



### Why Use this Resource?

Effective relations between paid staff and volunteers can lead to an enjoyable and productive workplace. This information sheet provides strategies and ideas for successful staff and volunteer relations. It contains guidelines for producing a range of documents for your organisation.

**[Links to National Standards for Involving Volunteers - No. 8 Continuous Improvement]**



### Why is it important to consult with paid staff prior to the introduction of volunteers to an organisation?

Organisations wishing to involve volunteers need to firstly consult with those individuals with whom the volunteers will be working. Volunteer roles, management and support, needs to be clearly defined with paid staff to reduce the risk of mistrust. Staff need to see that volunteers complement and strengthen their capacity and enhance the capability of the organisation to achieve its goals rather than fear their involvement.

### What are some of the benefits to highlight to paid staff?

- Additional projects can be implemented and maintained.
- Volunteers come with expertise and experience that an organisation may not have available to them, which can advance the capacity of the organisation.

Successful introduction of volunteers to an organisation depends on the support available to the volunteers from the staff of the organisation. This support depends on the staff having a say in why, where and how volunteers are utilised within the organisation. Thus several purposes for consulting with paid staff prior to introducing volunteers can be identified. They include;

- To identify and clarify why the organisation wants/needs volunteers.
- To gather paid staff suggestions regarding the utilisation of volunteers.
- To identify and address paid staff concerns about the introduction of volunteers.
- To identify volunteer roles.
- To identify staff to provide day to day support to volunteers working within their area.
- To develop and communicate policies and procedures for working with volunteers to staff throughout the organisation.
- To confirm arrangements for introducing volunteers.

Consultation with staff can be seen to be an ongoing process in the period leading up to and following the introduction of volunteers.

### Developing Effective Paid Staff and Volunteer Relations

Organisations involving volunteers to work alongside paid staff must carefully consider approaches to build paid staff and volunteer relations. It is critically important to develop a culture of trust, openness and respect between volunteers and paid staff where they are treated as equal custodians in contributing to the mission of the organisation.

Approaches you can use to develop effective relationships include:

- Encourage positive feedback and constructive criticism about the volunteer program. Encourage paid staff to voice their fears and concerns and show you are open to working with them to resolve these issues.
- Be a role model. In your dealings with volunteers ensure you follow your own advice. Demonstrate the skills so that paid staff can model your behaviour.
- Approach any organisational issue with a positive framework. Consider how volunteers could assist or add additional value to the projects being discussed. Staff will begin to see the value of volunteers in addressing their concerns rather than raising them.
- Spend as much time with paid staff as volunteer staff. Do not isolate the volunteer program but rather integrate it within all aspects of the organisation. See your role as providing ongoing education to paid staff in working with volunteers, and providing an open door to paid staff as well as volunteers.



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- Involve paid staff in all aspects of the program. Consult widely about new developments, develop job descriptions with the paid staff responsible and involve paid staff in the volunteer orientation.
- Develop a rationale for volunteer involvement that is understood and embraced by the paid staff.
- Highlight the benefits of volunteer involvement whilst at the same time consider the fears and concerns that staff may have about working with volunteers.
- Hold joint planning and staff meetings, so that volunteers and paid staff can share ideas, understand each other's issues and develop more effective and friendly relationships.
- Instead of exclusive spaces for staff provide shared spaces where volunteers and paid staff can socialise and work together.
- Appoint a Volunteer Advocate to represent volunteers in decision-making processes. On the board, management committee, top-line management and at staff meetings.
- Provide opportunities for paid and unpaid staff to socialise together.

A commitment from top-line management of the role and importance of volunteers in the organisation

### Developing Effective Teamwork (Best Practice Example)

In ensuring effective teamwork between paid and volunteer staff, American Red Cross California is often referred to as a best practice example. They organise retreats for staff, volunteers and participants, have developed a volunteer council, ensure volunteers liaise with other departments, have ongoing staff volunteer lunch visits, rotate volunteer assignments and tasks, have volunteer report cards (filled out by the staff) and have staff report cards (filled out by volunteers). They have also created a career development track for their volunteers, have volunteers shadow other volunteers to learn how the job is done and have a solution box rather than a suggestion box.

### Addressing Paid Staff Fears

Consulting with paid staff at the outset can provide opportunities to clearly identify staff fears and concerns in relation to involving volunteers. Paid staff will often have concerns about the volunteer program. Many of these fears are entirely justified and based on genuine concerns. Even if a fear appears as not necessary or ill informed, it must be taken seriously and addressed. A fear, even an unrealistic one, impacts significantly on how a person reacts and may have a long-term detriment to the program. Let us consider some of the most common fears and how they might be addressed.

#### Threat of job loss or reduced hours

Paid staff often fear that volunteers will gradually take over the functions and roles performed by paid staff. This can be heightened if paid staff recognise that the volunteers come with many skills and qualifications, not so different from their own.

It is important that this issue is practically addressed by providing a clear rationale for the reason for volunteer involvement, which provides a clear delineation between paid and unpaid roles within the organisation. In addition staff will feel more secure with job descriptions for both paid and volunteer staff, policy which details recruitment processes and confirms rationale, and a proven management commitment to staff tenure.



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### **Concern that volunteers are not accountable**

As volunteers give of their time freely and make such a valuable contribution, there is often a concern that they are free agents and will not have to play by the rules. Often staff feel reluctant to criticise volunteers as they recognise how much the volunteers give of their own time.

This issue can be addressed through ensuring there is policy and procedure which relates to volunteer staff, and that clear and effective management systems for volunteers are in place. It is important that paid staff see that these systems are put into action and implemented fairly for all volunteer staff. In addition to this it is important that paid staff recognise the reciprocity of volunteering. They need to know that volunteers are gaining significant benefits outside of monetary gain. An open approach to feedback about the volunteer program will also assist this process. Often part of this fear is linked to the next concern.

### **Fear of not being able to manage volunteers**

Often paid staff are given the job of working with volunteers without having the necessary skills. There is an assumption that the paid staff member is gaining valuable assistance without acknowledging the additional time and skills in supporting and training the volunteers.

Providing training in working with volunteers should be given to all staff who work with volunteers. This training should include an essential introduction to all the elements of working with volunteers. This may include exploring the rationale of volunteering within your program, discussing the reciprocal nature of volunteering, providing practical hands on training in supervising, supporting and motivating volunteer staff, and examining how paid staff can truly develop a human centred approach to working with volunteers. Remember to provide paid staff with the opportunity to openly discuss their fears and concerns and also to encourage suggestions and approaches in which the organisation could better work with and support volunteer staff. Turn this fear into a positive by encouraging staff to see this new management role as broadening their skills and developing a new area of expertise.

### **Paid/Volunteer Staff Guidelines**

Developing a document that outlines the working relationship between paid and volunteer staff can be useful in determining the collaborative approach that paid and volunteer staffs undertake.

The document can be developed jointly between management, paid and volunteer staff. Some examples of what you may include in Paid and Volunteer Staff Guidelines:

- The different but complementary roles, expectations and responsibilities of paid and voluntary staff will be clearly defined.
- All staff (paid and voluntary), will be provided with:
  - Orientation to the organisation - its mission, objectives, structure and procedures.
  - A clear understanding of what their role involves and conditions under which they will work.
  - Information, training, facilities, supervision and support necessary to the satisfactory carry out of their duties.
  - Opportunities to be involved in decisions of relevance to their role and responsibilities.



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# Information Sheet

## Working Together: Paid and Volunteer Staff



- All relevant legislation covering paid and voluntary staff, for example work health and safety, will be made known and closely observed.
- Entitlements in the way of salaries, out-of-pocket expenses and insurance cover will be known and agreed to before commencement with the organisation.
- Clear communication systems between management, paid and volunteer staff will be established, with opportunities for all to contribute their ideas and present any grievances for consideration.
- A climate of mutual trust, recognition and support will be fostered between management, volunteers and paid staff.
- Members of the community should not be coerced into performing voluntary work, or allocated unwelcome responsibilities or tasks.
- The involvement of volunteers does not constitute a threat to job security or work satisfaction of paid staff.
- The person or people responsible for managing volunteers will be adequately resourced to ensure that program goals are achievable.
- Management will deal with any dissatisfaction with performance levels as it occurs. A change in role, or withdrawal of the offer of voluntary work, or dismissal of a paid worker, will be considered only after those involved have been provided with opportunities to improve their performance to the required level.
- In the event of an industrial dispute, volunteers will not be expected to undertake work normally undertaken by paid staff.
- These guidelines will be reviewed annually.
- Management and staff will create roles that are meaningful to the organisation and the individual.

*Adapted from Noble. J., 1997. Volunteers and Paid Workers: A Collaborative Approach. Volunteering South Australia*

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**Volunteering has never been so easy**