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Volunteers are an integral part of our society—as a group they strengthen the fabric of society in innumerable ways, especially in performing a crucial role in the community information and support sector. Our sector owes its existence to volunteers and we continue to have a high reliance on a diverse range of passionate and enthusiastic volunteers to deliver critical services to those in need. While this work is highly valued, we also value the opportunity it provides for us to build and strengthen our volunteers.

In an everchanging world, the traditional volunteer and role they play is transforming, and the challenge for us is how we respond to and embrace these changes.

This edition of *Informed* provides a current picture of volunteering in Australia and gives insight into opportunities on how to tackle some contemporary challenges. We explore the use of technology, professionalising volunteering, embarking on inclusive volunteering and useful resources and tools to try. We also look at how corporate volunteering can bring in much needed skills to our sector and have a look at innovative ways to engage and build the capacity of our volunteers.

I sincerely thank all our contributors for taking the time to share their wisdom, and hope this edition inspires you to consider some novel approaches when engaging with new and existing volunteers.

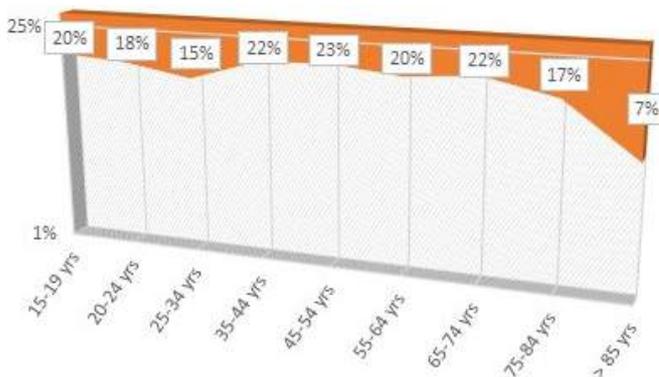
Kate Wheller, Executive Officer CISVic

Overview

Cameron Deans, CISVic Volunteer

The results of the 2016 census are in and volunteering is on the rise! Up from 17.8 per cent in 2011 to 19 per cent in 2016, volunteering makes a sizeable contribution to the national economy every year. This contribution supports many of the services we expect in a developed country such as Australia, services which would otherwise not be sustainable without significant changes to the Australian economy, probably via the tax system.

In Victoria, the rise in volunteering is even more pronounced, from 17.7 per cent in 2011 to 19.2 per cent in 2016. Also, volunteer contributions are widely spread across all age ranges, with a slight peak around the 45-54 year old age range and only significantly trailing off after 85 years of age.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census of Population and Housing

For organisations seeking volunteers this is welcome news, and offers confidence for the future of volunteering in Victoria. On closer analysis, the picture may be even more encouraging. As CEO of Volunteering Australia Adrienne Picone points out, the question on the census relating to volunteer activity has remained unchanged for the last three censuses and may not adequately capture all people involved in volunteer activity*. Volunteering Australia believes the number could be much higher and they have expressed support for the National Public Consultation on Statistics for Volunteering and Giving which was launched by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) earlier this year.

The census question is limited to the not-for-profit sector, failing to capture a range of informal

volunteering activities and telling us very little about the nature of volunteering in the nation.

Important statistics from the 2014 survey showed:

VICTORIA

- 1.5 million Victorians (32.3%) aged 15 years and over participated in formal volunteering.
- Victorian volunteers worked a total of 203 million hours.
- 33% of women aged 15 years and over volunteered (788,000 women) and 32% of men aged 15 years and over volunteered (726,500 men).
- The volunteer rate was 30% in capital cities (1 million people) and 40% outside capital cities (0.4 million people).

AUSTRALIA

- 29% of adults with a disability or long-term health condition volunteered (1.68 million people), compared with 32% for those with no disability or long-term health condition (4.1 million people).
- 26% of adults born overseas volunteered (1.5 million people).
- 23% of adults who spoke a language other than English at home volunteered (888,000 people).

Data from 2010 previously indicated the following break-down of volunteer hours worked across Australia:

- Men – 52 hours per year
- Women – 62 hours per year
- People in capital city – 49 hours per year
- People in the rest of the state – 81 hours per year
- Total for all people – 60 hours per year.

Responses to volunteering changes

Reflecting on the above data, it is worth noting the relative stability of volunteer participation across a range of ages. There seems to be no shortage of young people wanting to participate in volunteering; for work experience, to participate in community life, and just to do some good. As with many volunteers though, juggling travel time, day jobs, and dealing with paperwork present obstacles to volunteering.

The confusion about the true rates of volunteering is further complicated by the General Social Survey: Summary Results, Australia 2014, which found that 31 per cent of the Australian population volunteered in 2014 (amounting to a dollar contribution of \$290 billion per annum**). The apparent discrepancy (31 per cent in 2014 versus 19 per cent in 2016) may in part be explained by the inadequate wording of the census question about volunteering and its failure to effectively capture the range of volunteering activities that people are involved in.

*Caneva, L 2017, *Volunteering On the Rise in an Ageing and More Diversified Australia - Census 2016*, <https://probonoaustralia.com.au/news/2017/06/volunteering-rise-aging-diversified-australia-census-2016/>

**Volunteering Australia, *Response to National Public Consultation on Statistics for Volunteering and Giving*, May 2017,

https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1495163081VAResponsetoNationalPublicConsultationonStatisticsforVolunteeringandGiving.pdf

With the development of online platforms, many organisational tasks requiring volunteers need not necessitate the physical presence of a volunteer to complete them. Since 2000, the United Nations Volunteer Programme has connected development organisations with volunteers around the world to collaborate online for peace and development projects. In that time, 55,000 volunteers have supported the UN's various agencies, including 1,000 Australians. Today, this kind of online volunteering is finding a wider application thanks to the introduction of platforms such as Vollie. Join us as we explore this further in our article "*The Changing Face of Volunteering*".

A key finding in the *State of Volunteering in Australia, Report 2016** suggests there is a disconnect between the volunteering roles that people are interested in and the roles that organisations are offering. How well organisations move towards aligning volunteer roles to suit individual skills and experience, as opposed to only involving volunteers in limited roles, may be the difference between success and failure.

A recommendation from the report, as a solution to this, is the adoption and use of the *National Standards for Volunteer Involvement* resources and tools. Launched in 2015, these *Standards* provide good practice guidance and benchmarks to help organisations attract, manage and retain volunteers, and to manage risk and safety with respect to volunteers. The *Standards* are straight forward and are adaptable for different organisation types and different forms of volunteering, reflecting the diversity of this growing sector.

There are a number of ways to prepare and plan for implementation of the *Standards* and self-assess your progress:

- Attend a Volunteer Victoria's Volunteer Essentials: National Standards workshop (next workshop is September 21, 2017). Visit their website for further information (costs involved).
- Purchase the National Standards implementation guide, workbook and resource kit through volunteer Victoria (costs involved).

- Trial the Online Self-Assessment Tool at <https://spp.ngoservicesonline.com.au/national-standards-tool> (Costs involved)



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15**

THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT

You may be interested in exploring the use of Corporate Volunteering which draws on employees skills, talents and capability and puts them to work in your organisation. See our article about corporate volunteering "*Employee Volunteering*".

Strong voice of the volunteering sector

Volunteering Australia's sector-driven Tower of Strength campaign in early 2017 highlighted the vital importance of supporting volunteers in their local communities across the nation. The campaign was a great success, with considerable input from Volunteering Australia, the state peaks and community-base organisations. It was welcome news to hear from the Department of Social Services in July this year that funding for the Volunteer Management Program is to be reinstated.

The funding will provide approximately \$5.25 million for Volunteering Support Services to continue to support a diverse geographic and demographic cross-section of communities in Victoria from 1 January 2018 until June 2021.

Visit <http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au/volunteering-support-in-my-area/> to locate the closest Volunteering Support service to you and solicit their support.

*PWC and Volunteering Australia 2016, *State of Volunteering Report*
<https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/State-of-Volunteering-in-Australia-full-report.pdf>

The Future of Volunteering

Emily Flores, Marketing & Fundraising Manager, Volunteering Victoria

At Volunteering Victoria, we spend a lot of time thinking about the future of volunteering. Understanding the latest trends is at the heart of our mission to develop a collaborative, sustainable, thriving volunteering community and movement in Victoria. Occasionally we hear that volunteering doesn't have a future at all.

As we struggle to juggle competing priorities, our lives get busier, and we are faced with less job security, some may ask, 'does volunteering as we know it have a future at all?'

At Volunteering Victoria, we are more than a little optimistic about the future of volunteering. Volunteering is a fundamental part of humanity and intrinsic to our relations with others.

While the sector is changing rapidly through the introduction of new legislation, digital innovation, government initiatives, evolving business and enterprise models, and the changing expectations of volunteers, we believe that volunteering has always been adaptive, ebbing and flowing with the needs of the community.

We spoke to three of our key staff members, Roz Wollmering (Membership Manager and Acting CEO), Amanda Everton (Professional Development and Events Manager) and Hazel Maynard (Training and Conference Support) to get their thoughts on the future of volunteering.

Technology

It's impossible to talk about the future without discussing technology. In the last few years there has been a boom in volunteering digital apps and websites, connecting people with volunteering in new and innovative ways.

The past few years has seen the launch of:

- Event-specific volunteering apps connecting mostly young people with one-off event volunteer opportunities;
- Platforms that connect skilled professionals with volunteer opportunities that they can do virtually;

- Community action platforms that connect, organise and share information in order to engage, involve, and empower volunteers and other community members in local efforts;
- Apps that enable people to reach out for help within their existing networks, for example, during illness or the birth of a child.

The interesting thing about many of these apps and platforms is they have been created not by volunteer involving organisations but by individuals who have seen a gap in the market. This suggests what many probably already suspected – that many organisations have lacked the resources or skills to embrace new technology. This is of course not the case in every organisation but is certainly a trend across the sector and indicates that collaboration between not-for-profits and individuals and start-ups may play a big role in the future.



While technology brings new ways for people to engage as volunteers, it is important to remember why many people volunteer.

Hazel Maynard explains that isolation can play a big role in the decision to volunteer "Lots of people volunteer due to social isolation, which exists at any age. In these cases, digital and virtual volunteering may not be enough. A drawback of volunteering for many people is being with like-minded people."

Programs that can be flexible and incorporate technology to recruit and engage, while still supporting volunteers to engage with like-minded people will have better longevity than organisations that focus on just one, or the other.

Skills-based volunteering and shared leadership

There is an expectation among many of today's volunteers, from millennials to baby boomers, for a greater level of purpose, meaning and responsibility when volunteering. Millennials are seeking pathways to employment through volunteering. According to Roz Wollmering "millennials seek employers who tangibly support the pursuit of 'purpose' through employee volunteering and strategies that achieve social, environmental and economic outcomes for their communities: an economic ROI is not enough".

The days of volunteers being content with basic administration, or even tried and true roles like meal delivery are beginning to disappear. While those duties will inevitably need to make up a portion of volunteer roles and responsibilities, we are already seeing an increased demand for meaningful roles, more responsibility and leadership duties from our incoming volunteers.

According to Hazel Maynard a lot of this change has come about with the increase of women entering the workforce "many baby boomers, especially women, were in the paid workforce so there is less of a sense of duty to volunteer. They want to know what's in it for them – it's a two-way relationship. There are also expectations of professionalism with many volunteers of that generation expecting interviews, screening and induction as well as ongoing performance reviews".

This is backed up by a recent study from Bass Care* into the participation of baby boomers in volunteering. They found that there is a clear opportunity and challenge ahead in engaging baby boomers in volunteering, acknowledging that they are a diverse generation and a large cohort that will require a different approach.

"The importance of a skills based assessment in the recruitment process will assist to identify optimal roles for volunteer baby boomers, potentially creating new programs for clients that have previously not been possible".

As well as providing more meaningful roles, organisations will need to be flexible and adaptable. A weekly roster may become a thing of the past as young and old people have thirst for episodic or short term volunteering to fit in with their busy and complex lives.

Says Roz Wollmering "people want to give their time but they want to do it in different ways. Short term, online, episodic".

Legislation, policy and law

Volunteering often underpins government policy and legislative objectives, across a very broad range of portfolios. Volunteering makes significant contributions to emergency services, sport and recreation, health care, environmental protection, tourism, multiculturalism - the list is endless.

The trend towards a more professionalised volunteering workforce comes with regulatory requirements. These can be a challenge to stay on top of, particularly if you are a small not-for-profit organisation with a handful of part time staff! For example, the Victorian Government recently introduced changes which strengthen the protection of children from harm. These include ensuring volunteers have a Working With Children Check which is required if the person is working with children, whether they are supervised or not, and regardless if the contact is face-to-face or virtual.



*Jonathan Pietsch & Jacinta Archer 2013, *Community engagement, volunteering and retiring baby boomers*, <http://www.basscare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Baby-boomers-and-volunteering-FINAL-PDF-Feb-13-2013.pdf>

As the most significant social reform in Australia in a generation, the NDIS has large implications for volunteering and volunteering-involving organisations. The NDIS is likely to bring incredible benefits to people with disabilities. However, the transition is creating issues for organisations that provide services to people with disabilities and which rely on a volunteer workforce. The NDIS has not been designed with due consideration for recruiting, training and managing an unpaid volunteer workforce. In many cases, volunteers provide a dimension of support which paid staff might not, whether it is perhaps enthusiasm or lived experience, the motivations of a volunteer are unique and powerful.



Organisational Planning

Says Amanda “I think that organisations need to be prepared. Organisations that aren’t feeling the pressure to change have been fortunate. Maybe because they are larger charities with long-term volunteers and strong profiles. But those volunteers are aging and organisations must start looking at the trends of an aging population”.

“Look at the range of roles that you have – which ones might be affected as people retire – will the positions still be attractive? Do they need to be sold in a different way? Have they been adapted to suit the changing needs of your volunteers? What about your marketing and the language you use?”

The rise of informal volunteering – outside an organisational context -- also puts pressure on organisations. Many individuals choose to support local needs and go direct to their peers through informal volunteering and giving. According to Roz, “volunteer only, niche collectives, such as Women’s March Global, with no paid staff, have risen up in response to changing political and social environments. Through civic engagement activities, volunteers continue to tap into their desire to ‘be part of something bigger than one’s self’. Networked and ‘entrepreneurial’ volunteers are demonstrating that organisations need to free up and empower volunteers if they seek to attract talent and purpose”.

As Amanda concludes, “while there are no simple solutions to future-proof organisations, being adaptable and meaningfully engaging with your community and seeking to understand what your diverse volunteers want will be key”.

Volunteering Victoria prides itself on being at the forefront of volunteering trends. We encourage organisations to considering becoming members so that they can take part in our professional development workshops, events and special interest groups to help shape the future of volunteering.

Harness the
Power of
Association

<http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au>

By joining Volunteering Victoria you empower them to lead, support and advocate for volunteering, and they can help you meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving volunteering landscape.

Useful Resources - Volunteer Platform



seek
volunteer

Seek and Go Volunteer

Free volunteer platform to qualified not-for-profit organisations. Easy-to-use and has a high profile within the community. www.seek.com.au or govolunteer.com.au



Good Company

A corporate workplace, giving and volunteering, platform. Providing links between community not-for profit organisations and companies to give their Time (general volunteering), Talent (Skilled Volunteering) and Treasure (donating and fundraising via payroll). www.goodcompany.com.au

Useful Tools



Not-For-Profit Law

Volunteering law can be complex and confusing. Not-for-profit Law have developed a webpage, resources and videos specifically for volunteer involving community organisations to help better understand the laws that apply to them and their volunteers.

Visit www.nfplaw.org.au/volunteers

Volunteering Victoria

To help you manage your volunteers, Volunteering Victoria has developed a range of simple tools and templates. You are free to download these templates and adapt them to suit your organisation.

Visit <http://volunteeringvictoria.org.au/volunteer-management-toolkit/>



Check out

The Essentials of Managing Volunteers

Online training for new Volunteer Managers or those who work with volunteers as part of their role

<http://coursevenue.com.au/>

Advertise a board vacancy

Looking for talented people to contribute to your board or committee. Advertise for free at Community Directors.

www.communitydirectors.com.au

Inclusion: From the Inside Out

*Cameron Deans, CISVic Volunteer with Denise Budge,
Knox Infolink Centre Manager*

It has always been a challenge to attract the 'right' volunteer to match a role that has already been established. As a relatively new Centre Manager at Knox Infolink, Denise was on a steep learning curve about all the facets of the organisation including the various volunteer roles. Denise developed an understanding of what Knox Infolink needed in a volunteer, interviewing prospective volunteers with particular skills and qualities in mind, only to challenge these very ideals after a short time and ask 'why just these skills and qualities?'

These reservations increased following an encounter with a group of young people from Interchange Outer East, accompanied by their support worker. Interchange Outer East is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation which supports families who have a child or young person with a disability, living in Melbourne's outer eastern regions of Knox, Maroondah and Yarra Ranges. Through offering a range of programs and services, Interchange opens opportunities to families and allows them the choice of how this support is provided. They have a strong belief in engaging the local community in the organisation by forming connections and creating volunteering opportunities to build more inclusive communities.

After encountering the lively group of young people in the reception area and explaining a little of what Knox Infolink does, Denise began chatting with their support worker and this is when her notions of volunteering were clearly challenged. The support worker from Interchange wanted to know if Knox Infolink had volunteer positions, to which Denise proudly answered, "oh yes, we have about 35 wonderful volunteers who perform a number of different roles which allows us to provide the fantastic services that we do".

Denise politely took the support worker's card, thinking there would be too much support and supervision required and that the volunteers would not be able to do many of the things required.

Denise explained that after thinking outside the box and consulting with Emergency Relief (ER) Co-ordinators, Knox Infolink determined they could create a new role, ER Stock Support Worker.

"We created a new position description that clearly detailed the role that would include packing food parcels, storing food parcels, observing food hygiene guidelines, maintaining a clean and safe work environment, sorting and storing of fresh fruit and vegetables, professional development and other general duties. We opened the dialogue with Interchange about how we could support a young person from Interchange to be a Knox Infolink volunteer".



Knox Infolink produced a manual on how to pack a food parcel supported with photos of the food items to include, how to pack the parcel and visual aids around the office to assist. Interchange will choose a young person for the role of ER Stock Support Worker. "We will then go through an interview process as this would be our normal process to select a volunteer" explained Denise. Interchange suggests that the people they support be treated the same as any other volunteer as it would be good experience for them to have. We are hoping to have our new volunteer on board soon and this will be a small step towards being a more inclusive service that is more reflective of our community.

Similar opportunities have arisen with the help of Scope at various locations across Victoria. Scope supports over 6,000 people with physical, intellectual and multiple disabilities and developmental delays, working with corporate and community organisations to improve inclusiveness for people with a disability. Scope are partnering with Phillip Island Community and Learning Centre (PICAL), and Aldi to provide volunteering opportunities for four people with PICAL's SecondBite program. Erin, Harry, Spencer and Kenny have mild intellectual disabilities, and collect food close to expiry from Cowes' Aldi every Friday. This food is then donated to the food bank, along with food this group picks from PICAL's community garden.

PICAL had been running this program at the time Scope became involved, but there had been difficulty retaining the volunteers necessary and the program seemed on the verge of collapse. The co-ordinator for this region, Rob, described how Erin, Harry, Spencer and Kenny were able to step into the role without any trouble. "The right match between work involved and the volunteers can make the disability irrelevant" he explained. PICAL have expressed that enticing volunteers previously could be quite difficult and volunteer attendance could be sporadic, but find their new volunteers highly reliable. They love their work and carry it out enthusiastically. Good relationships between the organisations involved and proper consultation with a group like Scope can help ensure satisfactory implementation. A support worker to assist the group and transport arrangements needed to be made, but with these now in place, the process is fairly straightforward and has the full backing of PICAL and Aldi. The process has been a complete success according to Ron, and Scope is now looking to expand with similar programs to Wonthaggi and onto other places on the Bass Coast.

Scope are also working with Kim Berry, who is showing students at Pakenham Hills Primary School that disability is no barrier to achieving your dreams through her new position as a teaching assistant at the school.

Kim, who lives with cerebral palsy and is vision-impaired, says the teaching assistant position is enabling her to be one step closer to her goal of becoming an integration aide.

"I'm learning new skills every day, like how to assist with different styles of learning and what are the best ways to communicate clearly to students. It's been amazing," says Kim.

Scope organised and facilitated Kim's teaching position, where she volunteers once a week with Grade 3 and 4 art classes at Pakenham Hills Primary School, providing in-class support and advice to students. Kim's presence as a teaching assistant is hugely beneficial for the primary school students in learning about inclusion. The students learn that Kim and other people with a disability can take on leadership positions in our community and see first-hand the enormous value people with disability bring to our communities.

For Kim, the teaching position has cemented her dream of being an integration aide and helping children with a disability. "I've always loved teaching and I love being around the kids," explains Kim. "Being a person with a disability, I'm passionate about helping other children with a disability learn. This teaching assistant job helps me to be one step closer to my dream".

Addressing barriers to volunteering for people with a disability is not as complicated as we would first assume. Good awareness training, worker's attitudes, mentoring systems and accessibility to easy to understand information and systems is all it takes.

Marcus, who has schizophrenia, shared his thought about people with disabilities volunteering, for the Volunteering WA Enhancing Access online training tool "A person with a disability is one who has an impediment in everyday life. This does not mean we are unable to contribute to society in a positive and meaningful way".

Online training resource

<http://ea.volunteeringwa.org.au>

Incorporating volunteers with a disability into your organisation.
Volunteering WA's Enhancing access

The Changing Face of Volunteering

Jill Wilson, Volunteer Development Manager CISVic with Matthew Boyd, Founder and Managing Director of Vollie.



Volunteering now operates in a much more sophisticated landscape than even 20 years ago, it has a significant economic contribution to Australian society and through technology there are now greater and more diverse ways to engage with volunteers and participate in volunteering.

In 2014, Dr Lisel O'Dwyer (University of Adelaide) re-evaluated her study into the economic contribution of volunteering to Australian society, first conducted in 2011, with the new data showing a massive increase in the value of volunteering from \$200 billion to \$290 billion a year*.

Dr O'Dwyer's report found the economic contribution of volunteering to Australian society surpasses revenue sources from major sectors including mining, agriculture, defence and retail. However, Matthew Boyd founder and managing director of Vollie, an online platform unlocking skilled online volunteering, takes a different view "if you were to take a peek at the statistics around volunteering, you would quickly discover how slowly the economy of volunteering moves in comparison with the wider global economy. In the age of the sharing economy, the concept of 'volunteering' has failed to tap into the benefits of a workforce that are migrating to on-demand and remote working styles".

Is virtual volunteering the answer?

With the recent rise in the shared economy model of transactions like Airbnb, Uber or Airtasker, unlocking more volunteer potential with skilled remote volunteering might provide a valid way for community organisations to engage with skilled and/or the next generation of volunteers.

Matthew asserts Vollie is looking to generate millions of dollars' worth of value for their family of non-profit organisations, through skilled remote volunteering projects that have been previously inaccessible due to technology and resourcing barriers.

Skilled virtual volunteering, Matthew suggests, is uniquely different from traditional volunteering in that it matches the particular skills of each volunteer to the needs of the not-for-profit organisation and allows the volunteer to work from an off-site location such as their home or office. Rather than having a local accountant shaking the tin on a busy corner, a non-profit organisation can tap into this expertise (to assist with financial planning, tax returns, and revenue reports) from anywhere in the world. Matthew can see the benefits for both parties: the accountant has more flexibility about when they would like to volunteer and how they do it, and the organisation gains the benefits

*O'Dwyer 2013, *The Real Value of Volunteering*
<http://news.flinders.edu.au/blog/2014/10/31/volunteering-worth-290-billion-a-year/>

of having a high-quality accountant providing valuable resources for free.

One thing we do know is that we need to consider the motivations and barriers to people participating in volunteering. Matthew highlighted from the recent *State of Volunteering report* by PWC and Volunteering Australia*, where key findings suggested, among other problems, potential volunteers were deterred from volunteering due to:

- lack of flexibility in current volunteering programs,
- lack of support for online volunteering, and
- lack of engagement from volunteer organisations with volunteers about opportunities.

Matthew also comments that the report showed a whopping 86% of volunteer organisations need more volunteers. There is a clear need to help volunteer organisations better connect with people who want to volunteer, but are not offered appropriate opportunities to do so. Matthew believes Vollie is the answer and he says that “Vollie will allow volunteers to volunteer from anywhere at any time, meaning the next bit of free time someone has could be used to change the world for the better. Until now, engaging in skilled and remote volunteering programs has been a luxury few community organisations have managed to perfect due to two reasons:

- The ability to create projects that match the skills of a skilled volunteer is extremely time-consuming. A volunteer manager would need to know the volunteer’s skills, the organisation’s broader requirements, and then be able to implement a project that the organisation can create for the volunteer to maximise the volunteer’s time. This could take hours to plan for each volunteer, and may not result in a guaranteed project for the volunteer; and
- Community organisations are time-poor, and the management of a remote workforce is an additional requirement that most charities cannot afford or find the resources for. Expecting an in-house volunteer manager to incorporate volunteers from around the world into their management plan has, until now, been a task that is too hard to handle.”

Matthew and his colleagues built Vollie because “we saw the need to unlock skilled online volunteering and believe we knew how to do it in a way that made life easier for non-profit organisations. By providing a level of service that can take care of the creation and management of online volunteer projects, Vollie is removing the barriers that have prevented remote and skilled volunteering projects from happening in the past. By working with multiple community organisations, we’re also increasing the variety of projects available and thus reducing the risk of wasting a prospective volunteers’ time.”

Organisations are realising that some of their traditional long-time volunteers are moving on and they need to attract younger volunteers. Considering opportunities to utilise virtual volunteering may be an opportunity to dip their toe in the water.

[Learn more about Vollie at
www.vollie.com.au](http://www.vollie.com.au)

Another online platform you may wish to explore further is Communitier. Communitier is a social venture with the mission to increase social participation via virtual volunteering. Their platform is set up for volunteer involving organisations and volunteer coordinators to attract and collaborate with skilled volunteers in order to achieve social outcomes.

Although this may sound familiar, Communitier do however point out a difference in their platform which is their ability to go further than just matching volunteers with volunteer opportunities they incorporate the technical capability to facilitate a team, cluster or project-based approach to delivery. They provide the online vehicle that can enable technically competent and professionally skilled volunteers who are time-poor or live remotely to contribute to social projects anywhere in the world.

Communitier is currently piloting the platform however to learn more visit:

[Learn more about Communitier at
https://communitier.org/](https://communitier.org/)

Employee Volunteers

Jill Wilson, Volunteer Development Manager, CISVic, with Julie Trickey, Manager Corporate Volunteering, Ardoch Youth Foundation and Katrina Hudson, Manager, SEEK Volunteer ANZ

Employee volunteering (or what we in the community sector refer to as corporate volunteering) is defined as allowing staff to engage in unpaid work for a community organisation during work hours for a wider societal benefit, and for the possible benefit of the volunteer and for the corporation.

An Australia survey* in 2011 found 24% of volunteers worked for an employer that had an employee volunteer program. That is a lot of corporate social responsibility (CSR) effort that can be tapped into.

I recently spoke with one of our member agencies Ardoch Youth Foundation - about their success in capitalising on corporate volunteering to build the capacity of schools and early years services through the delivery of one of their cornerstone programs - Numeracy Buddies.

Julie Trickey, manager of Ardoch's corporate volunteering programs spoke to me about the need to invest the time to clearly understand and ensure there is alignment with the key vision, branding and strategic direction of a corporate partner, and your own.

"Ardoch is a children's education charity focused on improving educational outcomes for children and young people in disadvantaged communities and it's important for us to align with corporate partners that see the value in realising the potential of children through broadening their horizons".

Numeracy Buddies is an interactive, online numeracy program, which connects classes of primary school students (Little Buddies) with groups of volunteer mentors (Big Buddies) usually employees from a common workplace. 'Buddies' communicate through a blog forum and together, solve a range of numeracy problems set by the class teacher. Over two terms the Buddies interact and complete the problems through weekly/fortnightly blog communication. The Big Buddies are trained to

support and encourage the Little Buddies' skills development whilst sharing how they use numeracy in their lives and careers. As one-on-one relationships are formed, Big Buddies become positive role models who encourage learning and contribute to the children's social development by building their confidence and self-esteem.

A key objective of the Numeracy Buddies program is to provide time-efficient, meaningful corporate volunteering opportunities and it is vital to find a partner with whom a workable, happy and mutually beneficial partnership is possible. By using online technology to facilitate interactions between students and corporate volunteers in the Numeracy Buddies program, Ardoch has opened opportunities to provide a very efficient way for time-poor corporates to make a meaningful community contribution.



Julie advised that this hasn't meant the 'opportunity' of a large influx of volunteers hasn't come at a cost of time and effort to Ardoch. It has also been important for Ardoch to introduce and build in fees for corporate partners, to assist in the administration and management of the program and volunteers. "We have established strong partnership agreements that incorporate charges to assist in covering costs".

Corporate volunteers play an essential role in Ardoch's programs and it has been important for them to create and cultivate mutually beneficial partnerships that draw on the skills, talents and capability of both partners.

*Volunteering Australia, National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2011, https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1377045635VANSVI2011.pdf

5 Things You Can Do to Attract Corporate Partners*

1. Have a Clear, Strong Brand

Make it clear, to everyone in every place, why you exist, what you do and how you do it. Don't try to be broad and cater to every company's needs (or every person's needs for that matter). That's not how strong brands are made and great partners attracted.

2. Show Your Impact (And Their Impact)

Do your utmost to track what is important for your corporate partner – impact. This could look different for the corporate partner than it does for you however. They may want to know how many hours their employees volunteered or projects they supported financially. In combination with the stats and data, or instead of if you must, provide some great and personal stories of impact.

3. Engage Employees

Create programs, opportunities and strategies that can be used by corporate partners to engage their employees. Volunteer days, events to sponsor and attend and campaigns with fundraising challenges are just three ways that can make it easy for the company to say 'yes' and activate their staff.

4. Work Local

If you are a local organisation, or even just based locally, look to those local companies, branches and divisions. They often have control over their own destinies, or some of it, and can lead to bigger, national partnerships and projects.

5. Know Your Corporate Partner

Back to marketing 101. Know what the company wants. Do some research, ask their employees if you can or try to get an informational interview to find out more. The more you know about their needs, the better you can position your organisation to be a great partner for them.

If you were more interested in harnessing individual corporate volunteers rather than entering a formal partnership with a corporate, SEEK Volunteer have been working on building the connections between corporate volunteering and not-for-profits to increase the opportunities for employees to give back and make a positive impact in their communities.

The new online Corporate Volunteering Portal has been designed to help Australian businesses provide easier pathways for their employees to directly link into volunteering in the community. The Portal also gives a great opportunity for smaller, local not-for-profits to work with bigger corporates with larger and more developed employee giving programs.

Kathleen McCudden, Group HR Director for SEEK,

recognises that volunteering plays an important role in many people's lives and career journey, but challenges existed in connecting people to volunteering organisations and opportunities to contribute to our society. "At SEEK we utilised our capabilities to build Australia's single largest source for volunteering opportunities, and we are excited to now extend that offering into businesses," said McCudden.

The new volunteering portal designed specifically for corporates is currently being trialled by select businesses and will be rolled out more widely in the second half of this year. "Feedback from many organisations Australia-wide inspired SEEK Volunteer to create this new corporate volunteering portal," revealed McCudden. We discovered there was a growing need for a corporate portal that sourced relevant volunteering opportunities on behalf of organisations.

"Across the country, many companies expressed their desire to offer volunteering opportunities to help increase their staff satisfaction and engagement but were struggling with the cost of resourcing and managing volunteer programs for their staff," McCudden continued.

The platform is free for all not-for-profits to use. To access the platform, organisations need to be registered with SEEK Volunteer. If you are already registered, the next time you sign in to post a volunteer opportunity you will see an option to post directly to one of the Corporates on the pilot.

Should you have any queries about the SEEK volunteer registration process or the corporate platform, please contact Katrina Hudson, Manager on 03 8517 4553 or khudson@seek.com.au.

*For Momentum, 2015 Corporate Partner Survey, <http://recharity.ca/companies-want-nonprofit-partners/>

Return on Capacity Building

Jill Wilson, Volunteer Development Manager, CISVic, with Freedom Preston, Executive Officer, DIVRS and Jon Jones, Farms to Families Committee Volunteer, Whittlesea Community Connections

Team Approach

Good volunteer engagement is done strategically, it is embedded within the culture of an agency, and the pay-off, for both the organisation and volunteers, is the development and strengthening of capacity. I recently visited Freedom Preston, Executive Officer from Darebin Information and Volunteer Resource Service (DIVRS), out in Preston and spoke with her about the role volunteers played in the development of their agency's strategic approach.

Freedom will be the first to tell you this was not an easy or quick process "when I arrived at the agency in 2013 we didn't have a strategic direction, we didn't even overtly state our values and objectives. Historically the agency had a constitutional purpose and a mission, but most of this was mislaid. So, engaging volunteers in this process happened right at the beginning".

As Freedom was new to the agency she relied on others to come together and share their knowledge of the agency. This included the volunteers "It's a fundamental principle in a volunteer agency- the strategic approach is not just driven by volunteers it's created and led by volunteers."

Freedom was clear that "our strategic planning wasn't just about this document [strategic approach], it was about all the activity we went through to focus the picture of what we wanted to achieve. Part of understanding our own organisation was rewriting the organisation".

Speaking of the benefits of involving volunteers in strategic thinking Freedom says "like the old saying that many hands make light work, everybody brings unique backgrounds and experiences, making it a very valuable and rewarding process." Other benefits Freedom shared included:

- the positive impact the process had on solidifying volunteer engagement in the organisation
- it changed behaviour and changed the language of the organisations, everyone was clear about what it was we now were achieving.



Freedom had already known from the outset that they would lose people through this process- if people had only a little alignment or agreement with our new vision and approach then they would naturally fall away. "They chose to be somewhere else because what we were doing no longer aligned with them and that's ok".

Initially DIVRS didn't have a great uptake from volunteers to involve themselves in the process, however, Freedom feels that if they were to do it again now there would be greater interest and more involvement. "People can really see themselves shaping the organisation. We needed a clear vision, we were really explicit about this and for volunteers this became a really clear choice."

A Two - Way Street

Research suggests that volunteers are happier, healthier and sleep better than people who don't volunteer. It is also a fact that volunteering builds the confidence, skills, professional and personal networks and experiences of people involved. In the community sector, we are afforded a unique opportunity to have a direct impact on the lives of people we help. This is the same for volunteering - it can be an opportunity for people to have a positive impact on their communities while further developing themselves. Projects that harness the strengths of community members, or service users, not only contribute to positive outcomes but also build capacity in people and communities.

In a collaboration with the City of Whittlesea, Foodbank and Plenty Valley Community Health, Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) Farms-to-Families program increased accessibility to healthy food and fostered community connections in some of Melbourne's more disadvantaged suburbs.

To support the ongoing development and success of this free pop-up farmers market initiative, a volunteer committee was established from a diverse cross-section of the local community, a unique multicultural group, supported by WCC.

Jon Jones, a committee member, spoke of his experience of the group "Our volunteer group was formed to assist at the grass-roots community level to facilitate regular fruit, vegetable and dairy to residents of the Whittlesea City most in need of food security. The main process and message was to ensure the delivery of food in a relaxed, enjoyable, dignified, community-friendly atmosphere. We needed to utilise and build on the existing community links to build trust and support to ensure each market had a welcoming family-oriented atmosphere without judgements or stigmas."

Throughout the project the committee met regularly, particularly in the early stages, and to assist the development of the members, the group agreed to share the meeting procedures, such as chairing and recording and distributing minutes.

Jon and the group came across many challenges at various levels. "Some of these included the multitude of stakeholders who had differing agendas and approaches". But it was the group learning from each market and continually trying new ways to value add and continuously improve the days and the community experience, that helped. "Some of the processes we put in place were providing tea and coffee, setting up chairs and tables, and providing a children's play area close to the heart of the market. Also, we provided hot food and music when possible, and continually changed the plan of the market to reduce stress, queueing and assist with breaking down cultural barriers".

"Our group was very proactive and functional and provided opportunities for both personal and vocational development. This was emphasised by four members resigning from the group over time as most of them successfully found employment". Jon believes the group "...were able to identify community need, break down perceptions and build positive community relationships".

Through activities such as the Farm-to-Families program WCC demonstrates its commitment to strengthen the capacity of their agency and the whole community.



Meet our CISVic Volunteers



Lina, DIVRS

Lina Shaaban has been volunteering for Darebin Information Volunteer Resource Service (DIVRS), in Preston, for the past 11 months as a receptionist. For over 15 years, Lina enjoyed working in a corporate environment, but has realised that she is thriving in the community service sector and that she has found this role to be the very satisfying and fulfilling.

"I would recommend volunteering to anyone... you can never be prepared for how helping others can touch you and even make subtle differences in the way you live your own life."

Heather has been volunteering for Cobram Support and Information Services for 35 years, she would definitely recommend volunteering to others, and has found that volunteering has given her confidence in herself.

The best thing about volunteering is "Being able to help disadvantaged people."



Heather, Cobram Support & Information Service

Claire has been volunteering for 5 months, at Western Port Community Support and hopes that she is part of a new generation of volunteers. After meeting with a staff and two board members and hearing about how the agency supports the community, Claire decided that she wanted to be involved. "I feel I am making a difference by contributing to an organisation that offers services to our most vulnerable people in our community".

"I enjoy talking to the other volunteers, some of which have been volunteering for over 20 years."



Claire, Western Port Community Support

Community Information & Support Victoria (CISVic) is the peak body representing local community information and support services.

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...helping local communities help local people