

ENGAGING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS



Volunteers come from a variety of ages, experiences and backgrounds. Volunteers both young and older have unique contributions and unique challenges.

Young people can provide creativity, enthusiasm, knowledge of technology and fresh perspectives that volunteer-involving organisations may not have previously considered. Young people benefit from the opportunity to expand their social and professional networks, gain experience and work references and make a difference to the world around them.



Recruiting young volunteers can help the sustainability of volunteering organisations and the formal volunteering sector now and in the future by providing positive volunteer experiences which will encourage young people into a lifetime of volunteering.

Tips for volunteer-involving organisations wishing to engage younger volunteers including volunteers under the age of 18

Identifying appropriate roles

- Talk to your insurance provider about how young they are prepared to provide insurance coverage for volunteers. For example, your policy may state there is no lower age limit but the child volunteer must be able to take direction and work independently.
- Consider volunteer roles suitable for families with children. These provide opportunities for parents and children to have “family time” while instilling a love of volunteering. Examples of family volunteer roles include:
 - Tree planting and land care projects
 - Inter-generational social support programs involving visiting older people or people with disabilities
 - Event day activities such as handing out water at a fun run, providing entertainment or helping with an art and craft activity stall
 - Assisting with serving and clean up of school breakfast programs.
- Volunteer roles suitable for high school aged children may include:
 - The above, and
 - Retail/customer service/hospitality (no alcohol)
 - Coaching or mentoring younger children through junior sports programs, reading

programs, Girl Guides, Scouts, Cadets, etc.

- Tutoring other community members in basic information and communication technology activities
- Creating videos to record oral history of older members or promote your organisation on your website and social media
- Participating in reference groups to help organisations more effectively work with young volunteers and community members.

Risk management considerations

- Family volunteering roles:
 - Can involve child volunteers as young as agreed is appropriate by the parent/guardian, the organisation and the organisation's insurance provider
 - Screening and recruitment of young volunteers should consider the suitability of the volunteers on a case by case basis according to the specific risks of the position and tasks, the support and supervision available and the abilities of the child volunteer
 - Orientation of volunteers should clarify what the organisation is responsible for and what the parent/guardian is responsible for in managing and supervising the child volunteer
- It may be appropriate for older children (e.g. aged 14-17) to perform volunteer work independently or in groups with other volunteers
- Volunteer-involving organisations are encouraged to obtain signed consent forms from the child's parent/guardian as part of the recruitment and orientation process
- Staff members and volunteer team leaders working with children in Queensland (including child volunteers) are not required to have Working with Children Checks (Blue Cards) when managing young volunteers unless they are otherwise working in a category of regulated employment.
- Young volunteers are not required to apply for a Working with Children (Blue Card) check even if volunteering with other young people. However it will be important to apply for a Blue Card if they continue to volunteer once they turn 18 years old.
- The organisation must have a child and youth

risk management strategy in place (a Blue Card is only one part of this). Consult with the Blue Card Contact Centre for further information regarding a risk assessment and child and youth risk management strategies.

- Young volunteers, like all volunteers, should have access to grievance procedures and have their wellbeing ensured by policies covering health and safety and anti-discrimination, including workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

Finding younger volunteers

The Volunteering Queensland website has search options for volunteers that include roles that are "Good For" 'Families with Children' and 'Younger Volunteers aged 14-18'. Advertising roles using these options can increase the number of volunteers you are able to reach and help engage the many young people who are searching for ways to help the community (and themselves) through volunteering.

Further reading

- Young People as Volunteers: A guide to moving beyond traditional practices
- Engaging Millennial Volunteers

Contact us

For more information about volunteering contact Volunteering Queensland on:

Website: volunteeringqld.org.au

Phone: 3002 7600

Email: helpdesk@volunteeringqld.org.au

Facebook: facebook.com/VolunteeringQld

Twitter: twitter.com/VolunteeringQld

Instagram: instagram.com/volunteeringqld

Youtube: youtube.com/user/VolunteeringQldTV

Or our statewide network of Volunteer Resource Centres: volunteeringqld.org.au/networks

*Please note this is general information and each organisation needs to make their own organisation-specific assessments and/or seek their own internal and external advice before engaging young people as volunteers.