The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Standard 4: Recruitment and Selection

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Objective:

To develop a consistent strategy for volunteer recruitment and selection, to identify the obstacles and opportunities in the process, and to outline an action plan to begin implementation.

Standard 4: Recruitment and Selection

"I am convinced that nothing we do is more important than hiring and developing people. At the end of the day, you bet on people, not on strategies" – Lawrence Bossidy

What is Standard 4?

Standard 4 focuses on developing and executing an effective volunteer recruitment and selection plan. With the right recruitment strategy, you can support both your organisational goals and your volunteers' goals in one streamlined approach.

This Standard creates guidelines to measure how well your organisation attracts the best volunteers for the job, whilst protecting the safety of everyone involved. It highlights the processes needed to provide potential volunteers and volunteer managers with the information needed to understand if they're the right fit.

By following these guidelines, you create and embed a solid routine practice for recruitment and selection that enables your organisation to: stay compliant; attract talent; and reach its goals.

In short? Standard 4 helps you to create a recruitment plan that attracts appropriate volunteers and provides all parties with the information needed to make the right decision.

Standard 4 Criteria

The four Criteria that measure the effectiveness of an organisation's recruitment and selection processes, according to Volunteering Australia, are:

1. Attracting the Right Volunteers
2. Providing Relevant Information
3. Fulfilling and Fair Selection
4. Screening Processes

Why is Standard 4 So Important?

Preparing leadership and management, committing to volunteer involvement, and defining volunteer roles are all essential components of laying a solid foundation for your volunteer program. These strategies and systems support your project outcomes. However, your results depend on the execution of your recruitment and selection processes.

Standard 4 not only helps us develop a recruitment plan, but also empowers us to apply these strategies to reap the results of our prep work.

When compliant with Standard 4, your organisation can enjoy more dedicated volunteers, reduced liability, and a safer, more secure working environment.

A well-structured and consistent recruitment strategy is essential for attracting dedicated volunteers who are aligned with your organisation's mission and values. You will build stronger, trust-based relationships with your volunteers by ensuring their safety and security through these processes. Ultimately, your recruitment strategy will enable you to play to their strengths and recognise their talents.

The main barrier to recruiting is finding volunteers with the time, commitment, and interest to get involved. Make it worth their time by providing enough details. Inspire commitment by highlighting their strengths, knowledge, and abilities. Pique their interest by selecting and placing them individually, based on their passions.

By implementing standardised procedures for assessing, selecting, and onboarding new volunteers, you can translate your efforts into increased organisational capacity and impact. Together, we will inspire the next generation of changemakers, fostering a spirit of compassionate service and community resilience!

Criteria 4.1
ATTRACTING THE RIGHT VOLUNTEERS

It all starts with a plan: what's your organisation's approach to finding volunteers fit for your inspired roles? This process should be consistent and in line with your organisation's overarching goals for volunteer involvement.

It's not always easy to find volunteers with the time, commitment, and interest that your organisation needs in order to succeed. But with the right strategy, you can convey the benefits of your volunteer work and attract those with the passions, knowledge, and skills appropriate for the role. These traits can not only benefit your organisation, but also fuel your volunteers to dedicate their resources to your cause.

> "If the organisation recruits volunteers, it uses planned approaches to attract volunteers with relevant interests, knowledge, skills or attributes."
> – Volunteering Australia.

Of course, you must find these volunteers first. Where does your organisation source volunteers? Are you looking in the right places to attract aligned, relevant applicants? Are you presenting the roles in an authentic, effective way to make the roles approachable and desirable? Criterion 4.1 can help us answer these questions and find new solutions.

Evidence 4.1: Checklist

Let's get started! Review the Criteria to understand the characteristics of an effective planned recruitment approach. Assess how well your organisation meets the Evidence of the Criteria by ranking your current efforts on a scale from 1 to 5:

"Recruitment and selection of volunteers is guided by the organisation's broader plan for volunteer involvement."

Under Standard 2, your organisation should publicly declare the purpose of its volunteer program and ensure that it's designed to support your foundational goals.

Does your recruitment and selection process reflect this mission? If so, in what ways? Are there documented and applied procedures ensuring that it does?

Start with the bigger picture, and work backwards. Sometimes, our greatest problems can be solved by going back to the basics. Revisit your organisation's volunteer objectives, and adjust your recruitment and selection processes accordingly.

Identify your organisation's needs: VIO managers must thoroughly understand the needs, requirements, and expectations of volunteers. From here, they can ensure that the recruitment process is better aligned with the specific responsibilities, skill sets, and interests needed for those roles.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)

"Targeted methods are used to advertise and communicate volunteer opportunities."

What methods do you use to find volunteers and advertise your open positions? How do you communicate the value and benefits of these opportunities? What measures do you take to attract relevant volunteers? What platforms do you use?

The key to developing an effective recruitment plan is to create *targeted* methods. Identify the interests, knowledge, skills or attributes needed for each role. You can then determine *where* to find such applicants and *how* to communicate with them.

Volunteering Australia recommends that you segment your advertising efforts based on the target candidates for the role. For example, if you're looking to recruit youth in your community, approach your marketing from this perspective; perhaps utilise social media channels and college campus resources while sharing messages that speak to their current needs and goals. Focusing on specific recruitment channels will enable you to meet your potential volunteers where they're at, and to tap into diverse talent pools.

It's important to craft compelling and engaging opportunities for your volunteers. By developing well-written volunteer job descriptions, you can gain the attention of potential candidates in a way that speaks to their hearts, passions, and interests.

Regularly assess the effectiveness of your recruitment and selection efforts to identify areas for improvement. Incorporating feedback from volunteers and staff members can help pinpoint modifications needed to streamline the process and to attract the best candidates possible.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Criteria 4.2
PROVIDING RELEVANT INFORMATION

Keep in mind that the selection decision isn't just up to your organisation - it's also up to the volunteer. Just as you need thorough information about the applicant's background, they need a similar level of information about your organisation, its volunteer program, and the role they're applying for.

Criterion 4.2 outlines multiple strategies to help you equip potential volunteers with the resources needed to make an informed decision.

As Standard 3 taught us, each volunteering opportunity should be clearly defined, with its purpose outlined, its responsibilities articulated, and the impact it will have on the community described. These clarifications will ensure that potential volunteers can find a role that truly aligns with their interests, values, and skills.

"Potential volunteers are provided with relevant information about the organisation, the volunteer role and the recruitment and selection process." – Volunteering Australia.

The same level of transparency should also be applied to the recruitment and selection process. By promoting fairness, knowledge, and diversity, you will create a welcoming atmosphere that encourages a wide range of individuals to share their talents in service to the greater good.

Evidence 4.2: Checklist

Let's equip potential volunteers with the knowledge they need about your organisation, the volunteer role, and the recruitment and selection process. Once again, read through the Evidence and evaluate how well your organisation meets it:

"Information is readily accessible to potential volunteers about the organisation and volunteer roles."

How easily can your applicants access information about the role? What about your organisation and its recruitment process?

Volunteer recruitment managers should be able to share this information and answer questions easily and quickly. For complete transparency, relevant information should be able to be accessed by the volunteer without your involvement. Details about the role, your organisation's recruitment and selection process, and your organisation itself should be included in the volunteer job description and/or email correspondence attached to the role.

Critically, this information should be shared *before* the potential volunteer makes the decision to join your organisation or not.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)

"Details of volunteer roles, organisation expectations of the role, and the recruitment and selection process are provided in print, electronically and/or face-to-face"

How do volunteer applicants find this information? How detailed is it?

For maximum accessibility, make this information available in print, electronically, and face-to-face with potential volunteer recruits. This might look like documenting the details in your online volunteer job listing, providing a printed handout during interviews, and reiterating the points as you discuss the role in person.

This transparency should go beyond the details of the volunteer role and its duties, to also describe:

• What your organisation expects from them in the role;
• How they will be contributing to your cause; and
• How the recruitment and selection process works.

It's best to always let your volunteer applicants know exactly what they can expect as a volunteer for your organisation by clearly and consistently communicating across channels.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

"An identified person is available as a contact for potential volunteers throughout the recruitment and selection process."

After following these steps, potential volunteers should feel clarity and confidence about their decision to join your organisation. However, they may have these further specific questions, which should be answered in order to confirm their choice:

- Has your organisation assigned a point of contact for applicants to answer questions throughout the recruitment and selection process?
- If so, is the applicant aware of who this person is?
- Is their contact information readily available?
- Are they able to respond to questions in a timely manner?

A dedicated individual should be nominated as the liaison for prospective volunteers, providing support and guidance throughout the entire recruitment and selection journey. This approach ensures that all volunteer candidates are treated with care, attention, and respect. This duty of care also sets the tone for the positive and inclusive environment they'll enter once they become a volunteer.

By investing in personalised and effective communication, your organisation can attract, engage, and retain talented and diverse volunteers who share its passion for making a difference.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

"Volunteer applicants are informed of recruitment and selection outcomes and offered feedback, as relevant to the role"

Whether the decision is "yes" or "no," it's crucial to inform your volunteer applicants of the decision to take them on, or not.

Do you have a process for how to accept a volunteer's application? Is it clear what their next steps are for getting started? Creating a baseline process for selecting volunteers can help your organisation to save time and leave a positive first impression on your new recruits.

But what if they aren't fit for the role? Do you have a process for how to reject a volunteer's application? Don't ever "ghost" your applicants! Let them know you've made your decision, to show that you respect their time. You need to have a baseline process for letting applicants know they haven't been accepted for the role, and why.

Provide feedback relevant to the role. For example, there may be a certain skill set needed that the applicant doesn't have. You might let them know this, and inform them of other volunteer opportunities or training available that will enable them to participate and contribute.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Criteria 4.3

FULFILLING AND FAIR SELECTION

Generic roles and job descriptions help no one. When volunteers can find opportunities that complement their interests, knowledge, skills, and attributes, they are more likely to find deep fulfilment in their role. This can inspire them to make the time, commit to, and stay interested in your organisation's cause. When your organisation is able to match specific volunteers with complementary roles, you can access previously unleashed resources, efficiency, and productivity. Their skills and your goals can work in tandem to enable your organisation's vision and values to come to life.

This requires a distinct selection process that recognises each individual's strengths and traits. However, we must remember to be fair, just, and balanced in the process. We should embrace our volunteers' traits, and ensure that we do

> "Volunteers are selected based on interest, knowledge, skills or attributes relevant to the role, and consistent with anti-discrimination legislation" - Volunteering Australia.

not discriminate against them. Above all, the strategic selection process must comply with Australian anti-discrimination laws.

By showcasing your volunteers' individual talents and promoting inclusivity and equality, you can create a fulfilling and fair work environment for everyone.

Evidence 4.3: Checklist

Let's take action! Read through the Evidence for Criterion 4.3 to rate how well your organisation meets the Standards and determine what you need to do to improve:

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"A documented selection process is followed to match volunteer interest, knowledge, skills or attributes with suitable roles."

Do you have a consistent process for selecting volunteers? Is this process documented and referred to when evaluating every applicant? If so, is this process designed to match volunteers with roles that suit their interests, knowledge, skills, and attributes?

Developing and documenting a formal selection process can help streamline management's decisions, by eliminating confusion. It can ensure that you consistently match volunteers with roles that support both their goals, and those of your organisation.

This process can be reflected in your job descriptions, interview questions, and screening process/es. Your job description might include keywords attracting those with certain interests and qualifications, helping to narrow down applicants from the beginning. Your interview questions might ask what they feel most passionate about, what they want out of their volunteer experience, and how much time they're willing to commit to the cause. Ensure you gather volunteers' skills, preferences, and availability in the application process, so that you can match them with the right opportunity. Get to know their "non-negotiables" (the factors that would keep them from being able to volunteer).

From here, your selection and screening processes should take into account the necessary qualifications and responsibilities of each role and where the volunteer's unique attributes can be best recognised.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)

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"Volunteer recruitment and selection complies with anti-discrimination legislation."

The *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* protects volunteers from discrimination in the workplace they're assigned to.

Review the Act to ensure that both your organisation and its recruitment and selection process are compliant. For example, the Act may require that some organisations make "reasonable adjustments" for volunteers with disabilities. These adjustments might include modifying the qualifications for a role, offering accommodations during training, and/or installing a ramp or other resources to make your building more accessible.

While your job descriptions and selection process should attract and screen suitable candidates, they should also simultaneously ensure that they don't disqualify candidates based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, religion, income, disability, or any other traits protected under current anti-discrimination legislation.

Consider conducting a routine audit of your recruitment and selection processes, looking for any verbiage that may discriminate against candidates.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Criteria 4.4
SCREENING PROCESSES

Above all, we want to assure the safety, security, and well-being of everyone throughout your organisation, whether volunteers, employees, clients, or stakeholders.

You should have a screening process in place that enables you to effectively qualify applicants to ensure that they're the appropriate choice for the role.

By documenting and applying this process, you can better comply with legislative requirements, select the best candidates, and protect your organisation.

"Screening processes are applied to volunteer roles that help maintain the safety and security of service users, employees, volunteers and the organisation." – Volunteering Australia.

Evidence 4.4: Checklist

Ready to take action? Explore the Evidence needed for Criterion 4.4 to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your screening process:

"Volunteer screening requirements are documented, applied, and meet legislative requirements."

Do you have a routine screening process for your applicants? Are there consistent qualifications that must be met for each role? Are you aware of and compliant with the current legislation regarding background screening *and* anti-discrimination for volunteers?

Mandatory screening requirements vary throughout Australia's states and territories. Take the time to understand the legislation around volunteer screening in your region. Ensure that the process is documented and applied to every applicant through application forms, interviews, and/or reference checks.

Develop and document a screening policy, and communicate this policy with your volunteers.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)

"Volunteer reference checks are undertaken as appropriate to the role."

Every volunteer role requires a unique set of skills, interests, and attributes. Does your screening process take into account the nuances of each role?

Depending on your region, there may be unique screening requirements for different volunteer roles, including those in board and management committees, aged care settings, NDIS roles, and childcare. Reference checking can enable you to verify the accuracy of their application form and interview answers. Further, it forms a second line of defence, ensuring that you're protecting the well-being of your clients. This is especially important if the volunteer will be working with, or impacting, vulnerable clients.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

"Guidelines are applied to determining the types of convictions or disciplinary actions that preclude people from becoming volunteers, and to informing people about how their personal history may be used for decision making."

What are your "deal breakers"? Does your organisation have set guidelines in place for the types of convictions or disciplinary actions that disqualify a volunteer? Do you have a clear and consistent policy for letting applicants know whether and how their personal history is relevant to, and applied in line with, the selection process?

Ensure that you abide by the Privacy Laws, by obtaining permission to contact an applicant's referees before reaching out to them.

If you cannot conduct a reference check, you may be able to opt for Statutory Declarations and/or Police Checks. You must explain why a Police Check is necessary for the role, should it deemed to be so. Otherwise, you will be at risk of discriminating against the applicant.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Your Recruitment and Selection Standards

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Take a moment to review your Current Rankings of each Criteria and Evidence Checklist. Note any key areas for improvement. These will guide your efforts moving forward.

Use this practice to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses:

- What is your strongest Standard 4 Criterion?

- Which Criterion does your organisation need to improve on the most?

- What actions are easiest to implement?

- What actions are the most challenging to implement?

How to Implement Standard 4 to Strengthen Recruitment and Selection

Where should we start?

Let's continue taking action by exploring Step 5 of Volunteering Australia's 10 Steps to Implementing the National Standards.

Steps 1 to 6 are vital for implementing the National Standards. However, they might not all apply to smaller organisations. Where that's the case, pay close attention: Steps 1, 4, and 5 apply to organisations of all sizes.

Step 5 is to *"Develop the project plan."* In this step, we map out the next steps to effectively manage the project's four main components: *work tasks, time, costs,* and *responsibility.* Use this Step as a basic guideline to incorporate the National Standards into your organisation's volunteer program:

Step 5: Develop the Project Plan

» Task 1: Divide the Project into Tasks.

Plan ahead. Work with your team to write down everything that needs to happen to implement the National Standards. Break these actions down into tasks, and organise them by categories.

» Task 2: Estimate the Time and Costs.

Estimate the amount of time and money needed to complete each task and task group. Be sure to estimate how much time will be required of each member to ensure responsibilities are divided fairly.

Note: You may not have exact answers. That's okay! Instead, you may estimate the range of time and money the task is likely to require. Don't forget that time is money – ensure that you're calculating in the time cost of paid employees working on the project.

» Task 3: Visualise Your Plan.

Once you've completed your estimates, consider organising them into a chart to visualise your results. This helps to identify the easiest and the most challenging tasks. In addition, breaking down the schedule may reveal opportunities for members to work on tasks simultaneously.

The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.