The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

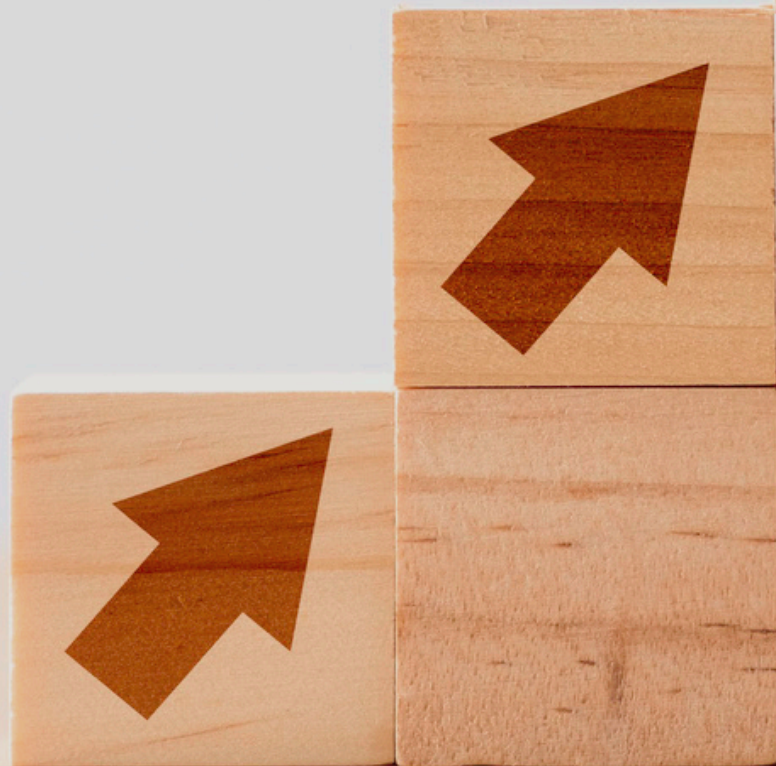Standard 8: Quality Management and Continuous Improvement

Standard 8: Quality Management and Continuous Improvement

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Objective:

To identify Standard 8 Criteria and Evidence, create a system of good practice, review, and improvement for effective volunteer involvement, and implement the policies and procedures to maintain the system.

Standard 8: Quality Management and Continuous Improvement

"The thing is, continuity of strategic direction and continuous improvement in how you do things are absolutely consistent with each other. In fact, they're mutually reinforcing" – Michael Porter.

What is Standard 8?

Volunteering requires a commitment to effective management practices, review, and continuous improvement. Standard 8 ensures that we make this commitment, not just today, but for all the days to come.

Implementing quality management practices enables organisations to monitor and measure the effectiveness of their volunteer involvement. This, in turn, enables organisations to pinpoint areas for improvement, so that volunteer contribution can grow in tandem with the organisation.

Quality management and continuous improvement require establishing the following systems for regularly monitoring and reviewing the:

- Effectiveness of volunteer recruitment and management.
- Positive outcomes of volunteer involvement.
- Efficiency of volunteer time and resources.

Keeping track of your performance in each area can help identify opportunities to optimise these, for both your volunteers' and your organisation's success. It ensures that your organisation implements the policies and procedures that are developed throughout this training. As you meet Standard 8, you will ensure that your organisation continually benefits from, and complies with, the National Standards.

In short? Standard 8 encourages us to create a system for continually reviewing and improving volunteer involvement.

Standard 8 Criteria

Volunteering Australia prescribes four Criteria that measure the level of quality management

and continuous improvement an organisation dedicates to volunteer involvement. These are:

1. Effective Implementation of Policies & Procedures.
2. Regular Review of Volunteer Involvement Frameworks.
3. Reporting of the Organisation's Volunteer Commitment.
4. Volunteer Feedback.

Why is Standard 8 So Important?

Standard 8 ties the National Standards together. It measures and validates the effectiveness of new policies and procedures. Doing so will inspire you to continually grow and improve your volunteer programs. This will, in turn, keep your organisation up-to-date, flexible, and innovative.

By meeting Standard 8, your organisation will be following best practices in developing policies and procedures that ensure consistent and effective volunteer involvement. Evaluating the performance of your volunteer program over time will help you to focus on the bigger picture, and make decisions that support your organisation's overarching goals. You can engage in processes that:

- Identify opportunities for improvement.
- Implement changes.
- Achieve ongoing positive progress towards your organisational goals.

The benefits of effective volunteer involvement go beyond your volunteers' immediate tasks. They include:

- Building a community of committed advocates for your organisation.
- Expanding your organisational network.
- Enabling your organisation to achieve its goals more efficiently.

By continually investing in the success of your volunteers, you can create both tangible and unseen benefits that will propel both your organisation's purpose, and its success.

In the end? Standard 8 empowers us to achieve long-term growth rather than short-term success.

Criteria 8.1

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Any plan's success depends on how well it's implemented. It's one thing to draft policies and procedures, but it's quite another thing to implement them… Here, we want to "walk the walk," not just "talk the talk."

You can implement your new policies and procedures smoothly and effectively with the right management systems. Once you do, all employees and volunteers should be fully aware of and understand them. Indeed, your organisation should understand that implementing these policies is not a one-time event, and that – for lasting success – they need to be regularly reviewed and improved upon.

"Policies and procedures are implemented to effectively guide all aspects of volunteer involvement." – Volunteering Australia.

By following these steps, you can implement effective and comprehensive policies and procedures that root your volunteer involvement practice in success. By regularly reviewing, improving and communicating these policies and procedures to all employees and volunteers, you can create a positive and impactful environment for everyone.
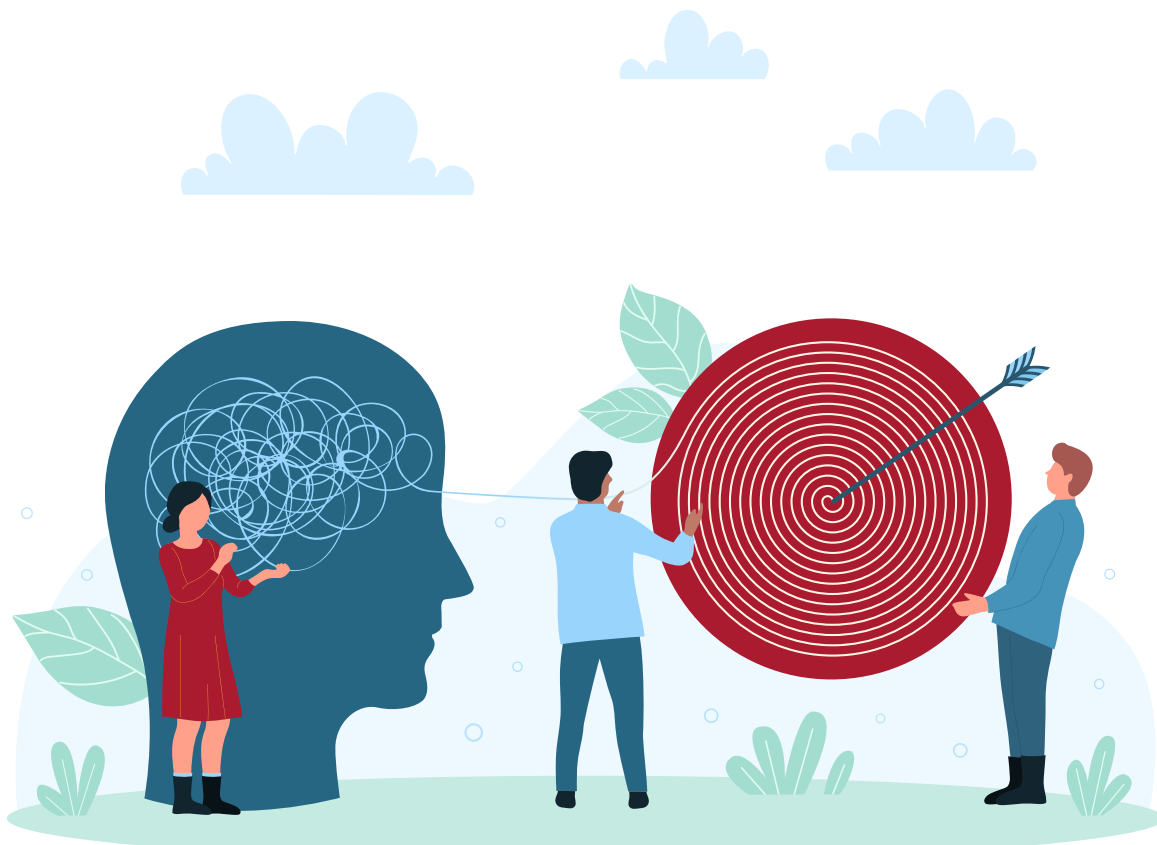
Evidence 8.1: Checklist

Let's begin! We'll start by assessing how well your organisation currently meets each Criterion by looking for the right evidence. Consider using the scale to rank your organisation's current quality management and continuous improvement efforts on a scale from 1 – 5.

Use the Current Ranking Scale to identify any areas that need improvement:

"Volunteer involvement strategies, policies and procedures are informed by current best practice and meet legislative requirements"

Are your volunteer involvement policies and procedures compliant with the National Standards? Do they meet legal requirements based on your region, industry, or unique volunteer work?

Make sure your new strategies are quality and compliant before you begin implementing them. It's important to have clear volunteer involvement strategies, policies, and procedures up-to-date with current laws, regulations, and principles.

Work with your team to review legal requirements and best practices for your specific organisation.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

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

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"The organisation's policies and procedures effectively guide volunteer involvement practice."

Do your policies and procedures provide enough guidance for volunteer involvement? Do your volunteers and volunteer managers follow these standards? How do you ensure these standards guide their everyday actions? How often do they refer to these standards?

You should have sufficient policies and procedures in place to guide volunteers and volunteer managers to meet the National Standards. According to Volunteering Australia, these policies and procedures should provide guidelines for areas such as:

- Leadership and management responsibilities.
- Volunteer involvement.
- Recruiting and selecting.
- Support and development.
- Work and the workplace.
- Transitioning, exiting, and re-engaging volunteers.
- Volunteer recognition.
- Continuous improvement.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Evidence 8.1: Checklist

"All employees and volunteers are made aware of and understand policies and procedures relating to volunteer involvement"

Are all of your employees and volunteers aware of your volunteer policies and procedures? How do you ensure that they're not only aware of, but actually *understand,* them? How often do you train and remind them?

Don't leave this up to chance! Simply having these policies and procedures isn't beneficial, unless they are actively implemented. This can be achieved through regular training sessions, online modules, or regular meetings to keep everyone up-to-date. It's crucial to ensure that everyone receives this training and guidance.

Keep the conversation open. Regularly discuss and enforce these policies. Reiterate that management is always open to answering questions that help employees and volunteers better understand what they are and why they're important.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

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

"Volunteer involvement policies and procedures are reviewed and improved on a regular schedule."

Do you review your volunteer involvement policies and procedures? Do you take action to adapt and improve them when possible? How often do you review and improve them?

Regularly reassessing your strategies ensures that they stay relevant and meet the changing needs of your organisation. Be consistent: Establish a schedule for reviewing these policies, whether biannually, annually, or any regular schedule that works for your organisation.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

"Processes are in place for identifying, implementing and communicating required changes to volunteer involvement policies and procedures"

Do you have a strategy for identifying any necessary changes to your volunteer policies and procedures? Do you have a plan for implementing new changes? How do you approach or plan to communicate these changes?

When it's time to change and pivot, you should have processes to identify, implement, and communicate any required changes. Regular reviews of your strategies will be most beneficial when you have effective processes in place to not only identify areas of improvement, but also to implement helpful changes.

Make sure that all employees and volunteers are aware of the latest developments. Clear communication can increase their confidence and compliance with the new standards. Employees and volunteers represent your organisation. Equipping them with appropriate training and resources on any changes can help your organisation avoid potential legal and compliance issues.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Criteria 8.2

REGULAR REVIEW OF VOLUNTEER INVOLVEMENT FREMEWORKS

Implementing the National Standards is a continual effort. By regularly reviewing your organisation's volunteer involvement within the context of the Standards, you can ensure that your volunteers contribute to the cause, commit to your organisation, and gain valuable skills and experiences.

How, then, do you keep your volunteer program effective? How can you know when and what to improve?

When reviewing your frameworks, don't forget one of your greatest organisational superpowers: *Data.*

Quantitative and qualitative data can streamline the process as you monitor, review, and improve your volunteer management systems. Quantitative data can help you stay effective and efficient, making the most of your volunteers' time, energy, and resources.

> "Volunteer involvement is regularly reviewed in line with the organisation's evaluation and quality management frameworks." – Volunteering Australia.

Qualitative data can humanise your strategy, helping you listen to and apply volunteer feedback.

As you do so, you can provide volunteers with opportunities to develop their skills, contribute to your mission, and make a difference in their community. By continuously evaluating and improving your volunteer program, you can create meaningful experiences for your volunteers while achieving your organisational goals — it's a win-win situation!

Evidence 8.2: Checklist

Let's take action! Think about how management can regularly review volunteer involvement to keep it aligned with your policies, procedures, and the National Standards. Evaluate your efforts based on the Criteria and Evidence provided by Volunteering Australia:

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"Quantitative and qualitative performance data is used to monitor, review and improve the organisation's volunteer management systems, effectiveness of volunteer contribution, and impact on outcomes"

Do you gather quantitative and qualitative data to keep track of volunteer performance? How do you gather this data? Do you use this data to improve your volunteer management systems? Do you apply this data to increase positive outcomes of volunteer work?

Establish systems to continually measure the positive impact of volunteer involvement. This includes examining: how effectively volunteer resources are being utilised; how volunteers contribute to your objectives and outcomes; and potential areas for growth.

Set key performance indicators such as volunteer retention, engagement, and positive feedback. Use this information to make informed decisions about the improvements you need to make.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

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

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"Feedback from volunteers, employees, and other stakeholders is used to inform improvements to volunteer involvement."

Do you gather feedback from volunteers on how to improve the volunteer program? Do you seek feedback from employees and other stakeholders? If so, do you directly apply feedback when reviewing and improving your volunteer program?

Seek volunteer involvement feedback across your organisation. If you send out surveys, consider adding questions about how to improve your volunteer program.

By listening to your volunteers' thoughts, experiences, and perspectives, you can make evidence-based decisions that improve the quality of your volunteer outcomes.

Above all, ensure that you apply this feedback when regularly reviewing your volunteer management frameworks. Feedback should be a key guidepost for your decision-making.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Criteria 8.3

REPORTING OF ORGANISATION'S VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

Data is one of your greatest assets, especially when it comes to volunteer involvement.

Track and report on performance throughout your organisation, from your governing body and employees, to your volunteers and stakeholders. Harness your quantitative and qualitative data to identify, collect, and analyse how well your volunteers' performance is contributing to your purpose.

Share targeted reports on volunteer involvement performance to all stakeholders on a regular schedule. This means that everyone is kept in the loop on your progress and successes, ensuring that you can continue to make a real difference in your community.

> "The organisation's performance with volunteer involvement is monitored and reported to the governing body, employees, volunteers, and stakeholders"
>
> - Volunteering Australia.

Evidence 8.3: Checklist

Review your organisation's current performance reporting processes, and ascertain what is available to your stakeholders. Prioritise your next steps forward by evaluating each of the following principles, as defined by Volunteering Australia:
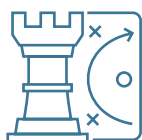
"Quantitative and qualitative performance data relating to the organisation's volunteer involvement objectives are identified, collected, and analysed."

Do you have clear volunteer involvement objectives? Do you gather quantitative and qualitative data to measure your progress in reaching these objectives? How do you analyse this data?

Your data should be focused and strategic. Ask your team: How can we know if our volunteer involvement objectives are met? Pinpoint your "key performance indicators." Identify what outcomes indicate progress or achievement of your goals. Analyse your data to look for these outcomes!

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)
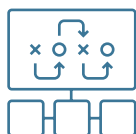
"Performance data is used to regularly evaluate the organisation's volunteer involvement."

Do you regularly use this performance data to measure the effectiveness of your volunteer program? How do you apply this data to identify your volunteer strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats? How often do you evaluate your organisation's volunteer involvement?

Regularly assessing volunteer performance data can help to optimise your efforts: By knowing what works (and what doesn't), you can make the most of your volunteer involvement.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

"Targeted reports on the organisation's volunteer involvement performance are communicated to the governing body, employees, volunteers, and stakeholders on a regular schedule."

Do you turn performance data into shareable reports? Do you create targeted reports specifically for volunteer involvement performance? If so, do you share these reports with all stakeholders consistently?

Identify volunteer performance data most relevant to your stakeholders. Use this data to create targeted reports for distribution. Establish a regular schedule for sharing these insights across your organisation.

In the end, transparency always pays off. Communicate your progress to keep all members motivated, valued, and connected to your mission.

Bonus: You can also use this positive data to recognise volunteers, praise their contributions, and reward their hard work!

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Criteria 8.4

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

Open communication is the key to fostering positive, supportive relationships with your volunteers.

Involve them in the journey to improve your volunteer program. They offer a unique perspective you simply can't find on your own. Make them your partners in continuous improvement!

Make it a point to regularly seek volunteer feedback and input about their experiences. Every volunteer communicates differently, so be sure to use various methods to gather their insights.

"Opportunities are available for volunteers to provide feedback on the organisation's volunteer involvement and relevant areas of the organisation's work."
– Volunteering Australia.

Provide your volunteers with opportunities to contribute to your organisation's review and development. Reward them for speaking up and sharing their ideas! This will contribute to your volunteer program running smoothly, increase volunteer retention, and create a positive volunteer culture.

Evidence 8.4: Checklist

We're onto our final Evidence Checklist! Review the following Evidence for Criterion 8.4, as provided by Volunteering Australia. Assess what your organisation is doing well and how it might improve:

"Feedback and input from volunteers about their experience as volunteers is regularly sought."

How often do you seek feedback from your volunteers about their experiences? How do you stay consistent in these efforts?

The continual improvement of your volunteer program relies on your commitment to seeking feedback. Without feedback, you cannot truly measure and improve your volunteers' experience.

Create systems and schedules to regularly seek feedback from volunteers.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

(1 = Absent/Needs Improvement > 5 = Fully Implemented/Compliant)
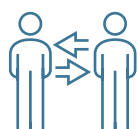
"A range of methods is used to gain volunteer feedback, appropriate to volunteers and their roles."

Do you seek feedback in various ways? Are these methods relevant to the volunteers and their roles?

Feedback is subjective. One volunteer's answer to the same question might vary simply depending on where, when, or how you ask them. Improve the quality of your data by creating a range of feedback methods. For example:

• Consider creating anonymous and identified feedback methods to allow volunteers to share their views without fear of retaliation.

• Gather feedback virtually and in-person. Email surveys and on-site interviews can offer unique insights.

• Give your volunteers a choice. Always let them know they can opt in or out of giving feedback, and assure them that they can share their thoughts with you anytime.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

"Volunteers are provided opportunities to contribute to the review and development of the organisation."

When seeking volunteer feedback, do you give them an opportunity to share their ideas and opinions on your organisation as a whole?

Volunteers are stakeholders of your organisation. Their perspective is valuable, not only to the success of your volunteer program but to the success of your organisation as a whole. Include questions in your feedback surveys that invite them to contribute to the overall improvement of your organisation.

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

Evidence 8.4: Checklist

"Data is collected, analysed and used to evaluate volunteer role satisfaction. "

Do you seek feedback to measure how happy volunteers are with their roles? How do you collect this feedback? How do you analyse and apply this feedback to improve volunteer satisfaction?

Supported volunteers are satisfied volunteers — and satisfied volunteers keep coming back! However, in order to support your volunteers, you must obtain meaningful feedback about their experience and satisfaction levels. Offer anonymous feedback methods to enable your volunteers to share how satisfied they are in their role, and what you can do to improve their experience.

You can directly apply these insights and better support your volunteers' unique needs from here!

Current Ranking: 1   2   3   4   5

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

Assessing Your Quality Management and Continuous Standards

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Review the Current Rankings of each Criteria and Evidence Checklist. Can you identify your strongest and weakest areas? Prioritise your efforts, starting with Criteria 8.1 and work your way forward.

Use this practice to help evaluate your organisational strengths and weaknesses:

- **What is your strongest Standard 8 Criterion?**

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

- **What actions are easiest to implement?**

- **What actions are the most challenging to implement?**

How to Implement Standard 8 to Continuously Improve Your Efforts

So, what's next?

Let's complete Volunteering Australia's 10 Steps to Implementing the National Standards. Step 9 is to "*Implement the policies and procedures*," and Step 10 is to "*Maintain the system.*"

Steps 9 and 10 are optional to meet the National Standards. However, they are especially helpful for organisations that need guidance on Implementing the Standards, who need to obtain the approval and support of all stakeholders, and for creating processes for ongoing improvement and maintenance.

Use each Task as a helpful starting point for your efforts, feeling free to adjust the Tasks to meet the needs and goals of your organisation.

Step 9: Implement the Policies and Procedures

Task 1: Create a Release & Implementation Plan.

Work with your team to determine a plan and timeline for:

1. Releasing your documented policies and procedures.

2. Implementing your policies and procedures.

Task 2: Circulate the Policies and Procedures.

Share your policy and procedure documents on a "need-to-know" basis. Set a start date for when the new policies will be active. Include this start date in your documents to help your volunteers to stay compliant.

Keep track of who you've distributed the documents to.

• Establish separate distribution lists if you produce two sets of documents, such as a manual and an information kit. This will help to ensure that every member receives the appropriate information.

• Consider including a column for each document's number when creating these distribution lists. This way, you can easily keep track of each document and where it has been distributed.

Task 3: Conduct Briefing Sessions.

Ensure that everyone is in the know! Set up briefing sessions to train all relevant members on the new policies and procedures. Start at the top with management and work your way to volunteers.

Make sure you can conduct these sessions before your formal start date.

Task 4: Feedback and Review.

Congrats! You've implemented your new policies and procedures. Let's check on your progress. After 2-3 weeks, send out a form to gather feedback from stakeholders. Seek their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the new policies and procedures.

Note: It's important to quickly correct any mistakes. If members aren't following the new policies and procedures, follow your set processes to correct the behaviour. If you don't, getting stakeholders to treat the new standards seriously might be difficult.

Task 5: Team Evaluation.

Meet as a team to assess the outcomes thus far, and ascertain what you can do to continually improve them.

How to Implement Standard 8 to Continuously Improve Your Efforts

Step 10: Maintain the System

Task 1: Bring Your Project to a Close.

You did it! Congratulate your team for their hard work. Close the project, and thank your team for their dedication.

Put together a final report to share with leadership. Include:

• The names of each team member.

• Their specific contributions.

• Any outcomes and goals achieved.

Task 2: Assign a Maintenance Leader.

Work with your leadership team to assign a team member to continually manage and maintain the volunteer management system. Depending on the size of your organisation, this might be assigned to a full-time volunteer manager.

Update the job description of the maintenance leader to clarify their new responsibilities.

Task 3: Consider Creating a Standards Maintenance Team.

If your organisation is large, consider turning your current team into a standards maintenance team! Determine how often the team should meet, aside from an "as-needed" basis.

Task 4: Develop a Risk Management Plan.

Identify current and potential risks your volunteer program faces in meeting the National Standards. Assess each risk's probability and severity. From here, create a plan to both prevent and resolve these risks as they occur.

Document this plan, and keep track of any risks that may arise. Write down what happened, how it happened, how you resolved it, and what you can do to prevent it from happening again.

Task 5: Audit Your Management System.

Schedule regular check-ins to assess how well your volunteer management system meets the National Standards. Find a third-party or independent qualified professional to conduct the audit to prevent bias.

Task 6: Celebrate Your Progress!

Recognise your Maintenance Leader, Maintenance Team, volunteers, employees, and stakeholders as they meet the National Standards. Set milestones to celebrate along the way.

Resources

- **National Standards for Volunteer Involvement - Document**

  https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Standards-Document-FINAL-3004.pdf

- **Implementing the National Standards - Guide And Workbook**

  https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/implementing-the-national-standards/

- **Advancing Your Personal Leadership, One Step At A Time**

  https://www.workforgood.org/article/advancing-your-personal-leadership-one-step-at-a-time

- **Assess and Manage Risk**

  https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/protect-your-business/risk-management/prepare-a-risk-management-plan

- **Peter F. Drucker Quote**

  https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/452830-unless-commitment-is-made-there-are-only-promises-and-hopes

- **Volunteering In Australia 2022 - The Organisation Perspective**

  https://volunteeringstrategy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Volunteering-in-Australia-2022-The-Organisation-Perspective.pdf

- **Commitment to Volunteer Involvement**

  https://volunteeringhub.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Commitment%20to%20Volunteer%20Involvement.pdf

- **Volunteer Hub - Quotes That Have The Power To Inspire Volunteers**

  https://www.volunteerhub.com/blog/quotes-inspire-volunteers/

- **Sample Volunteer Job Description**

  https://www.iwu.edu/action/officeassistantvolunteer.pdf

- **Fair Work Legislation**

  https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/legislation

- **Volunteer Rights & Volunteer Checklist**

  https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/wp-content/files_mf/1376971192VAVolunteerRightsandchecklist.pdf

- **When is a Volunteer not a Volunteer?**

  https://mcdonaldmurholme.com.au/when-is-a-volunteer-not-a-volunteer/

- **Australia: Volunteer workplace rights and obligations**

  https://www.mondaq.com/australia/employee-rights-labour-relations/1291688/volunteer-workplace-rights-and-obligations

- **Volunteer Workplace Rights And Obligations**

  https://www.volunteerhub.com/blog/40-volunteer-statistics/

- **Inspirational Quotes for Recruiters**

  https://hireforhope.com/inspirational-quotes-for-recruiters/

- **National Standards for Volunteer Involvement gap analysis**

  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/nationalstandardsvolunteering

Resources

- 19 Volunteering Statistics Your Nonprofit Team Should Study

  https://blog.goldenvolunteer.com/volunteering-statistics/
- Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

  https://www.humanrights.vic.gov.au/for-individuals/volunteering/
- Volunteer Matching: Finding the Right Role for Every Volunteer

  https://tobijohnson.com/volunteer-matching-finding-right-role/
- Background Screening For Volunteers

  https://www.volunteeringwa.org.au/assets/factsheets/background-screening-for-volunteers-may-2021.pdf
- 21 Inspirational Employee Engagement Quotes from Business Leaders

  https://blog.kainexus.com/employee-engagement/inspirational-quotes
- Employee Training Statistics: Cost of Progress in 2023

  https://teamstage.io/training-statistics/
- Majority of workers who quit a job in 2021

  https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/03/09/majority-of-workers-who-quit-a-job-in-2021-cite-low-pay-no-opportunities-for-advancement-feeling-disrespected/
- Best Workplace Safety Quotes From Inspirational Figures

  https://blog.vantagecircle.com/workplace-safety-quotes/
- WHS duties for volunteer organisations

  https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/managing-health-and-safety/volunteers/whs-duties
- The Essential Guide to Work Health and Safety for Volunteers

  https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1703/volunteers_guide.pdf
- Work health and safety for volunteer organisations

  https://www.dmirs.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/atoms/files/211103_gl_whsvolunteer.pdf
- Key work health and safety statistics Australia 2022

  https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/key-work-health-and-safety-statistics-australia-2022
- Top 10 Quotes about Rewards and Recognition

  https://blog.awardsnetwork.com/top-10-quotes-rewards-recognition
- 18 Employee Recognition Statistics You Need to Know in 2023

  https://www.workhuman.com/blog/employee-recognition-statistics/
- Employee Rewards and Recognition for Multi-cultural Workforce

  https://www.hifives.in/employee-recognition-and-rewards-that-work-best-for-a-multi-cultural-workforce/
- 25 Inspirational Business Process Improvement Quotes

  https://www.teamguru.com/blog/25-inspirational-business-process-improvement-quotes/1632

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.