a very large body of skilled volunteers are based in cities but are willing to take on remote projects assisting rural community groups, provided they have all the required information.

## Where to source skilled volunteers

Once you have established a clear project brief and volunteer role, contact local professionals and businesses to see if they can assist you. Networks such as local Chambers of Commerce or service clubs such as Rotary or Lions may also be able to assist or refer your request to their networks.

Brokers also exist to help facilitate the relationship between community groups and skilled volunteers.

**Good Company:** [www.goodcompany.com.au](http://www.goodcompany.com.au)

Good Company act as volunteer placement agents for major corporations including NAB, ANZ and AMP with over 7,000 skilled volunteers registered and many hundreds of community groups looking for skilled volunteers.

**Skillsbank:** [www.cllm.org.au/skillsbank.htm](http://www.cllm.org.au/skillsbank.htm)

The local graduate program of Community Leadership Loddon Murray, Skillsbank draws on the skills of alumni from throughout Central Victoria including Buloke Shire.

**Great Connections:** [www.leadershipvictoria.org](http://www.leadershipvictoria.org)

Great Connections is administered by Leadership Victoria and draws on a graduate program of over 1000 alumni seeking leadership roles.

## Corporate volunteering

Corporate volunteering is very similar to skilled volunteering however, corporate volunteering tends to involve teams for one-off activities. Tasks suitable for corporate volunteers include tree planting, mass mail outs, painting of buildings, etc. If you have a role which requires a large number of volunteers to complete it, consider approaching a local business or make a request to a larger metropolitan or regional company. Establishing a positive relationship with business can pay significant long term dividends.



## Schools and youth partnerships

Many schools are now actively seeking to form links between their students' curriculum and the broader community and are looking for community projects to embed within classroom learning. Not only does this represent a great opportunity for you to market your community group to a new member or volunteer base, but you can also develop volunteer projects specifically harnessing the skills and resources that students might offer.

Volunteer projects well suited to school partnerships include:

- Group activities such as tree plantings;
- Media assignments such as writing promotional material, developing website content, creating facebook pages;
- Assistance with catering and food preparation;
- Fundraising;
- Event management including risk assessment and event assistance.

Funding streams exists to encourage youth engagement. Community groups should identify appropriate opportunities to support, resource and fund their volunteer involvement with youth and schools.

## Job services agencies

Depending on their circumstances, some Centrelink clients are able to volunteer as an approved work activity. Clients aged over 55 are able to volunteer for up to 15 hours per week. For many Centrelink clients volunteering assists them to engage with the community and can lead to meaningful relationships between community groups and new volunteers.

Any community group can register with Centrelink to accept clients in volunteer roles provided they are a not for profit organisation and have appropriate insurance coverage.