Training Manual

RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS FROM DIVERSE CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS

For trainers and organisations wanting to increase the cultural diversity of their volunteer programs

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volunteering australia

The *Training Manual for Recruiting and Supporting Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* has been designed to enable trainers to deliver customised training to managers and others within volunteer-involving organisations which will help them to

↗ lay the groundwork for recruiting new volunteers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds

↗ develop an inclusive organisational culture and culturally sensitive practices

↗ successfully recruit and retain volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The Manual consists of an introductory section for trainers (Trainer's Preparation) and four training modules:

1. Planning

2. Recruitment

3. Welcoming & Orienting Volunteers

4. Supporting Volunteers

Trainers are encouraged to customise and add to the material to meet the needs of each client organisation. The Trainer's Preparation section has been developed to help them work with organisations to do this, and also to market the training and its benefits.

Ico Najovski has been a volunteer broadcaster on the Macedonian program at 3ZZZ for 15 years, and has been volunteering in the community for 21 years.

trainer's preparation

MARKETING THE CONCEPT TO CLIENT ORGANISATIONS

Organisations which have relatively few volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds may not initially see this as something they need to take action to change – many organisations responding to the National Survey in 2005[1] said that they did not actively recruit from culturally and linguistically diverse communities but that 'their doors were always open' to all volunteers.

Before you develop a training program, you may need to generate interest amongst volunteer agencies in the concept of recruiting volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds, and you need to ensure that the volunteer agencies you work with see the training program you are going to be delivering as an interesting initiative that will build competence and capacity within the organisation. You want them to sign up!

This section provides a number of strategies and ideas on how to approach the promotion of the training program you will be offering to organisations in your area, it provides ways of making the training relevant, feasible – with respect to time and intellectual commitment – and of benefit to volunteering agencies and volunteer-involving organisations in your state/territory.

You are most likely to find opportunities to promote the training in environments and situations where coordinators and managers of volunteers meet and exchange information – network meetings, professional association newsletters, volunteering and not-for-profit sector conferences, information sessions…You may decide to use a few different approaches; perhaps a written piece for a newsletter or brochure as well as a verbal presentation.

The information in this module can be adapted for written or verbal presentation.

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[1] Australian Multicultural Foundations and Volunteering Australia (2007) *National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds*, Melbourne.

Photo courtesy of Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (www.cmyi.net.au). Young Leaders of Today Leadership Training.

Key Action 1

Securing the organisation's interest in and support for the training

Why?

Before organisations sign up to attend the training, they will want to know about the benefits of involving more volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Research findings

In the recent *National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds*[2] co-ordinators/managers of volunteers identified the following benefits of involving volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds:

↗ these volunteers bring potentially useful knowledge of specific cultures;

↗ they connect the mainstream organisation with their home communities;

↗ they speak (and may write in) one or more languages besides English;

↗ they increase the cultural sensitivity of the organisation's service provision;

↗ they bring new perspectives to the organisation;

↗ they bring new and varied life experiences which add to staff and other volunteers' knowledge;

↗ their involvement promotes mutual respect and understanding/tolerance and works against racism and ignorance in the community;

↗ their involvement increases their own understanding of mainstream Australian society, which is also of benefit to the wider community.

A recent Canadian study[3] found that involving young people from culturally diverse backgrounds as volunteers would benefit organisations in the following four ways:

↗ improvement of organisational and staff cultural competence;

↗ increased support from diverse communities;

↗ enrichment of the organisation's programs; and

↗ a pool of qualified candidates for future staff positions.

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[2] Australian Multicultural Foundation & Volunteering Australia (in press), *National Survey of Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds*, Melbourne: Volunteering Australia

[3] Calgary Immigrant Aid Society, 2005, *Culturally Diverse Youth and Volunteerism*, Ottawa: Volunteer Canada

An effective selling strategy is to provide evidence of the practical outcomes that prospective participants can expect.

A UK study in 1997[4] identified a broader range of benefits – to individuals, organisations and the community – from working with volunteers from a range of cultural and language backgrounds, including:

↗ empowerment of individuals;

↗ skills sharing, both within and outside the organisation;

↗ mentoring/sharing life experiences;

↗ informing and educating others;

↗ advocacy;

↗ (introducing or strengthening) anti-discriminatory practices;

↗ identity retention;

↗ networking.

An effective selling strategy is to provide evidence of the practical outcomes that prospective participants can expect. There are some simple but effective ways to illustrate the benefits of having a culturally diverse volunteer workforce and of managing it well:

↗ Include testimonials from organisations which already have a culturally diverse volunteer program.

↗ Include volunteer success stories.

↗ Provide examples of projects or initiatives made possible only through the involvement of volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds. (Many examples are to be found in the following modules. Why not print some to distribute?)

↗ Highlight the relevance of the training program to managers' existing positions and work roles so that it does not appear to be another additional burden to already busy professional lives.

↗ Highlight how the training program can help managers of volunteers to meet the National Standards and achieve 'best practice' in their volunteer program. (See following section **About the National Standards** for more information.)

The *Step into Voluntary Work* program[5] requires participants to go back to their organisations and implement the strategies they have developed during the training. This has been highly valued by managers of volunteers and is also used by them as a way of obtaining support from their supervisors.

You can also research and demonstrate the links between the training program and existing accredited training packages, placing the training program in the overall context of professional training and development of staff and the development of volunteers' skills and qualifications.

[4] National Centre for Volunteering, 1997, *My Time, My Community, Myself*, London: National Centre for Volunteering.

[5] An accredited training course for women from CALD backgrounds to introduce them to the concept of 'volunteering' within the Australian context, and to bring greater cultural diversity into the sector. Delivered by Australian Multicultural Foundation and Judith Miralles & Associates, see <http://www.jm-a.com.au/facilitation.htm#fac1>

What are some approaches that will assist you to generally publicise the training program and its benefits? As with anything we do, it is important to set realistic (not the same as overly modest) goals. Positive word-of-mouth is recognised as one of the most effective advertisements.

↗ Try to promote the program through your professional networks.

↗ Register to deliver a paper or workshop at relevant professional conferences.

↗ Become a role model and advocate for a culturally diverse volunteer sector. Work to include volunteers from diverse backgrounds within your own organisation so others can see the benefits.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL STANDARDS

The *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations* set eight standards for a 'best practice' approach to managing volunteers.

Volunteering Australia recommends that all volunteer-involving organisations familiarise themselves with the National Standards and aim for best practice in their programs as much as possible. The National Standards, together with an Implementation Guide and Workbook, are available from Volunteering Australia by visiting www.volunteeringaustralia.org or calling (03) 9820 4100.

Standard	Application to a culturally diverse volunteer program
1. Policies and procedures *An organisation that involves volunteers shall define and document its policies and procedures for volunteer involvement and ensure that these are understood, implemented and maintained at all levels of the organisation where volunteers are involved.*	Strategies relating to volunteers of diverse cultural and language backgrounds should be built into an organisation's policies and strategic plans. It is important to incorporate diversity into organisational documents so it becomes an accepted part of organisational culture and practice.
2. Management responsibility *An organisation that involves volunteers shall ensure that volunteers are managed within a defined system and by capable personnel with the authority and resources to achieve the organisation's policy goals.*	Proper management of volunteers is an essential component of any effective volunteer program. Equipping staff with the knowledge and capability (for example, through training) to manage volunteers of diverse cultural backgrounds and giving them access to specialist resources will ensure that volunteers are sufficiently supported in their work.
3. Recruitment and selection *An organisation that involves volunteers shall plan and have clearly documented volunteer recruitment, selection and orientation policies and procedures that are consistent with non-discriminatory practices and guidelines.*	Managers of volunteers have rated recruitment as the most pressing concern (*National Survey of Volunteering Issues*, 2005, Volunteering Australia). People who want to volunteer with an organisation need to understand what the organisation is looking for and what is involved in its recruitment and selection. They also need to feel confident that these processes will be fair and non-discriminatory. This is particularly important for volunteers from diverse cultural or language backgrounds.
4. Work and the workplace *An organisation that involves volunteers shall clearly specify and control the work of volunteers and ensure that their place of work is conducive to preserving their health, safety and wellbeing.*	Organisations have a duty of care to their staff and legislated responsibilities for their health, safety and wellbeing. When a volunteer program involves people with basic or limited English and perhaps limited exposure to Australian workplace practices, then clear and effective communication about roles, responsibilities and procedures becomes an essential part of good risk management. Also, a workplace where volunteers' needs are considered and respected is conducive to a good working environment and to staff wellbeing. When people from a range of cultural and language backgrounds are involved, this becomes even more important because they may have a range of specific and differing needs.

Standard	Application to a culturally diverse volunteer program
5. Training and development *An organisation that involves volunteers shall ensure that volunteers obtain the knowledge, skills, feedback on work and the recognition needed to effectively carry out their responsibilities.*	Training and development are key components of any effective volunteer program. Like other volunteers, volunteers of diverse cultural backgrounds need proper induction and training to be able to perform their roles well. Induction and training programs for volunteers of diverse cultural backgrounds will need careful planning so they are able to meet the specific needs of people from those backgrounds.
6. Service delivery *An organisation that involves volunteers shall ensure that appropriate processes and procedures are established and followed for effective planning, control, and review of all activities relating to the delivery of services by volunteers.*	One of the key benefits of involving people of diverse cultural backgrounds in a volunteering program is the improvement it can bring to service delivery. It makes sense, then, to monitor and evaluate their work to see whether this benefit is being realised. Proper planning, control and review of service delivery performed by volunteers will help make the best use of their time and skills.
7. Documentation and records *An organisation that involves volunteers shall establish a system and have defined procedures to control all documentation and personnel records that relate to the management of volunteers.*	Recording and documenting volunteers and their activities will assist with review and evaluation of a volunteer program, and lead towards improvement. Maintaining records on volunteers of diverse cultural backgrounds can also contribute information towards a valuable cultural knowledge base.
8. Continuous improvement *An organisation that involves volunteers shall plan and continually review its volunteer management system to ensure that opportunities to improve the quality of the system are identified and actively pursued.*	Continuous improvement of the volunteer program is essential to you maintaining best practice standards. Regular reviews and updates of the volunteer program will help identify strengths and weaknesses and tailor the program accordingly. As the organisation learns more about new volunteers and their cultures, this information can be used to strengthen and improve procedures.

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Key Action 2

Identify specific needs of audience/client

Why?

Identifying the capacity of the organisation to absorb and support new volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds and scoping the range of activities involving volunteers will enable you to design the training so it takes into account the workplace reality of managers of volunteers.

How?

What factors need to be considered? What do you know? What do you need to know? Things you need to look at include:

↗ the current level of cross-cultural awareness amongst volunteer coordinators;

↗ the number of people from culturally diverse backgrounds already working as volunteers (they may become valuable role models or champions);

↗ the type of tasks/ activities available to volunteers and thus the type of skills required; and

↗ how volunteers are inducted and trained for their roles.

This information will not only help you to promote the training, but will also be vital once you begin to develop the training program and materials and will determine the complexity and length of the program you offer.

The questionnaire which follows can be distributed to possible participants within the organisation. You can also adapt it If you have some pre-existing knowledge of the issues that will be raised by the audience you are addressing.

Answers to the questionnaire will help you design the training. Equally valuable is the anecdotal information you will collect as you begin the process of promoting the training. By arranging your information sessions so that there is ample time to ask questions and interact with the audience, you will become aware of the level of interest, reservations, resource implications etc.

Questionnaire for intending participants

Your answers to this questionnaire will help determine the type of training program of most benefit to you.
You may wish to take this away with you and consider these questions back at your workplace.
Responses should be emailed to the address below.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Organisation: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Gender: ☐ F   ☐ M   Age: _____

1. Have you recruited volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds in this job or previous jobs? ☐ No ☐ Yes

   If Yes, please describe briefly. _____

*If you answered **Yes to Question 1**:*

2. What areas do you think are fundamental to good practice in recruiting and supporting volunteers from diverse backgrounds?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Are there any areas or topics that you would like to find out more about?

   _____

   _____

*If you answered **No** to **Question 1**:*   **Rating Scale:** 1 = lowest: e.g. not at all/very poor 5 = highest: e.g. very/excellent

4. How experienced are you in working with diverse cultures? ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. How would you rate your current level of knowledge about:

a) recruiting volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

b) managing and supporting volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

6. How confident are you to recruit and manage volunteers from different cultures? ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Your answers to the following questions will help us to better plan our training program.

7. What information would address the knowledge gaps you have identified? _____

8. What would help you feel more confident? _____

9. What activities do volunteers in your organisation perform? _____

10. Would volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds perform the same activities? _____

11. If no, what type of activities would be available to them? _____

10. How does your organisation currently induct and train new volunteers? _____

   _____

11. The training comprises four modules – planning, recruitment, welcome/orientation and support.

   What delivery format would suit you best?

Full program	**Part program (indicate which topics)**
Three full consecutive days	Planning
Three full days over three weeks	Recruitment
	Welcome/orientation
	Support

Email to: _____

After doing your initial research with the organisation it is important to present very clear information about the content and the outcomes of the training program.

Key Action 3

Presenting the program, objectives and outcomes

Why?

It is a lot easier to sell a product to someone if s/he can instantly see it meets her/his needs. After doing your initial research with the organisation it is important to present very clear information about the content and the outcomes of the training program.

How?

The final step is to develop a clear program outline that is customised to reflect the needs and organisational capacity you have identified. There will be basic principles that will weave their way through all training programs, but organisations in specific locations or managers of volunteers in specific sectors e.g. hospitals, may have particular needs you identify. Thus the program you offer may be quite different each time around.

Use the information you have collected from the questionnaires and preliminary discussions with the organisation to highlight in your presentation the ways in which the training program will

a) actively help the organisation

↗ to become more inclusive; _____

↗ to recruit more easily within its catchment; _____

↗ to retain existing volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds; _____

↗ to service its users and clients more easily and cost-effectively; _____

↗ to increase cross-cultural skills and knowledge of its paid staff and volunteers; and _____

b) will support managers of volunteers generally in their management of a culturally diverse workforce.

Trainer's checklist

When preparing your presentation you can use the following checklist to see that you have covered the main promotional points.

Checklist: Have I covered all these areas?
Secure organisation's interest in and support for training
Have I
↗ included testimonials from organisations with existing volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds?
↗ included volunteer success stories?
↗ provided examples of projects / initiatives made possible only through the involvement of volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds?
↗ used the experience of my own organisation in this area to show benefits?
↗ highlighted the relevance of the training program to managers' existing positions and work roles?
↗ demonstrated the links between the training program and existing accredited training packages?
Identify specific needs of audience in relation to recruitment of volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds
Do I know
↗ the level of cross-cultural awareness amongst volunteer coordinators?
↗ the number of people from culturally diverse backgrounds already working as volunteers?
↗ the type of tasks/ activities available to volunteers and the type of skills required?
↗ the type of orientation/induction and training that new volunteers are given?
↗ what type of training program people wish to attend?
Present program, objectives and outcomes
Can I show how the training will help with
↗ recruitment?
↗ retention and support of volunteers?
↗ skills development
↗ good practice in volunteer management?

Once this stage of marketing and developing the concept with organisations is complete, the training program can begin. The four modules outline the basic content of a training program that will support managers of volunteers to increase the cultural and linguistic diversity within their organisations.

Bonne chance!
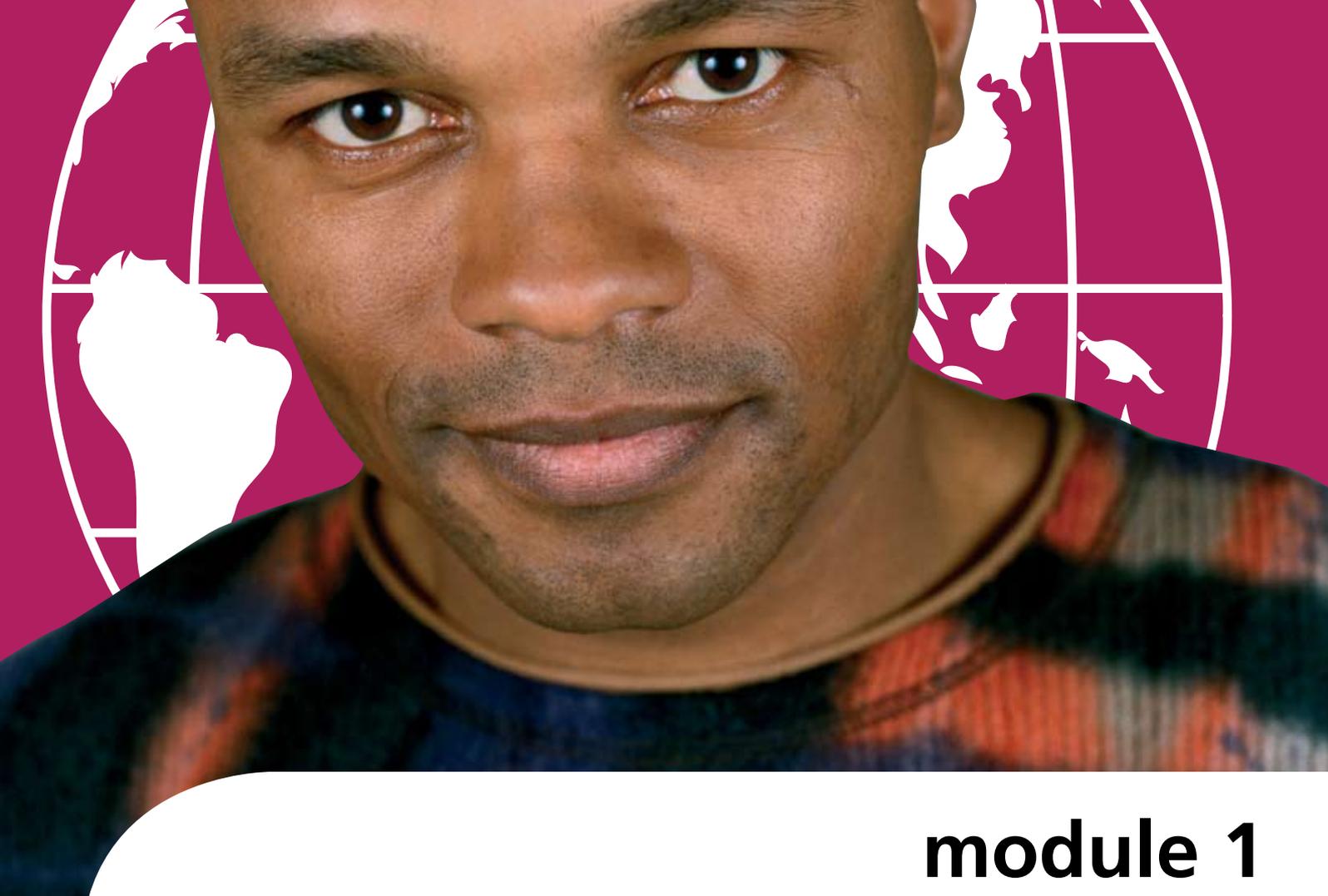
module 1

PLANNING

This module covers some of the planning that organisations should do to ensure their efforts to recruit volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are successful.

Recruitment of new volunteers, particularly those coming from diverse cultural backgrounds into an organisation which has previously not been very diverse, is more likely to succeed if steps have been taken first to address:

↗ who should be targeted for recruitment and why;

↗ what changes need to be made to the volunteer program to support and integrate new volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds, and

↗ whether management will support these changes.

These vital planning steps are explored in this module.

Remember that the recruitment and support of volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds is less likely to be sustainable if these strategies are pursued in isolation from each other.

Key Action 1

Know your local demographics

Why?

Many volunteer-involving organisations in Australia have maintained a very Anglo-Celtic outlook and have not adjusted to changing national demographics, so their internal staff and volunteer profile often does not reflect the make-up of the local community. Equally, they may no longer be reaching the people in their catchment who need or would value their services.

Before the organisation moves to recruit new volunteers and connect more effectively with a changing client base, it needs to research the demographics of its local area or organisational catchment.

Before the organisation moves to recruit new volunteers and connect more effectively with a changing client base, it needs to research the demographics of its local area or organisational catchment. This will reveal not only which groups may provide new volunteers, but which local communities could be accessing the organisation as clients. For example, if the organisation provides youth services and there are a number of people from Somali background in the area, then they could be a group to target, as they are a young community with children who might benefit from the services.

How?

Local demographic statistics can be accessed through websites. On the Department of Immigration and Citizenship website <www.diversityaustralia.gov.au/research/03.htm> there are links to national and state sites for demographics and community summaries. Local demographics can also be accessed through:

↗ local councils

↗ Migrant Resource Centres

↗ Ethnic Communities Councils.

The organisation needs to research each local community's culture and religion, its English proficiency, its age and gender profile, when they came to Australia and their reasons for migration. Initially this information can help to establish whether the organisation should be connecting with these communities and whether they are possible clients for the organisation. This can be used to put forward a business case to management to increase the cultural diversity of the volunteer program. Later, when they are trying to recruit volunteers, the research will help them develop strategies.

Diversity within Australia

Australian demographics are constantly changing, so it is increasingly important to diversify the workforce to reflect the change. According to the 2001 census, 43% of the Australian population was born overseas or had one parent born overseas. Some 16% of consumers do not speak English at home. Here are some other features of Australian society according to the 2001 census:

↗ Over 200 languages are spoken in Australia.

↗ Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Judaism experienced the largest growth in religious affiliation.

↗ Attendance in Christian congregations has fallen dramatically.

↗ The proportion of the population aged over 65 has tripled in the past 100 years.

↗ Some of the newly arrived immigrants have higher birth rates than the Australian average.

↗ Some migrants (for example Italians, Greeks) are now reaching their peak ageing period.

↗ Italian is the most popular language other than English spoken at home, followed by Greek, Cantonese, Arabic and Vietnamese.

↗ Arabic is spoken by 3.6% of people in Sydney, making it the most commonly spoken language-other-than-English there.

↗ Western Australia has the highest proportion of the total population born overseas (27%). New South Wales and Victoria have equal proportions of overseas born people (about 23%), followed by the ACT and South Australia (21%) each, Queensland (17%), the NT (14%) and Tasmania (10%).

↗ The region with the lowest proportion of Australian-born residents was Dandenong in Victoria.

↗ Five in every 100 Australians were born in Asia.

Self-reflection task

Consider your organisation.

Are the volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds?

Do they reflect the local catchment?

What are some of the benefits volunteers from a wider range of cultural and language backgrounds could give to your organisation?

Notes for the trainer

Volunteer coordinators/managers may not know whether they have volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds because their organisation does not record that data. This was often the response when organisations participating in the National Survey in 2005 were asked to report how many volunteers of diverse background they had. For the purposes of this exercise, they can guess their numbers of culturally diverse volunteers.

Research findings

National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds (2007)

Some of the organisations responding to the *National Survey* in 2005 said that they did not recruit volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, but that 'their doors were always open'. Possibly if these organisations looked at their internal environments, they might find that they were not very inclusive in their practices.

Key Action 2

Know your organisation's needs and capacity

Why?

Before developing strategies to recruit volunteers from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it is important to look at

↗ what activities the organisation needs volunteers to perform and what skills are required for these

↗ what support the organisation can realistically give volunteers so that they feel included and that they play a useful role.

It's pointless, for example, to go out and recruit volunteers with limited English when good English skills are important in the roles the organisation has to fill, or to recruit 10 new volunteers who all need to be buddied with an experienced volunteer when there are only three volunteers who have been trained to do this.

What roles does the organisation have?

What skills does it need?

What resources does it have?

How?

When deciding who to target as recruits and how many new volunteers of diverse background the organisation can support, the organisation needs to assess

↗ the types of roles they have and their skills needs,

↗ the resources that are available, including staff time and physical resources.

Organisations can also assess their capacity to recruit and support volunteers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds by meeting with existing volunteers as well as potential volunteers to identify any barriers that may arise initially.

> **Self-reflection task**
>
> Identify what roles need to be filled by volunteers in your organisation and what tasks they have to perform.
>
> Who are these roles suitable for?
>
> How many volunteers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds can your organisation support?

Notes for the trainer

Point out to participants that it is generally more effective to start with just a few volunteers, maybe from a similar cultural background, so that they can be supported adequately and will have a better chance of remaining with the organisation in the long term.

> **Case study 1**
>
> *Big Brother, Big Sister* (organisation)
>
> After realising that they did not deal with families from diverse cultural backgrounds, the organisation *Big Brother, Big Sister* decided to develop a strategy to recruit more culturally diverse volunteers so that they could access a wider range of communities. Realising that they had no experience of working with community groups from different cultures and did not know what some of the barriers might be, they decided to target a few volunteers from one cultural group so that they could develop a model for accessing other communities.

Key Action 3

Secure Management Support

Why?

Management support is essential if the organisation is going to make the internal changes needed to successfully involve greater numbers of volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Once the organisation has a better understanding of which culturally and linguistically diverse communities are within its catchment and whether they are or could be serviced or accessed by the organisation, then a business case can be developed for presentation to senior managers or the board of management.

Once management support has been secured, strategies can be put in place that will encourage and support an effective culturally diverse volunteer program. These *diversity management* strategies include inclusive policies and practices, inclusive selection processes, and a welcoming environment.

How?

Develop a business case

Senior managers need to be convinced that a recruitment strategy which targets a particular demographic, or focuses on increasing the organisation's cultural diversity, will have economic benefits for the organisation. The business case needs to make a link between increased organisational diversity and the organisation's strategic direction, and show how increasing diversity will help the organisation. Specific economic evidence that could be provided includes:

↗ any revenue or cost savings that may be generated by making the organisation more culturally diverse (e.g. an increased local support base, or being able to tap into larger local pool of volunteers);

↗ any future costs that may be reduced or avoided;

↗ the cost of implementing the diversity strategy (e.g. special training or language-related costs, advertising costs);

↗ the cost of NOT becoming more diverse (e.g. a dwindling volunteer and/or client base, loss of public support for an organisation seen as out of touch);

↗ any non-financial benefits (e.g. improved public profile, better client relations, development of staff skills).

Individual or group exercise

Your organisation is an aged-care facility. The local demographics show the community has a high percentage of people born in Italy and Greece. You research the clients your organisation deals with and find they are 95% Australian-born.

Use this information to put forward a business case that will convince your senior managers that increasing the diversity of the volunteer program will assist the organisation.

Notes for the trainer

You would expect participants to put forward such arguments as:

↗ *Greeks and Italian migrated after the Second World War and are ageing populations in need of aged care, but they are not being serviced by the organisation.*

↗ *If you increased the number of volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly Greeks and Italians, this would help tap into those communities.*

↗ *The organisation's mission is to provide support to the ageing local community but they are not being serviced.*

↗ *Failure to provide this service to the immediate community opens the way for competitors and puts the long-term viability, and possible funding, of the organisation at risk.*

Most Australian CEOs do not recognise the importance of diversity management and do not have diversity management policies or practices.

Group exercise

For groups of three or four

Each group member briefly explains who they are and what services their organisation provides.

Choose one of the organisations in your group and develop a business case for senior managers about the benefits of increasing the diversity of the volunteer program.

Each group must present their case to the other groups.

Case study 2

A Citizens' Advice Bureau was concerned that as fewer and fewer local people were contacting them, the need for their services was decreasing. When the organisation researched who the clients were, they found they were predominantly people born in Australia. They then researched their catchment and found that over 40% of the local community were from a non-English-speaking background. The organisation began to actively recruit volunteers from a range of cultural and language backgrounds to help them attract and service clients from non-English-speaking backgrounds. They concentrated on the largest community in their catchment (Turkish) to begin with, and then expanded to other cultural groups.

Once senior managers are on side, diversity management strategies can be put in place.

Research Findings

The Australian Centre for International Business found that most Australian CEOs do not recognise the importance of diversity management nor do they have diversity management policies or practices. The Australian Centre for International Business also reports the key steps to 'sell' diversity to senior management.

These steps include:

↗ Gather the information to put into a business case for diversity management and present as a formal report for senior managers.

↗ Link the report to the strategic directions of the business.

↗ Organise a formal presentation of the report for the CEO and board or senior management team, linking diversity to the organisational strategic direction.

↗ Gather feedback on the report and presentation.

Further Resources

The Australian Centre for International Business, 2001 Engaging Senior Managers: A Business Model for diversity management www.diversityaustralia.gov.au/_inc/doc_pdf/eng_sen_manage_model.pdf

Key Action 4

Implement Diversity Management Strategies

Why?

When organisations are strongly monocultural, their internal environments are often not inclusive of people from other cultures. Once you have management support for a culturally diverse recruitment strategy, other aspects of the organisation's internal environment can be explored, and diversity management strategies can start to be adopted.

Diversity management is the process of gaining the maximum contribution from all staff. This involves minimising any barriers that prevent full participation and allowing for differences so that economic benefits can be realised.

How?

Effectively managing diversity requires strategies that will allow the greatest return or benefit to be generated by the skills and knowledge and the differences that people bring to the workplace. These strategies include:

↗ policies and procedures that are inclusive;

↗ increasing staff knowledge and understanding of cultural sensitivities and how to work together effectively; and

↗ creating an internal environment that is welcoming to all cultures.

To succeed, these strategies need to be pursued in combination rather than in isolation. It's a mistake to expect this change to occur quickly; diversity management strategies can take many years to be fully incorporated into how an organisation works. Organisations need to begin the process so that the strategies they develop to recruit, welcome and support volunteers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are sustainable.

> **Self-reflection task**
>
> What are some effective diversity management strategies that your organisation has in place?
>
> Record some successful diversity management strategies that you have observed within organisations.

Notes for the trainer

Participant's answers may include:

↗ *Inclusive statements in their policies*

↗ *Job descriptions in simple English*

↗ *Multicultural officer*

↗ *Resources in different languages*

↗ *Cultural diversity training*

↗ *Staff audits*

↗ *Diverse communities involved in policy reviews*

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Putting up pictures or photos of various scenes and situations around the walls of the room can make it easier for people to visualise their organisation and describe it.

Self-reflection task

Think about your organisation. How does it currently manage its diversity?

Notes for the trainer

Putting up pictures or photos of various scenes and situations around the walls of the room can make it easier for people to visualise their organisation and describe it. Some people will only be able to describe their particular unit/department and others the whole organisation, depending on the size of the organisation and their position in it.

Scenario

The staff and volunteers attending the regular staff meeting have been briefed about a new culturally diverse recruitment program. A volunteer recruited through the program starts work and is welcomed and supported through the buddy system.

Some days later a staff member returns from leave and finds the new volunteer in the tea room using the staff member's personal mug. The staff member is upset and comes to you complaining bitterly 'I didn't know we had foreign volunteers and I don't want someone like that drinking out of my mug!!'

Things to consider

Someone missed out on the briefing.

Highlights that everyone needs to be on board to hear the briefing.

The provision of information needs to be thought through carefully.

The organisational culture comes into this scenario. The reaction to a *foreign* volunteer is part of organisational culture.

Some questions

How could planning have avoided this situation?

What were the gaps?

Case study supplied by Volunteer State Centres & VA course participants Lucia Ikin, Roger McFarlane, Jennie Loveridge and Teresa Forest

Notes for the trainer

Some possibilities:

↗ *Cultural awareness training for staff prior to introducing the new volunteers*

↗ *This training should be ongoing so that missing one briefing will not cause problems.*

↗ *Examine the organisational culture to determine staff attitudes and understanding of cultural and religious issues.*

↗ *Assess policies and practices to ascertain if they are culturally inclusive.*

Strategic focus: Organisational policy and procedures

Why?

An organisation's policies and formal procedures shape, or should shape, what happens in that organisation day to day. Policies and procedures therefore need to be written so that they are inclusive of all people, and make room for and do not exclude, marginalise or disadvantage people because of their culture, religion, gender, disability, language etc.

How?

Some organisations have developed a specific policy on diversity or cultural diversity; other organisations have diversity reflected in their overall mission and value statements. It is important that these statements are then reflected in human resource practices, including the selection process, job descriptions, and general work practices.

Community members can be asked to help with the process of reviewing policies. They will be able to identify areas in which the policy falls short, and can help with the language used to make the policies more inclusive.

The terminology used in policies and procedures needs to recognise difference and be inclusive: for example, 'diversity', 'culturally sensitive', 'represent all backgrounds', 'respectful of all people', and so on. Policies also need to be written in simple language so that people with low English proficiency are more likely to understand them. It is also important that these policies are communicated in a way that all staff understand and are aware of them.

> **Self-reflection task**
>
> Look at the policies and practices in your organisation and describe how they are inclusive.

Notes for the trainer

↗ *If the participant is not familiar with their policies, then record some terms that could be used in policies to make them inclusive.*

↗ *Expressions like: 'inclusive of all Australians', 'diverse', 'encouraging', 'respect all cultures', 'open', 'tolerant', and 'supportive'.*

↗ *When reviewing policies ask 'Who is being disadvantaged by this policy or procedure?' and 'How can it be made equitable?'*

Group work

Read the mission below and reword so that it can be more easily understood by people with low English proficiency.

The Australian Charities Fund was founded in order to facilitate individual giving to charitable enterprise. The underlying premise is that individual philanthropy will be the vital element in sustaining many essential humanitarian and social programs.

Notes for the trainer

The aim is for the policy to use simple English and avoid any jargon.

Case study 3

Parks Victoria's long-term vision (Corporate Plan 2004-05 to 2006-2007) includes:

↗ Delivery of programs that provide equitable, sustainable, diverse, enjoyable recreational opportunities for all Victorians.

↗ Removing barriers to participation in park use and management for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians, and

↗ Increasing the substantial contribution that Parks Victoria makes to growing social capital...By encouraging the active involvement of... the broader community.

Parks Vic have developed initiatives in pursuit of their long-term vision – see Appendix at the end of this module .
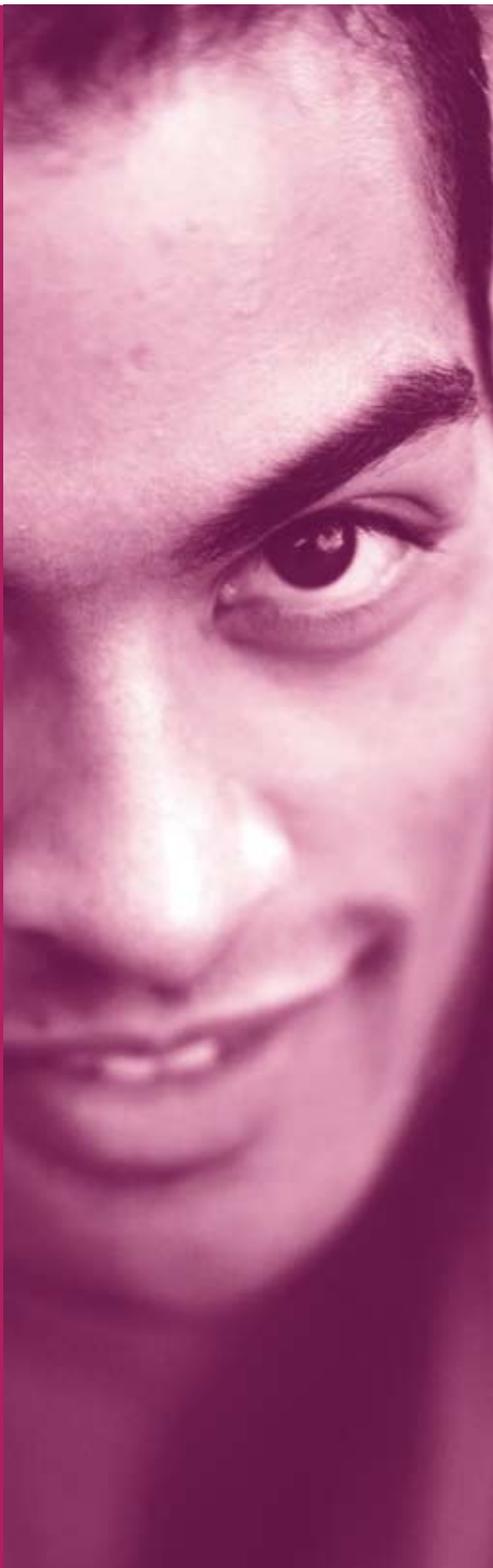
Worksheet: Organisational Policies and Diversity

For each of the following statements, place a tick in the box you think best reflects your organisational situation.

	Does not apply	Has not been addressed	Could be improved	We do this well
Our vision and values statement includes diversity.				
Our organisation has a written policy on addressing the cultural diversity of our catchment area.				
All staff are aware of these policies on diversity.				
Our organisation's policies reflect the diverse nature of the community.				
The diversity policies include race, culture, aboriginality, language, religion and geographic origin.				
There is an employment policy which encourages the employment of workers from culturally diverse backgrounds.				
There is a specific program devoted to promotion of access and equity issues.				
There are consultations with representatives from diverse communities when developing all agency policies.				
Action to be taken on policies:				

Source: The Disability Learning And Development Unit (DLDU) of the Disability Services Division (DSD) of the Department of Human Services (DHS) 2003 *A Culturally Diverse Workforce.*

Research findings

National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds (2007)

The National Survey in 2005 asked organisations to list the external resources which had helped them to develop their policies:

↗ volunteer networks including Volunteering Australia, State Volunteer Centres, Volunteer Resource Centres, and other volunteer-involving organisations (31%);

↗ Volunteering Australia for the National Standards and written resources, or the GoVolunteering website;

↗ some mentioned specific resources such as the Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre in Victoria which has developed a Volunteer Orientation Kit with versions in Chinese, Greek and Italian;

↗ government resources including *The Charter of Public Service in a Culturally Diverse Australia* (Department of Immigration and Citizenship) <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/index.htm>*; Cultural Diversity Resource Kit* (Department of Health and Ageing); the *Community Visitors Scheme Handbook* (for volunteers visiting the aged) is available in 14 languages and shows how volunteer roles can be defined (Department of Health and Ageing).

Cultural awareness training helps avoid misunderstandings between clients, staff and volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Volunteer-involving organisations also listed ways they had developed culturally inclusive policies and guidelines, including:

↗ developing a Cultural Action Plan;

↗ developing a Cultural Resource Kit for volunteers and staff, e.g. phone numbers of Migrant Resource Centre, religious leaders, etc.;

↗ giving volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds opportunities to have input into decisions about the organisation;

↗ employing someone to develop the organisation's relationship and understanding of local ethnic communities; and

↗ having planning days with communities.

Other resources

An example of guidelines for implementing multicultural policy can be found at:
<www.nt.gov.au/dcm/multicultural/pdf/200602MulticulturalPolicyImplementGuide.pdf>

Strategic focus: Training

Why?

One of the findings of the *National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds* (in press) was that organisations were very aware of the need for their staff to undergo cultural awareness training so that there would be fewer misunderstandings when working with clients, staff or volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

It is particularly important to understand how people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds perceive volunteering (Cox 1999). People from different cultural backgrounds have different perceptions of volunteering; some cultures do not understand working for no financial gain, while some cultures do not understand the Australian health and welfare framework (Cox, 1999). Some people are not used to even a basic level of government service provision, let alone non-government or community-based structures. Understanding how these services operate, what they do and that they are free is often difficult for migrants who do not have a similar framework in their own countries (Cox 1999). It can be even more confusing when services are delivered by people who are not paid.

However, it is difficult to introduce training into organisations that are 'hostile' towards diversity. Training therefore needs to start with 'awareness-based diversity training' which involves raising awareness of the challenges faced by different people encountering or joining the organisation, and build on that. Training needs to be part of broader diversity initiatives and there is little point in introducing it if structural barriers remain in place (Moore, 1999).

How?

Staff training in both cultural awareness and diversity management can be made part of professional development plans so that it is mandatory.

Staff can be trained in such areas as:

↗ general cultural awareness and understanding of culture

↗ understanding of other cultures and stereotyping

↗ communication styles

↗ understanding of migration and settlement issues

↗ cultural misunderstandings.

Case study 4: Exercise

Royal Life Saving Australia

An article in the *Sun-Herald*, 15 October 2006, identified some of the cultural misunderstandings arising between lifeguards and the public. 'There are cultural clashes when people don't understand life guards are just trying to facilitate the rules.' 'Some people see it as abusive.' 'Members of some cultural groups wanted to wear street clothing into pools. Lifeguards believed this was unsafe and conflicts arose when guards instructed people to remove clothing.'

How would staff training help with this situation? Explain.

Notes for the trainer

↗ *Training could give staff a better understanding of the impact of communication styles – the way they speak to people from different cultural groups. For example, in some cultures being very direct can be seen as being aggressive, while males instructing females, or young people instructing older people, can also create problems.*

↗ *It could be a matter of explaining the reasons for the clothing regulation and not just insisting that people take off their clothes.*

Strategic focus: Environment

Why?

Organisations can create a culturally sensitive environment so that people from all cultural, religious and language backgrounds feel welcome and comfortable. This is particularly important in reception areas where a first impression can be lasting.

How?

There are many simple ways to create an environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all cultures, for example:

↗ posters and display material that reflect diversity (i.e. people from a range of ages and backgrounds);

↗ 'Welcome' signs translated into different languages, or universally understood signs;

↗ flexibility around religious days;

↗ sharing of different foods.

Group work

What practices/strategies within organisations have you seen that would help different cultural groups feel welcome?

Research findings

National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds (in press)

The National Survey asked: *'In what ways does your organisation adapt its internal environment and services to meet the needs of people from CALD backgrounds?* Not-for-profit organisations' responses included:

Inclusive processes

↗ On- and off-the-job training

↗ Literacy classes

↗ Flexible delivery of training

↗ Plain English training

↗ Training delivered in other languages

↗ Plain English 'information sessions' (avoiding jargon)

↗ Option for a verbal rather than written application

↗ Giving extra time for training where needed

↗ Separate training programs to allow for limited English-speaking ability

Translated materials

↗ Brochures, posters and videos

Staff/Volunteer training

↗ Training for staff in cross-cultural awareness

↗ Training for staff in using interpreters

↗ Training on diversity

Inclusive atmosphere

↗ Taking into account special dietary requirements

↗ Religious requirements

↗ Flexibility around times and days of religious significance

↗ Openly acknowledging strengths of cultural diversity

↗ Opportunities to share culture and stories

↗ Asking volunteers what they preferred (and not making assumptions)

↗ Awareness of language barriers

↗ Helping volunteers with written documents

↗ Multicultural entertainment.

Identify other stakeholders whose interest and support may be important to the success of a recruitment strategy, such as particular leaders and key communicators within target communities.

A welcoming reception area

↗ Information displays or posters in different languages and depicting people from different ethnic backgrounds

↗ Volunteers/staff working in reception who are bilingual or come from a variety of cultural backgrounds

↗ Translated information

↗ Reception staff trained to assist people with low English skills

↗ Map and other useful information displayed in foyer.

Key Action 5

Identify key stakeholders

Why?

Once organisations have researched local demographics to identify the target groups within their catchment, and have worked out what they need, it is important to identify other stakeholders whose interest and support may be important to the success of a recruitment strategy, such as particular leaders and key communicators within target communities.

How?

There are several steps that can be taken to identify stakeholders.

↗ You can use local networks, local council directories, including Migrant Resource Centres, ethnic community council, Adult Multicultural Education Services, etc.

↗ A committee can be developed specifically for this project.

↗ Identify community leaders through research and follow up with them.

↗ Focus groups sessions can be run with communities, leaders, gatekeepers to identify community needs.

Case study 5

One of the ways The Cancer Council Victoria increased their connections with communities and other stakeholders was to organise a forum day. They invited relevant stakeholders (using their connection) to the forum day. At the forum they ran an information session specifically relevant to diverse linguistic and cultural groups. In the afternoon they organised workshop sessions for communities and other stakeholders to voice their opinions on what could help them as well as what would help the Cancer Council Victoria to be more culturally sensitive. During the day they provided food and entertainment. At the end of the day, they developed an action plan and working group to oversee their progress.

Key Action 6

Forge alliances

Why?

Another strategy for organisations wanting to become involved with culturally and linguistically diverse communities is to forge alliances with them. One benefit of alliances and joint projects is that the level of trust is built up. Another is that there can be an exchange of knowledge and a growth of mutual understanding. Developing partnerships can also be a selling point to managers, and working together can add to staff understanding of the communities as clients.

How?

The organisation and the community group could:

↗ apply for funding for small volunteer project grants or other grants through the state or local government. A joint project could be developed to assist both the community and the not-for-profit organisation;

↗ partner to plan an event;

↗ share knowledge and resources, by sharing or exchanging staff or sharing facilities;

↗ undertake initiatives jointly to share the costs, workload and opportunities;

↗ involve the community in planning processes;

↗ hold social meetings where the community is invited to share ideas.

Remember that partnerships and collaborative practices need to have benefits for all parties involved.

Case study 6

A volunteer-involving organisation approached a language and literacy centre and offered to provide them with a room for their managers' meeting. Once they had developed a relationship with the centre, they offered to give the centre's students a tour of their organisation, with the aim of building the students' interest in volunteering. In this way an alliance was developed which benefited both organisations.

Case study 7: Exercise

A health service wanted to increase understanding in the Horn of African community of mental health issues. The service consulted with the Horn of African community as to the best method to inform the community about mental health issues. The community suggested that the message would be best delivered by community leaders who had already won the trust of community members. The health service then applied for funding to implement a peer education program. This meant recruiting community leaders who were interested in becoming educators for the community, training the educators and then mentoring them as they ran information sessions for the community.

Questions to be answered

What do you think were the successful strategies in this scenario?

What background work would have been necessary to develop the alliance?

What issues could have arisen?

Notes for the trainer

↗ *The program was able to succeed because it was developed in partnership between the Horn of African community and the health service for the benefit of both organisations.*

↗ *The Horn of African leaders developed better skills and felt empowered to continue the volunteer work, and the message about mental health was being imparted to the community.*

↗ *Issues that needed to be considered in advance included: monitoring and evaluating the process; continued support for the educators; and the effect on the educators of talking about mental health issues which could have brought up issues from their past.*

Group exercise:

Each group to work on one of the three scenarios below and answer the questions at the end. Report back to the larger group.

Scenario 1

Polly Anna is a long term employee at the local community centre. She thinks the CALD program is a wonderful initiative. *We are a friendly welcoming organisation, very receptive to foreigners and lovely multicultural peoples*.

Policy
Open door to everyone. Don't discriminate.

Orientate
Buddy up with whoever needs help at the time.

Bring on the recruits!!

Scenario 2

Miss Ratchett is a volunteer manager with the local community visiting scheme. She runs a tight ship with well trained volunteers who know exactly what they should and shouldn't do. Lately the service has been working with more and more clients from diverse cultural backgrounds and many of the existing volunteers find this difficult and confronting. Having recently attended the CALD training for volunteer managers, Miss Ratchett is fired with enthusiasm to engage some culturally diverse volunteers.

'*We are proud of our volunteers and the quality service they deliver*' says Miss Ratchett. '*To maintain standards we will need to make sure the new volunteers fit into our roles and culture of excellence. I am planning changes including a literacy test and an extended training program. I will be performing spot checks to make sure they are doing the right thing. One strike and they're out. PDs will be read out at community meetings and events.*'

Scenario 3

Dee Nyall is a volunteer coordinator at a large charity. She receives a directive from management – who believe the organisation is not very inclusive. She thinks '*Some of my best friends are not "aussie". Why do we need that – we're a friendly bunch! And I'm way too busy.*'

Currently they have some international students who volunteer. She notes they never seem to stick around to finish the project.

She is too busy to do research. Although the organisation works with elderly clients from Italian and Greek backgrounds, she decides to recruit more university students (who are generally from Asian-speaking backgrounds).

University students like short-term projects to develop their skills.

At the induction their English is poor, an she realises she will need to speak slowly.

She holds a separate session and introduces them to the rest of the volunteers but has trouble pronouncing their names. She wonders why she had to bother; they always look miserable and quickly leave.

What was the approach used in each scenario?

What advice would you give the coordinator?

What steps are important in planning to engage volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds?

Case study supplied by Volunteer State Centres & VA course participants Lisa Cavallaro, Kate Geyle and Talia van Gils.

Notes for the trainer

Some of the issues that should be discussed are:

↗ *In Scenario 1 the approach is we are open to anyone. The coordinator believes they are very open and receptive to volunteers from diverse backgrounds, but their approach has not considered cultural, language and religious differences. Their approach is to treat everyone as a homogenous group.*

↗ *In Scenario 2 the approach is that the new volunteers fit in with the existing culture. There is no attempt to consider religious, cultural or language differences.*

↗ *In Scenario 3 inclusiveness has been forced on the coordinator. There is no consideration of the coordinator's attitude or understanding of cultural issues.*

© iStockphoto.com/Sophia Tsibikaki/Ladida

Summary: Bringing the key steps together

General planning issues

The participants should identify the important steps in planning prior to recruitment of culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers as discussed throughout this module. These will include

↗ Researching the organisation's needs and demographics

↗ Researching the local demographics

↗ Reviewing the organisational culture including policies and practices

↗ Staff awareness training

↗ Reviewing volunteer roles and positions etc.

> **Strategic planning exercise**
>
> The aim of this exercise is to clarify all of the key actions that have been worked through in this module so that participants can develop their own plan of action.
>
> Working through the following template:
>
> ↗ identify the objective you wish to achieve;
>
> ↗ work out the planning you will do prior to recruiting volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

How are you going to plan prior to recruiting volunteers from a range of cultural backgrounds?

Objective:

Strategies What will you do?	Outcomes How will you know you have done it?	Timeline How long will it take?	Resources What do you need?	Responsibility Who will do it?

Notes for the trainer

↗ *The participant needs to be realistic about what they can do and how long it will take to achieve their objective.*

↗ *The participant needs to consider the resources and opportunities that are already available to the organisation, including good contacts with communities, data collected by the organisation etc. and use those.*

↗ *The participant needs to consider how to overcome the barriers to achieving their objective.*

↗ *Have the participant break down the strategies into very small steps so that they know exactly what they will be doing.*

↗ *See an example on the next page.*

Example of a Plan

Strategies What will you do?	Outcomes How will you know you have done it?	Timeline How long will it take?	Resources What do you need?	Responsibility Who will do it?
Research demographics of the area	Identification of the top ten language groups, English proficiency, perceptions of volunteering, age, skills, education, religion	First two months	ABS data, state and local government & DIAC community profiles and stats, websites including www.infoxchange.net.au Multicultural Resources Directories, MRCs community listings	Volunteer
Research community leaders	Identification of leaders and regard in which they are held	As above	As above	As above
Meet with four Councils' Volunteer Coordinators	Identification of CALD inclusive strategies already in place	Third month	Time availability of staff / facilities	Manager
Development of diversity-inclusive policies	All policies written and inclusive of diversity	Six – eight months		Communications Officer Volunteer Co-ordinator
Development and implementation of cross-cultural awareness training session	Training session developed able to be delivered over half day	Eight – ten months	Follow model already developed	Communications Officer Volunteer Co-ordinator
Development of cross-cultural promotional material for the centre	Welcome signs in top ten languages Depending on research, possible written communications in top ten languages	Ten months	Funding	Volunteer

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Mallinger & Rizescu, 2004, *Personality Traits and Workplace Culture: Online tests measure the fit between person and organisation.* Accessed at <gbr.pepperdine.edu/031/culture.html>

The Australia Centre for International Business (ACIB), 2004, *Building Cross-Cultural Capabilities for Going Global: A Toolkit for Diversity Management.* Accessed at <www.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/acib>

The Australia Centre for International Business (ACIB), 2004, *Using Diversity Climate Surveys: A Toolkit for Diversity Management.* Accessed at <www.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/acib>

Australian Multicultural Foundation and Volunteering Australia, 2007, *Muslim Youths' Experiences of and Attitudes Towards Volunteering*, Melbourne: Volunteering Australia

Australian Multicultural Foundation and Volunteering Australia, 2007, *National Survey of Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds*, Melbourne: Volunteering Australia

FURTHER READING

Training Resources

The Australia Centre for International Business, 2004 (ACIB). Various useful resource kits at <www.ecom.unimelb.edu.au/acib>

Office of the Director of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, 1996, *Managing Diversity: A Resource.* Accessed at <www.eeo.nsw.gov.au/reermg/managing.htm>

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Other Useful Resources

Emergency Management Australia, 2002, *Guidelines: Emergency Managers working with Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Communities*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

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Volunteer Centre of South Australia, 1993, *inside out: Perceptions of Volunteering in a Multicultural Society*, Volunteering Centre of SA, Adelaide

Disability In-Service Training Support Service, *Checklists and work sheets for cultural competency and organisation policy and diversity*. Accessed at <www.distss.or.au/CBT/culturalChecklist.html>

APPENDIX

PARKS VICTORIA CASE STUDY

Recent initiatives by Parks Victoria **to encourage the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the use, development and management of Victoria's Parks.**

Background

Parks Victoria's long-term vision (Corporate Plan 2004-05 to 2006-2007) includes:

↗ *delivering programs that provide equitable, sustainable, diverse and enjoyable recreational opportunities for all Victorians;*

↗ *removing barriers to participation in park use and management for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians; and*

↗ *increasing the substantial contribution that Parks Victoria makes to growing social capital...by encouraging the active involvement of...the broader community.*

Report

In order to progress the achievement of the Long-Term Vision, Parks Victoria is pursuing a range of initiatives and to assist this has established a new position of 'Project Officer; Community Involvement Programs' whose role is to

identify and pursue initiatives which enhance Parks Victoria's pursuit of effective relationships with culturally diverse communities and in particular projects which will increase the participation of communities which have in the past been under-represented in community involvement/engagement programs associated with parks.

Initiatives being followed in pursuit of the Long-Term Vision fall into two areas: building an organisation which is competent in engaging with all cultures; and building appreciation and awareness in culturally and linguistically diverse communities of the values and purpose of parks:

a) Building organisational capability

Building an organisation which is competent in engaging with all cultures requires building the capacity of the organisation and the ability of individual staff:

↗ to be confident and competent in engaging with multicultural communities,

↗ to develop networks with multicultural organisations, and

↗ to attract and retain the involvement of people from multicultural communities.

Current and future initiatives contributing to this outcome are:

↗ **Parks Victoria's program of overseas exchanges and staff study tours** is seen as one of the tools contributing to achieving this. In particular the potential further exchanges with bodies such as Johannesburg City Parks, Singapore National Parks Board, and other opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region offer the prospect of broadening the cultural awareness of participants as well as enhancing their professional skills. Visits to Parks Victoria by representatives from Mongolia also contribute to broadening cultural awareness.

↗ **Australian Multicultural Foundation, Victoria Training:** during July to October 2004, 13 staff participated in a program run by the Australian Multicultural Foundation Victoria, entitled 'Towards Greater Diversity in the Voluntary Sector'. The program reinforced the view that Parks Victoria can benefit from engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It provided participants with an insight into how to identify and overcome barriers which may prevent multicultural participation and how to build relationships with target communities. Direct outcomes of the program can already be seen in activities to engage culturally and linguistically diverse communities in parks. Examples include:

↗ **Coast Care Week, December 2004:** DSE, Coast Care, and Parks Victoria worked with the Western Young People's Independent Network, Brimbank Youth Services, and Friends of Barwon Bluff to successfully engage culturally and linguistically diverse participants from both established and refugee communities;

↗ **Werribee Park** now includes a section on diversity in the induction and recruitment of volunteers. The training material is provided by the Australian Multicultural Foundation;

↗ **Brimbank Park** has established a relationship with the Migrant Resource Centre and the programs being delivered include guided walks and talks for non-English-speaking communities.

b) Building community awareness

Partnerships are being developed with a wide variety of organisations which support or assist culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including refugees. These organisations include:

Western Young People's Independent Network	Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
Migrant Resource Centres	The Adult Migrant Education Service
The Australian Multicultural Foundation	The Victorian Multicultural Commission

Cultural Diversity Week, 17–23 March 2005. Parks Victoria's Community Partnership Unit is coordinating and supporting a range of activities and events during this week. It is anticipated these activities and events will prove valuable in creating and establishing relationships with new communities. Events and activities include

↗ **Albert Park** The Islamic Girls and Women's Group and the Australian Lebanese Women's Association will have an afternoon at Albert Park to celebrate cultural diversity.

↗ **Hawkestowe Park** in partnership with the City of Whittlesea will host a one-day event, entitled 'Women in the Park' and a week-long art exhibition, with works from many of the diverse cultural groups in the City.

↗ **Bourke Street Office** staff will be invited to bring a national dish to share with other staff to celebrate Cultural Diversity week and hear and ask questions of guest speakers talking about their experiences as Indigenous, Islamic and disabled persons in Australia.

↗ **Point Cook Coastal Park** in partnership with Hobsons Bay City Council, DSE and the Westgate Migrant Resource Centre are organising an event to celebrate diversity and build knowledge and awareness of resource management and of recreational opportunities available to communities.

↗ **Brimbank Park**, Brimbank City Council is organising a Harmony Day Walk at Brimbank Park involving the local community.

c) Future initiatives

Through a range of further initiatives it is proposed to encourage people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities to broaden their knowledge and awareness of resource management, employment, and recreational opportunities and to provide the opportunity for people from such communities to meet Friends Groups and have the experience of volunteering.

↗ In partnership with the Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES), it is proposed to include visits to park venues in the AMES English-language teaching program for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

↗ Through the organisations such as the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and Migrant Resource Centres, young people from multicultural communities will be encouraged to join the Camp Host Volunteers and Seasonal Rangers Programs.

↗ Through the Friends Network Committee, it is proposed to sponsor representatives from Friends Groups to attend the Australian Multicultural Foundation training program.

module 2

RECRUITMENT

This module looks at processes and strategies that can help organisations to recruit volunteers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

This module assumes the planning stage (Module 1) has been worked through so that strategies in this module can be effective.

It was found in the *National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* in 2005 that only 26% of organisations surveyed actively recruited volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In organisations which actively recruited, an average of 38% of their volunteers came from diverse cultural backgrounds, whereas those who did not actively recruit had an average of 20% of volunteers from diverse backgrounds. These results suggest that actively recruiting volunteers from a range of cultural backgrounds will result in a more diverse volunteering program.

The general principles for recruitment of volunteers are relevant for volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds but issues about language, religion and culture can complicate the process. We need to be mindful that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not a homogenous group.

This module will look at whom to target, how best to communicate to the target group, and how to deal with low English language proficiency when disseminating information, designing roles, and during the application and selection process.

Key Action 1

Know your community

Why?

Once an organisation has identified which cultural and linguistic communities live within its catchment, it needs to find out more about each community's demographic and cultural characteristics in order to decide whether they are a suitable target for a volunteer recruitment campaign, and how they can be reached.

Photo courtesy of Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (www.cmyi.net.au). Youth Policy Forum 2006.

How?

Participants who have completed Module 1 will have done some research already and found out which communities are in the organisation's catchment and could be targeted as potential volunteers.

Revisit the community profiles from Module 1 and identify some of the demographic variables.

Some of the demographic variables that are important to consider include:

Demographic variable	Some examples
Length of time the community has resided in Australia	If the local community contains recent arrivals then settlement is often the biggest issue, including finding accommodation, employment, and education for children. Once a language/cultural group has been in Australia for some time, they are more ready to volunteer in the broader community. Prior to that they are more likely to assist their own community to resettle. However, it is important to emphasise that communities are keen to become part of the broader community. Over time language/cultural groups begin to settle and do not need the support of other community members as much. Some may move to other locations and so the demographics within the local area change over time.
Size of the community	The larger language groups will have greater resources to assist them within the broader community. Larger communities and well established communities usually have good networks. For example Italians, Greeks, Maltese, Polish are large language groups with well established networks. It is easier find out information about these language groups.
Age/gender of the community	Some language/cultural groups have been in Australia for some time, e.g. Italians, Greeks and their populations are now ageing. Some of the more recently arrived groups have younger demographics, for example, the African communities. Refugee communities heavily affected by conflict and war may have a gender imbalance, with more women than men. This may also be true of ageing communities, as women on average live longer.
Language proficiency	Different communities have had different experiences in their own countries in relation to education and literacy. Some are illiterate even in their own language. In some countries women have little opportunity for education. Language proficiency can affect how quickly a community will settle within Australia.

Adapted from Judith Miralles & Associates and Australian Multicultural Foundation 2006, *Towards greater cultural diversity in the volunteer sector.*

Identifying the demographics of the target community will help the organisation shape its recruitment strategy.

Group exercise

For groups of three or four

Pick a community that the group has some knowledge about. Identify some of the demographic variables for that community. Is the community ageing or young? Educated or not?

Adapted from Judith Miralles & Associates and Australian Multicultural Foundation 2006, *Towards greater cultural diversity in the volunteer sector.*

Notes for the trainer

Two examples:

↗ *The Italian community has been in Australia since WW2 and is ageing. The Italian community is the largest language group in Australia. English proficiency is low among older Italians.*

↗ *Arabic-speakers come from several different countries, and several religions are practised. The Arabic-speaking communities within Australia are generally young communities.*

Group exercise

At the time of the 2001 Census, the top ten language groups (i.e. spoken by the largest numbers) other than English within Australia were:

1. Italian

2. Greek

3. Vietnamese

4. Cantonese

5. Arabic

6. Mandarin

7. Macedonian

8. Turkish

9. Croatian

10. Spanish

Discuss the implications of a community being in the top ten language groups within Australia.

Adapted from Judith Miralles & Associates and Australian Multicultural Foundation 2006, *Towards greater cultural diversity in the volunteer sector.*

Notes for the trainer

↗ *Governments can more easily justify funding translations for the larger language groups, so when government funding is given to translate materials the top ten language groups are often considered first.*

↗ *The* National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds *in 2005 also focused on the top ten language groups.*

↗ *The language groups in the top ten change over time. For example, in 1996 Spanish was in 12th place and German in 7th.*

↗ *Targeting the largest language groups in your area is not necessarily the right strategy. For example, the Polish-speaking community may be the largest in your catchment, but if your organisation delivers youth services then translating materials into Polish will not necessarily work for you because the Polish community is an ageing community.*

Self-reflection task

Identify which community/ies could be target groups for your organisation. Explain why.

Case study 1: Exercise

Alzheimer's Australia is a peak body which provides support and advocacy for people suffering with dementia.

Discuss in groups which communities would be appropriate to target for Alzheimer's Australia and why.

Notes for the trainer

↗ *Appropriate communities to target would be ageing communities such as the Greek, Italian, Polish and Maltese.*

↗ *It would also be sensible to target communities which will be ageing over the next ten years, such as the Vietnamese and Cambodian communities. Involving communities before they their peak ageing period will give them a better understanding of dementia.*
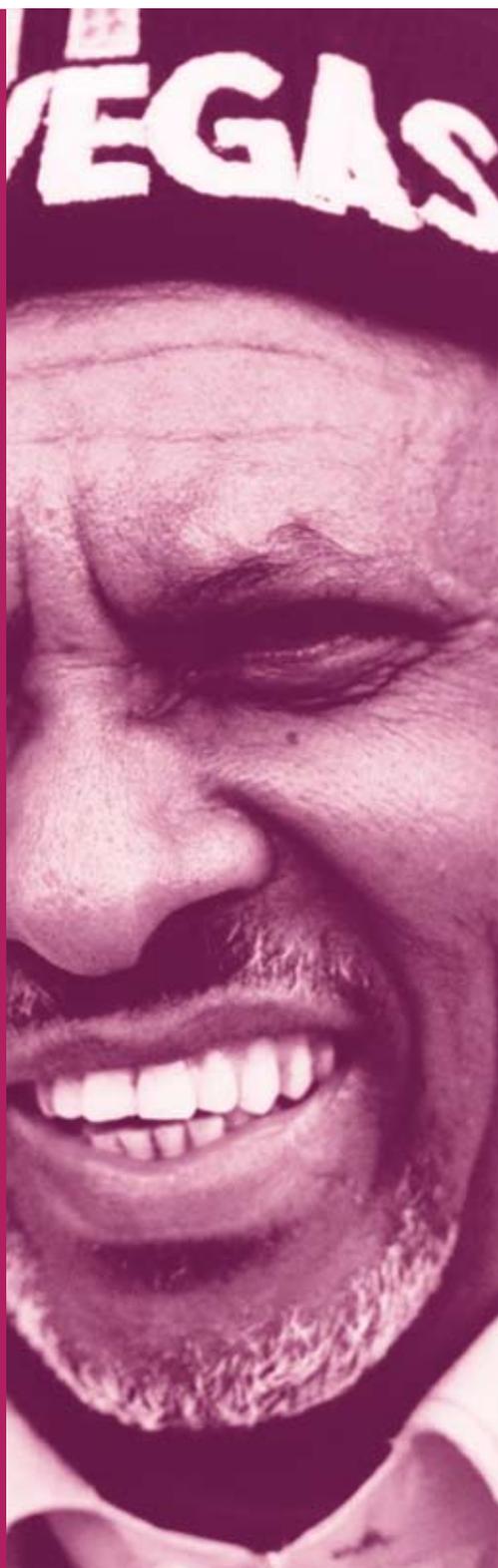
Case study 2

A school in an outer suburban high migrant area wants to recruit culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers to participate in school programs. The school has low retention rate of students and a poor reputation within the community.

Issues to consider

Lack of local knowledge by the volunteer coordinator.

Lack of awareness of school's needs in the wider community.

Lack of understanding of cultural needs within the school.

What are the benefits to prospective volunteers?

How do you establish networks in the wider community?

Taking into consideration the above issues, what are some of the steps that could be taken which would assist the process of recruitment of culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers in this situation?

Case study supplied by Volunteer State Centres & VA course participants Rick Barry, Gwenda Lawther, Jenny Lord and Jason Twomey

Notes for the trainer

Coordinator needs to

↗ *research the local demographics including the school and the local community;*

↗ *identify stakeholders within the school and community;*

↗ *Identify established community organisations that could assist;*

↗ *identify barriers/support within the school and community;*

↗ *look at the school culture;*

↗ *identify/scope roles for volunteers;*

↗ *identify benefits for the students/volunteers and the wider community (capacity);*

↗ *develop a linkage between community and school to strengthen retention rates, build school capacity for students and benefit the wider community;*

↗ *overcome negative perceptions re: reputation of school, focus people's attitudes i.e. school is integral to the community.*

Research has also shown that 'word-of-mouth', particularly through family and friends, has been organisations' most successful way of recruiting volunteers of CALD background.

Key Action 2

Work out how best to communicate

Why?

Research has shown that communities from non-English speaking backgrounds have low levels of access to information, and their understanding of services is often limited. Working out an effective way to communicate with communities is therefore important.

Research has also shown that 'word-of-mouth', particularly through family and friends, has been organisations' most successful way of recruiting volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds.[6] However, it is important to look at a range of channels for delivering messages to ethnic communities.

Generally, no single strategy will be totally effective in reaching people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds. A strategy that combines methods is likely to be most successful.[6]

How?

Communication with communities is best done face-to-face. This can be through information sessions, focus groups, forums, interviews, meetings or festivals. However, other methods will also be successful, generally when used in combination. These methods include: ethnic media, newsletters, local newspapers and translated brochures.

Group exercise

For the whole group to discuss

The more traditional forms of communication include TV, radio, newspaper, and internet. What are some other (non-traditional) methods of getting information to people from a non-English-speaking background?

Notes for the trainer

Participants may suggest communicating through schools, women's groups, ethnic/community radio, newsletters, information sessions, community festivals etc.

Some effective channels for disseminating information to ethnic communities follow.

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[6] Australian Multicultural Foundation and Volunteering Australia (2007), *National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds*, Melbourne: Volunteering Australia

Communication channels	Points to consider
Through community organisations and community leaders	Communities are more trusting of information delivered in person, as in an information session. Face-to-face sessions with communities can be organised through community leaders and through partnerships with community organisations. Partnerships with communities are more successful when the community has control over the design and implementation of the project. Community leaders are a very trusted source of information. However, community leaders can also vet information and leave out information that they don't feel is appropriate (e.g. about domestic violence services). Recent focus groups with young Muslims (AMF and VA, 2007) found that community leaders play a crucial role in promoting volunteering among Muslim youth. If a respected community leader specifically sought their participation and clearly explained the activities required and how to get involved, young Muslims of both genders would generally willingly assist. The families of these young people would also be highly likely to support their involvement environment, due to the trust and respect that the leaders had in the community.
Ethnic media	Some communities have their own newspapers, e.g. Spanish, Italian, Greek, etc. Ethnic (including talk back) radio is a very popular medium with different communities, particularly for those who are housebound (mothers and the elderly). Some smaller communities have no print media (e.g. the Somalian community) and radio is the only means of accessing information. The Somali radio program on Saturday is listened to by the whole community.

Adapted from Judith Miralles & Associates and Australian Multicultural Foundation 2006, *Towards greater cultural diversity in the volunteer sector.*

Case study 3

An information session about health services within Australia was held for young refugee and migrant women. Even after the session the women did not really understand what community health centres were offering and how they could access them. It was not until they were shown how to get to the local community health centre and shown around the centre that they understood exactly what it offered. Many booked in to have dental work during that visit.

Case study 4

Islamic Women's Group

To promote volunteering to women from an Islamic women's group an initial meeting with the group's coordinator was organised. The coordinator then discussed volunteering at the group meetings. To encourage the women to become involved in volunteering, she took up a volunteering position herself. Others were then confident enough to follow.

Exercise

Read through case studies 3 and 4, and discuss the following questions in small groups and then report back:

What were the key success factors in these approaches?

What other strategies could have helped with accessing these communities?

Notes for the trainer

Key success factors:

↗ *More than one method of communication was used in both case studies, increasing the success.*

↗ *The second case study shows that Muslim women needed to develop trust and feel safe in the volunteering environment before they could volunteer. This was achieved through the involvement of the coordinator.*

Other strategies that could be used:

↗ *Information brochures to explain the services provided.*

↗ *Written information about volunteering.*

↗ *Organisation providing information face-to-face at the Islamic women's meeting.*

Research findings

National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds (in press)

↗ Media was the third most effective communication channel for the ten language groups surveyed.

↗ The most effective recruitment channels overall were, in order: family/friends 46%; through community clubs/groups 46%; media 17%; brochures 13%; and presentations by organisations 12%.

↗ Effective recruitment channels varied across language groups, for example:

  ↗ recruitment through community organisations was most effective for the Croatian, Greek, Vietnamese and Polish-speaking communities;

  ↗ the Mandarin-speaking communities were more evenly spread over the methods of recruitment compared to the other language groups;

  ↗ the Greek, Macedonian and Arabic-speaking communities rated media much higher than all the other language groups;

  ↗ brochures were a relatively successful means of recruitment (approx 20%) with Vietnamese, Macedonian, Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic-speaking communities, but were the least effective method with Italian, Greek and Croatian-speaking communities.

↗ The main sources of information about volunteering opportunities for Muslim youth interviewed in focus groups (AMF and VA, 2007) were:

  ↗ word of mouth – particularly parents, friends and community leaders,

  ↗ the local mosque,

  ↗ community radio, and

  ↗ local newspapers.

The messages about volunteering delivered to culturally and linguistically diverse communities must consider a range of understandings of volunteering.

Take different perceptions of volunteering into account

Why?

When developing a strategy to communicate with/reach volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse communities it is important to take differing perceptions of volunteering into account. This will have an impact on what messages to give to the community.

Different communities bring varied experiences of volunteering from their countries of birth. Volunteering as it is known in Australia is often quite different from volunteering in other countries. People from other countries are often involved in informal voluntary activity, for example in their extended family or immediate neighbourhood, as part of their religion or culture. For example, Muslims have a religious duty to help others in need. In some countries, Vietnam for instance, organisations like the Country Fire Authority/Rural Fire Service do not exist. If there were a fire in a village, then the whole community would help to put the fire out. In some communities volunteer work can be seen as work that should be paid. Some communities have very little understanding of how the Australian social welfare system works, let alone what it means to volunteer within the system.

How?

The messages about volunteering delivered to culturally and linguistically diverse communities must consider a range of understandings of volunteering. These can be explored through consultations with community leaders, and in focus groups, forums etc. But it may also mean using different terms to attract the initial interest of communities. It is important to make messages positive, emphasising that the volunteer can make a real contribution to the organisation.

Research findings

Martin (1999) says that failing not only to recognise but also to account for different understandings of volunteering in different cultural contexts can have considerable implications for project designers and managers. Some of these different understandings include:

↗ In some countries volunteers have been used to convert people to different religious faiths.

↗ Volunteering to help others for no financial gain is strongly rooted in Judeo-Christian ideals of selfless service to others.

↗ Social service as we have it in Australia can be quite foreign to new arrivals. 'Many of these people are not used even to the basic level of government service provision, let alone non-government or community based structures. The fact that theses services are delivered by people who are not paid may be incomprehensible.'

Case study 5

At Shepparton in regional Victoria, promoting volunteering as a way of *strengthening the community* succeeded in attracting the culturally and linguistically diverse community to attend a meeting about volunteering.
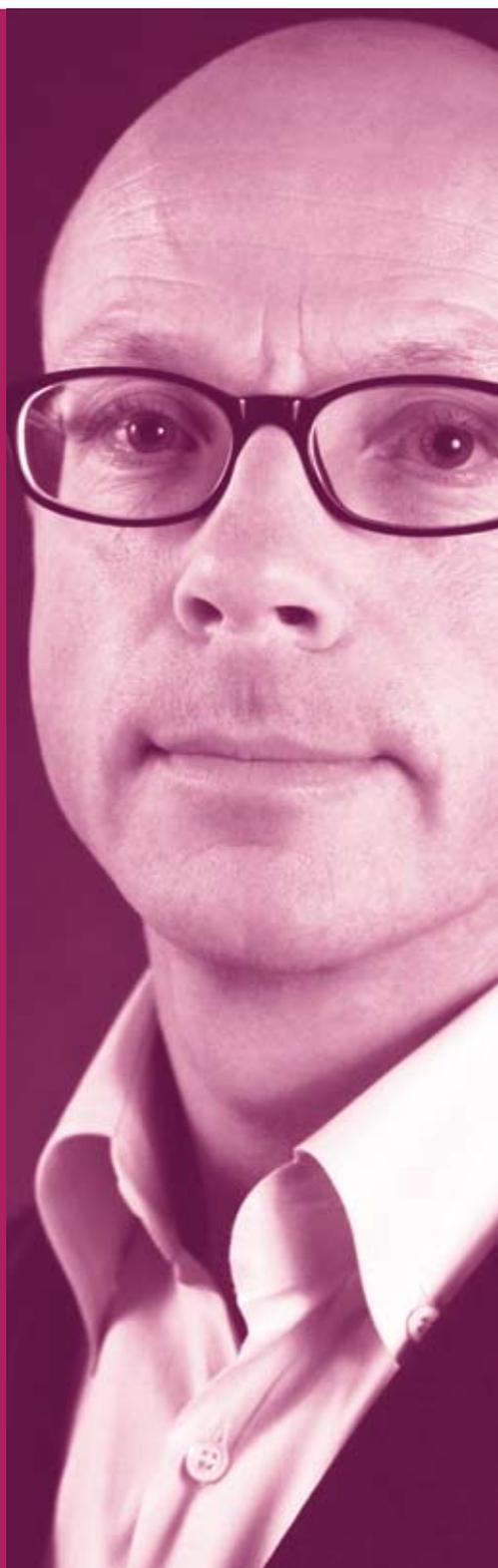
Group exercise

Develop the wording for a promotional brochure to invite diverse communities to an information session about volunteering for your organisation.

Notes for the trainer

The case study above and the group exercise are meant to encourage participants to think about the wording they can use to promote their service and volunteering experience. Sometimes the word volunteering will not be used in the promotional material.

Key Action 3

Account for Limited English

Why?

Low English proficiency can be a barrier both for mainstream organisations and for the volunteer. This section will look at dealing with low English proficiency specifically when recruiting volunteers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Issues raised by limited English skills once the volunteer has been recruited will be covered in Module 3.

How?

Communicating effectively with people who have limited English means paying particular attention to the language that people representing the organisation use and how they present information. It is important that potential volunteers receive clear messages

↗ in promotional material and when getting information about the organisation face to face, and

↗ during application and selection.

When delivering information sessions, or conducting forums or interviews, consider visual presentations and bilingual presentations. Always use simple English and avoid jargon.

Research findings

National Survey of Australian Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds (in press)

↗ The biggest barrier for organisations to recruiting volunteers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds was low English proficiency.

↗ For the volunteers themselves English language was a barrier but travel and time were greater barriers.

↗ Low English proficiency was more of an issue for older volunteers.

The process of applying and being selected for volunteer positions can be simplified to make it easier and more effective for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The selection and application process

Why?

Selection and application processes that rely too heavily on mastery of English, particularly written English, will exclude some people whom you would like to be able to recruit. The process of applying and being selected for volunteer positions can be simplified to make it easier and more effective for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

How?

Application forms can be written using simple language. Alternatively, people can be helped to fill out application forms over the counter, during an information session or even during interview. It is often much less stressful to interview one on one and during that process explain about the service, the job position and what is expected of the position.

Interviews can also be conducted in groups or with the help of a third person.

> **Group exercise**
>
> Your organisation expects volunteers to fill out an application form and attend an interview. How can this process be made easier for people with low English proficiency?

Role design and structure of work tasks

Why?

Volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may be unable to perform certain tasks, or limited in their ability to complete the full task because of limited English. This can mean volunteer roles and tasks need to be reviewed and (re)designed.

How?

A volunteer role can be restructured so that aspects of the role that require good English/literacy skills can be shared by a volunteer with these skills.

> **Case study 6: Exercise**
>
> A person from a non-English-speaking background was volunteering in a Citizen's Advice Bureau. The volunteer could speak English well enough but the role also required them to write a report at the end of the session, and this was difficult for the volunteer, whose literacy skills were inadequate. However, at the end of the shift the organisation sat the volunteer down with another volunteer who could write English well. The first volunteer explained what needed to go in the report and the other volunteer wrote it up. The role was successfully shared, and the volunteer of non-English-speaking background was able to go on making their contribution.
>
> What other examples can you think of where a role could be restructured so that a person of non-English-speaking background could still perform the role which they could not otherwise?

Case study 7

City of Whitehorse in Victoria has identified that language is something that stops people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds volunteering. So as part of their Meals on Wheels program they have put native English-speaking and non-English-speaking volunteers together to deliver meals. The program is designed not only to improve the Meals on Wheels service to clients from different cultural backgrounds but also to build the English skills and confidence of volunteers.

Notes for the trainer

Case study 7 shows how a role can be shared to deal with issues raised by a person in a volunteer role having low English proficiency. It demonstrates that with a bit of lateral thinking about the role design, both the volunteer and the clients receiving the service can benefit. You can discuss other volunteer positions that this example could apply to.

Activity: Recruitment Planning Process

Key Action	Activity that will achieve key action	Timeframe	Responsibility & resources
Know your community ↗ Identify communities ↗ Identify demographic characteristics ↗ How will community meet organisation's needs?			
Work out how best to communicate ↗ Strategies to disseminate information to community ↗ Accounting for different perceptions of volunteering			
Account for limited English Strategies to include volunteers with limited English ↗ Application and selection ↗ Redesigning roles			
Monitor the success of your strategies			

Participants are asked to work through the recruitment planning process so that it is relevant to their own organisation.

Notes for the trainer

↗ *This plan takes into account all of the areas discussed in this module so that participants can develop a plan that would apply to their own organisation.*

↗ *Ask participants to break down the actions so that they are clear about what they are doing and that the steps are achievable.*

↗ *It is important to monitor the success of the strategy/plan. This can be done by monitoring numbers of volunteers recruited from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, speaking to the communities, speaking to the volunteers, or by informal feedback (e.g. from service users).*

Other resources

Martin, Jay, 1999, 'Volunteering in a Culturally Diverse Context: Implications for Project Designers and Managers', *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, Vol. 4, no. 1.

Vangelista, A , 1999, 'Multicultural volunteering: Reflections on the 'salad bowl', *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, Vol. 4 no. 1, pp. 31-8

Warburton J, Oppenheimer M, & Zappala G, 2004, 'Marginalizing Australia's volunteers. The need for socially inclusive practices in the non-profit sector', *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, Vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 33-40

Multicultural directories <www.culturaldiversity.com.au/Default.aspx?tabid=80>

Multicultural media <www.culturaldiversity.com.au/Default.aspx?tabid=179>

module 3

Culture is covered in Module 4 – but can be covered in this Module instead, or in both.

WELCOMING & ORIENTING VOLUNTEERS

This module looks at how volunteer-involving organisations can maximise the volunteering experience and productivity of volunteers by providing a supportive and inclusive work environment from the outset.

In the following pages, we will highlight some of the important things to take note of in the initial welcoming and orientation of volunteers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

Key Action 1

Ensure limited English does not stop participation and effectiveness

Why?

Essential to an inclusive work environment is the acknowledgement that limited English does not need to be an obstacle to participation and effectiveness in the workplace. There are many simple ways that language issues can be addressed, but these all hinge on the continuous support and dedication of the organisation and the support of existing volunteers.

How?

There are a number of strategies that organisations can use to deal with limited English in newly recruited volunteers, and to make sure that they feel welcome and are properly inducted into the organisation so that they understand key procedures and responsibilities.

Managers need to try to build others' commitment to communicating effectively with volunteers of diverse language backgrounds by encouraging all staff to see limited English skills as a challenge and a learning opportunity (for all) rather than as a barrier.

Strategy: Make good communication everyone's responsibility

Cross-cultural communication strategies will work best if they are adopted across the whole organisation. Managers need to try to build others' commitment to communicating effectively with volunteers of diverse language backgrounds by encouraging all staff to see limited English skills as a challenge and a learning opportunity (for all) rather than as a barrier. They can do this by encouraging existing volunteers and paid staff to see communication difficulties not as the personal problem of the non-English-speaker but as a shared problem that everyone can help overcome. Developing this kind of ethos can be one goal of cross-cultural communication training.

Self-reflection task

What initiatives/strategies could be adopted across the whole organisation that you think would help your staff communicate more effectively with people from a language-other-than-English background?

Notes for the trainer

The following examples are from the Toolkit for Involving Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds (Volunteering Australia, 2007). Participants may suggest these themselves but you can take them through any that may be overlooked:

↗ ***Using simple, direct, concrete language.***

People learning a new language start with a small number of basic all-purpose words and then build on that. Simplify how you phrase things and play to the person's strengths by using the words they are most likely to already know. Example: 'Can you please help me with...?' is easier to understand than 'I wonder if you would mind helping me with...?'

Avoid acronyms and jargon because they assume a lot of prior knowledge – this applies to all new recruits, not just those of diverse cultural backgrounds.

↗ ***Showing as well as explaining – then seeking confirmation.***

Walk as well as talk people through work routines and procedures, then get them to show you what you have shown them. Avoid getting just 'Yes' or 'No' answers to questions about whether they have understood. Make sure that they have, especially when it involves physical safety or duty of care to clients and/or the public.

↗ ***Working out alternatives and back-ups to written communication.***

Even people whose spoken English is adequate may not be able to read English; they may not be literate in their own language or they may be unfamiliar with English script.

Think about key bits of information for volunteers that are placed on notice boards or in pigeon holes, such as rosters, meeting notices, warnings, telephone messages, invitations, and make sure that these also get passed on face-to-face; this could be built into daily or weekly team meetings, or into a particular job, e.g. reception. If you have a buddy system, it could be part of the buddy's job to help with reading and writing tasks, such as checking the notice board and writing OH&S or client visit reports.

↗ *Limiting written communication (forms and paperwork) to the essentials.*

This means reviewing and hopefully streamlining and cutting down on paperwork – something everyone will thank you for. Look at the writing you ask volunteers to do or the written information you provide them with, make sure it's needed and eliminate duplications and overlaps.

Strategy: Visual messages

Pictures, symbols and other visual aides are a great way to make sure a message is clearly understood. Where possible, organisations should try to use a limited amount of text in handouts and resources. Using pictures and symbols when training about safety issues is particularly important. If used well, pictures and recognised universal symbols can be an effective way of communicating to people from diverse language backgrounds.

Examples

Exercise

Are there any safety concerns or dangers in your organisation's workplace(s) that may need addressing?

How would you represent these graphically (without words) to another person?

Further resources

The SafeWork South Australia website has a number of posters which can be downloaded in PDF giving explanations of common safety signs in a range of community languages. Go to:
http://www.safework.sa.gov.au/contentPages/docs/aeWorkSafetySignsPoster.pdf
http://www.safework.sa.gov.au/contentPages/docs/aeSafetySignsx5.pdf

Provide a comfortable and relaxed environment when informally assessing language skills so that volunteers do not feel they are being judged or tested.

Strategy: Check the volunteer's level of English

It is important initially to establish the new volunteer's level of English. Rather than assuming anything at the beginning, managers should engage the new volunteer, have a conversation with them and find out what their level of both spoken and written English is. Note that it is common for people from a language background other then English to underestimate their competence in English, so it is important to provide a comfortable and relaxed environment when informally assessing language skills so that volunteers do not feel they are being judged or tested.

If necessary, an interpreter can be provided – just because the volunteer does not speak English well does not mean that they will not be a useful part of the team. Speak to them and find out what it is they are good at, what their interests are, how they think they can contribute; then think about what this means for the organisation.

Strategy: Involve community in orientation

In some cases community leaders could be invited to take part in the initial orientation process. Community leaders are greatly respected in some communities and can be sources of support and guidance. Again, this could also be seen as a worthwhile opportunity for reciprocal learning for both the existing volunteers at the organisation and the new volunteer, with the community leader taking on the role of a guide in order to assist a two-way understanding.

It is important that new volunteers are made to feel welcome and comfortable in their new surroundings. This being the case, organisations should not only encourage community leaders to be involved in the welcome and orientation process but new volunteers could also be encouraged to invite someone to come along with them to sit in on proceedings and become involved too.

Self-reflection task

Small group work is preferable when introducing new volunteers into unfamiliar settings.

Why do you think this might be?

Notes for the trainer

Here are some examples:

↗ *People feel more comfortable.*

↗ *The dynamics of a small group make it easier to work together.*

↗ *It is easier to try new things in small groups.*

Strategy: Focus on explaining the essentials

A phased approach to orientation will ensure volunteers are not overwhelmed by being given too much information all at once. Aim to give new volunteers time to go home, digest the information and discuss it with others. This in turn will lead to better levels of understanding and confidence on the part of the new volunteer.

Identify the key organisational procedures and processes that need to be explained. Again, these need to be written in simple, plain English (using visual aides if possible). For explaining more complex issues, for example: confidentiality, rights, and individual responsibilities, an interpreter could be used to ensure understanding.

New volunteers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds should also be provided with take-home materials and encouraged to refer back to them when necessary. Often people will report that written materials are very useful as references to be read and absorbed at their own pace. For example, other family members can help explain unfamiliar words and phrases or a bilingual dictionary used.

What do we mean by 'plain English'?

'Identify the staff members for whom the planned training would be an appropriate development opportunity, and specify dates and times at which they can attend.'

This is not plain English but it is an example of the kind of language you often find in organisational documents. A much easier and clearer (plain English) way to say this would be:

'Report on who needs training and when they can come.'

You will find a useful guide to what 'plain English' means and how to adopt it across your organisation at

<www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/plain_english_at_work>

Source: *Toolkit for Involving Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* (Volunteering Australia, 2007)

Scenario: Exercise

Consider this scenario:

You have conducted a comprehensive welcome and induction with your new volunteer from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. This session has covered the following important issues:

↗ An outline of organisation structure and history

↗ Reporting relationships

↗ Organisational mission

↗ Policies and procedures:

– OHSW; attendance cards; sign-on and sign-off book; car parking; travel reimbursement

– rights and responsibilities; ethics; confidentiality; boundaries; equal opportunity.

Two weeks after the volunteer has started at the organisation a fire drill is conducted at 2 p.m. The safety officer checks the sign-off book and notices that the volunteer has not signed out at the end of her shift at 1 p.m. Panic ensues.

What could have been done to prevent this?

Activity-based learning is a good way to show new volunteers what is required of them in a real-life work setting.

Some possibilities:

↗ *Improve the induction program – cover all safety procedures first, highlighting importance and why; or walk everyone through the safety procedures*

↗ *Buddy responsible for helping new volunteer to sign out after every shift for the first month*

Strategy: Activity-based learning/on the job learning

Activity-based learning is a good way to show new volunteers what is required of them in a real-life work setting. These are a few ways that activity-based learning can be done:

↗ Rather than telling them what is required in a certain role, let them have a go at the task involved (e.g. answering telephones).

↗ Role-playing – the volunteer observes the trainer doing the task in role play and then acts out the task themselves in a controlled (safe) environment.

Activity-based learning gives trainers/supervisors a way of gauging their new volunteers' understanding and competence in specific roles – by finding out what the problems are, they are better equipped to respond effectively to volunteers' learning/training needs.

Another useful strategy is modelling, where the trainer models the behaviour that is expected. For example, a trainer may model the values of inclusiveness and patience in day-to-day dealings with trainees. By 'walking the talk', this trainer leads by example and shows what is expected.

> **Group exercise**
>
> What other training strategies can you identify?

Notes for the trainer

Some possibilities:

↗ *Teaching from practical experience – using/teaching by example.*

↗ *Familiarising volunteers with jargon/terminology used in workplace.*

↗ *Providing templates/examples of the work they are expected to produce.*

> **Case study 1**
>
> After attending a *Step into Voluntary Work* (SIVW) course, the coordinator of volunteer services at St Vincent's Hospital initiated an English as a Second Language course for volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds. The ESL course was facilitated by another SIVW participant.
>
> This gave volunteers an informal, non-threatening environment in which improve language skills in the workplace context, as the person conducting the course could make sure that the volunteers learnt and practised the language that they needed to use to complete work tasks.

Strategy: Use buddies/language supporters

Another good way to improve understanding and ensure language skills are not an obstacle is to team new volunteers with existing volunteers in a buddy system. This way, the buddy can show the new volunteer the ropes, and also perhaps take on a mentoring role. This buddy system creates a reciprocal learning scenario where the new volunteer is supported in their role and the buddy learns more about their new colleague's background and culture – if successful, this in turn leads to mutual understanding and respect. Also, aside from simply offering support and guidance to the new volunteer, buddies will be made to feel as if they are a valued, trusted member of the team – this is a good way to recognise the efforts of longer-term volunteers.

Case study 2

A Spanish-speaking woman who had been working as a volunteer for a number of months was considered a very capable, dedicated and valuable member of the team. Because of her efforts, the organisation thought to put her into a new, more advanced role that would require her to keep a log book recording each day's events.

Her spoken English was not a problem, and she had managed to keep quiet that she struggled with writing English. Once it was established that writing was a problem for her, the organisation wondered whether the position should be offered to her at all. A colleague then suggested that she be given a buddy who would meet with her for an hour at the end of every shift to run through her work – her buddy would then help her to write it up into the log book.

Obviously, it is important to match buddies appropriately with new volunteers and some common link, however superficial, is always essential. For example, try to match to age, gender or working teams. It is important that pairs are given the best opportunity to form a trusting bond – this is known to be more probable if a common ground is used when matching people.

Self-reflection task

Think about what skills/attributes (or what training) buddies would need to be effective.

Notes for the trainer

Here are some possible answers:

↗ *Understand the work tasks.*

↗ *Have cultural awareness and sensitivity.*

↗ *Be non-judgemental.*

↗ *Need to have some communication strategies for working with people with low English language skills.*

Identify opportunities in workplace routines and roles that will help build language skills.

Tips: Improving English on the job

'On the job' is an ideal place to acquire, develop and practise new language skills. Volunteers whose involvement is limited at the beginning by poor English will not be permanently limited in this way given the right support and opportunities for learning and practising English. The time and energy invested by an organisation in providing these opportunities will pay off.

↗ **Work out exactly when and where volunteers need to be able to speak good English – for their own and clients' welfare and safety – and design roles and allocate tasks accordingly.** People need opportunities to acquire and practise new language skills but, as with any new skill, they need to do this in a low-risk environment, where the effect of getting things wrong does not have a highly negative impact for them or the organisation. Giving them the right tasks is important.

↗ **Use working partners and team structures to build language skills.** Partnering a new volunteer who has limited or basic English with a buddy, or putting them in a team, is an ideal way to support them so that they can develop English skills while making a contribution. For this to work, the buddy or team members need to actively contribute to the process, so choosing the right team members and briefing them will be important.

↗ **Identify opportunities in workplace routines and roles that will help build language skills.** For example, volunteers with limited English could benefit from roles that involve a lot of communication and interaction with others while having low-risk tasks and processes. Meetings and social gatherings also provide opportunities for structured interactions that require people to talk.

Source: *Toolkit for Involving Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* (Volunteering Australia, 2007)

Key Action 2

Make workplace documents and procedures culturally and linguistically sensitive

Why?

It is important for organisations to model a culturally inclusive approach in their policies, documents and formal procedures.

How?

The most effective way to do this is to ensure that the organisation adopts a 'built-in' and not 'bolted-on' approach to the development of culturally inclusive policies and procedures. What does this mean? It means that diversity is incorporated into all core organisational documents so it becomes an accepted part of organisational culture and practice. This is in keeping with the National Standards for Involving Volunteers.

National Standards

The *National Standards for Involving Volunteers in Not-for-Profit Organisations* consist of eight standards for a 'best practice' approach to managing volunteers. This of course includes volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Three standards in particular highlight the need for documentation to be culturally inclusive and non-discriminatory, and able to be understood by volunteers regardless of their language background.

Standard 1. Policies and procedures

An organisation that involves volunteers shall define and document its policies and procedures for volunteer involvement and ensure that these are understood, implemented and maintained at all levels of the organisation where volunteers are involved.

Standard 3. Recruitment and selection

An organisation that involves volunteers shall plan and have clearly documented volunteer recruitment, selection and orientation policies and procedures that are consistent with non-discriminatory practices and guidelines.

Standard 8. Continuous improvement

An organisation that involves volunteers shall plan and continually review its volunteer management system to ensure that opportunities to improve the quality of the system are identified and actively pursued.

Volunteering Australia recommends that all volunteer-involving organisations familiarise themselves with the National Standards and aim for best practice in their programs. The National Standards, together with an Implementation Guide and Workbook, are available from Volunteering Australia by visiting www.volunteeringaustralia.org or calling (03) 9820 4100.

Tips for developing culturally inclusive policies and procedures

Here are some strategies that may help you formulate appropriate policies and procedures for including volunteers from diverse backgrounds in your program:

↗ Recruit the assistance of a person from a CALD background to give advice. It is always helpful to get the advice of your target market to give you an insight into their attitudes and needs.

↗ Include general statements about valuing diversity and about your organisation's commitment to providing the resources needed to support diversity. Rather than talking specifically about involving CALD volunteers, it may be more useful to work general diversity statements into your organisational documents to help it become part of normal business practice.

↗ Policy should relate to diversity in general, rather than be culturally specific. As the needs and sensitivities of different cultures can vary enormously, it is worthwhile keeping policies relating to diversity generic and adaptable.

↗ Policies and procedures should be evolving documents that are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. As issues and gaps in your policies arise, these should be updated to ensure they remain relevant and useful to the organisation.

↗ Involve paid and volunteer staff in the process of developing and reviewing policies and procedures. Formal review processes involving all staff and informal mechanisms for them to provide feedback will help keep policies relevant, and will ensure that procedures are workable and meet the needs of a diverse workforce. Volunteers' involvement in this process also helps ensure that policies and procedures are understood and followed. Make the review process a 'live', verbal one, not a written one, so that you can be sure that volunteers of diverse backgrounds a) understand the policies and b) have some input.

Source: *Toolkit for Involving Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* (Volunteering Australia, 2007)

Individual exercise

Take the time to fill in the *Cultural Competency Checklist*. Filling the form out honestly will give you an idea of how your organisational practices rate in terms of promoting cultural diversity and accessible and equitable services – it may also highlight some weaknesses and strengths worth further consideration.

Tally up your score by adding up all of your answers. The lower your score, the more culturally sensitive and competent you are. Use this as a learning tool – you may see some areas that need a little more work and consideration.

What are some other ways to ensure that your organisation's procedures and documents are culturally sensitive?

Notes for the trainer

Here are some examples:

↗ *Take time to induct well.*

↗ *Look at documentation you have and adapt it.*

↗ *Display photos of staff and volunteers on wall – with responsibilities listed.*

↗ *Use simple written language.*

↗ *Do a language audit of all documents.*

↗ *Can complex policy documents be translated?*

↗ *Is there a bilingual person who can explain complex organisational policies (e.g. confidentiality)?*

↗ *Provide opportunities for volunteers' expertise and life experience to inform practice.*

CULTURAL COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

Complete checklist to see if you engage in practices that promote cultural diversity.

Choose one of the following for each question:

1 = Always   2 = Sometimes   3 = Never

The office, materials and resources

☐ I am aware of the positive impact of having posters, pictures and other materials that reflect the cultural diversity of the community we serve within the workplace.

☐ I encourage the provision of reading materials, magazines and other printed information in languages other than English in waiting areas.

☐ I encourage the use of information in different languages and use images that are culturally appropriate.

☐ I encourage better communication with people who speak languages other than English. For example, the placement of large interpreter boards in the reception area.

☐ I seek information from people and other community contacts, which will assist me in adapting to the diverse needs and preferences of people.

☐ I advocate for review within my agency (i.e. mission statement, policies and procedures) to ensure that its principles and practices promote cultural diversity and cultural competence.

☐ I attend training sessions which enhance my cultural awareness.

☐ I have well-established networks with individuals from local ethno-specific services.

☐ I work collaboratively with ethno-specific agencies in our area.

Communicating with people

☐ For people who speak languages other than English, I attempt to learn basic greetings.

☐ I am competent and confident in determining language needs and in using accredited interpreters.

☐ When interacting with people who have limited English proficiency I always keep in mind that:
  • limited English does not equate with limited intellectual functioning,
  • limited English has no relation to the ability of a person to communicate in their language of origin,
  • people may or may not be literate in their language of origin or English.

☐ When communicating in writing I ensure that all materials are written in the recipients' language of origin.

Values, assumptions and attitudes

☐ I explore my own values, assumptions and attitudes about issues.

☐ I explore my own beliefs, assumptions and attitudes and how they impact on how I work with people using the service.

☐ I avoid imposing values.

☐ In every situation, I discourage colleagues, service users and others from using racial and ethnic slurs by helping them understand the impact their language can have on others.

☐ I intervene in an appropriate manner when I observe other staff or service users engage in behaviours that show cultural insensitivity or prejudice.

☐ I recognise and accept that individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds may or may not want to have anything to do with their own culture.

☐ I understand and respect that factors such as gender, class, age, etc. have significance amongst different cultures.

Source: Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association (MDAA), NSW

module 4

Culture is covered in this Module, but it can be covered in Module 3 instead or in both.

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS

This module shows how, once an organisation has used resources to recruit and induct volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds, it can make sure its new volunteers stay for the long term.

Key Action 1

Integrate support into core business practices

Why?

Most staff will be looking forward to welcoming volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds, but the support these volunteers will need to feel confident and productive goes beyond goodwill; it has to be practical and sustained by internal policies and procedures. Managers of volunteers will need to have set in place procedures and systems and to have prepared the existing staff – both paid and voluntary. These policies and procedures will not differ dramatically from those already in place to support the general volunteer force, but as a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not appropriate, specific strategies will need to be developed.

How?

A sensible way to manage the process of identifying and developing specific strategies to support newly recruited volunteers is to build it into the regular policy and procedures review process.

Once again, the National Standards apply to best practice in supporting volunteers of diverse cultural backgrounds as well. The trainer delivering this module can draw on the material provided about the National Standards in the introductory Trainers' Preparation section of this Manual.

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Self-reflection task

Do you have a regular review process?

If you do – what has helped you achieve this?

If you do not – what strategies would help you to achieve this?

Notes for the trainer

This first exercise identifies the real situation managers of volunteer are working within and will feed into the exercises and case studies which follow.

↗ *Ask the group to share their experiences and summarise these on the whiteboard.*

↗ *Classify them under broad headings of 'facilitators' and 'blockers' if possible. Responses could include: lack of time, lack of a planning/review culture in the organisation, management support, incorporation of review process into job descriptions and performance indicators...*

This is an opportunity to link the Support module back to the Planning module and to reinforce the point that a whole-of-organisation approach needs to be in place.

Group exercise

Think back to the Strategic Action Plan you developed in Module 1. Review the plan to determine if you have included ways to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach to support your volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

What other strategies could be implemented?

Notes for the trainer

Possible strategies:

↗ *Provide a formal feedback mechanism for volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds.*

Some volunteers may lack the confidence to approach their manager informally. Each volunteer would be given a scheduled time to meet during the initial months of work. The meeting would provide a structured environment to identify and address any emergent problems. It would also be a valuable opportunity to recognise and praise good work and to build confidence.

↗ *Include 'mentoring' in the job description for the manager of volunteers.*

The message to volunteers would be that building and maintaining a good relationship between manager and volunteers is strongly endorsed by the organisation.

Increasing the pool of people within the organisation who can communicate across cultures will increase organisational capacity and support service delivery.

↗ *Include a 'buddy' role in the job description for some volunteer positions.*

The message to volunteers would be that providing support to other volunteers is a bona fide work role.

It would then be possible to argue that this work requires training/professional development and it would also be possible to develop performance indicators for it.

↗ *Schedule regular cross-cultural training for all staff.*

This will make it easier to allocate ongoing funds to cross-cultural training, and to incorporate the training into annual work plans for staff.

Key Action 2

Harness support of existing volunteers and paid staff

Why?

Harnessing the support of existing staff, paid and voluntary, delivers benefits on a number of fronts – it makes the job of the manager of volunteers a lot easier, as s/he does not need to:

↗ constantly promote the positive outcomes of the decision to recruit volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds; or

↗ provide single-handed support to volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Increasing the pool of people within the organisation who feel confident and competent to communicate across cultures will also have wider application with respect to organisational capacity and service delivery.

How?

It will be much easier to harness staff support if they feel equipped to communicate with new volunteers from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Cross-cultural training has been mentioned previously; it is discussed again in this module because it is fundamental to building the confidence and skills of staff. Information about dress codes, religious practices, different ways of greeting people (e.g. when to shake hands, when to maintain eye contact) can do much to alleviate the nervousness that can arise during intercultural encounters.

> **Group exercise**
>
> Think about the cultural background of the volunteers you have recruited or will be recruiting.
>
> Are there any specific cultural or religious issues that staff need to know about?

Notes for the trainer

A range of issues may arise, depending on the population of the suburb or region. Participants may also identify ways to deal with such cultural differences during communication. Some common areas of difference are:

↗ *Duration of eye contact – may differ with age and gender of speaker and listener, e.g. with people from some South-east Asian countries*

↗ *Shaking hands – may not be appropriate between male and female, e.g. for some Muslims*

↗ *Touch – some cultures are more comfortable with touching each other during conversation, e.g. Spanish speakers*

↗ *Direct communication styles – i.e. openly disagreeing with person, saying no, expressing one's views openly. It may be better to ask the question in such a way that neither 'yes' nor 'no' is an option. Open-ended questions may be best especially if you are trying to finalise the roster!*

↗ *Concept of time – some cultures see time as the servant and not the master. Getting to work on time is not a key responsibility. Getting the work done is important but it doesn't matter really when one gets to work.*

Case study 1

The Melbourne Museum has been working closely with the Immigration Museum using the Museum's three annual cultural festivals to educate their own volunteers from English-speaking backgrounds about other cultures.

Together they have also been forming alliances with volunteer programs in some of the ethno-specific Museums to learn more about how to improve their own program and make it more culturally appropriate. This includes the Vietnamese Museum on Phillip Island and the Chinese Museum in Bendigo. They will also be using the knowledge within their own volunteer base by sharing 'Travellers' Tales' of people's various cross-cultural experiences when travelling overseas.

Case study 2

Staff from Volunteer Alliance decided that they needed to make volunteers from diverse cultural and language backgrounds feel more comfortable in their working environment.

The Alliance has begun to run a series of articles in its regular newsletter about the issues faced by volunteers from diverse backgrounds. This is to help build understanding and support from other staff and volunteers. To assist in this process, the Alliance is also compiling a resource folder on various cross-cultural issues for the use of staff and volunteers.

Group exercise

Using Case studies 1 and 2:

What skills do staff need in order to feel confident about working with volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds?

What avenues do you have to access training for staff?

Forge partnerships with Migrant Resource Centres or ethno-specific organisations so that staff from these organisations can deliver cross-cultural training.

Notes for the trainer

Possibilities besides those in the case studies are to:

↗ *Forge partnerships with Migrant Resource Centres or ethno-specific organisations so that staff from these organisations can deliver cross-cultural training.*

↗ *Contract cross-cultural experts on a regular basis to conduct training.*

↗ *Begin to use the cross-cultural knowledge of new volunteers. This can be done in an informal way, e.g. over lunch or afternoon tea. It can be a good way of making new volunteers feel valued, but some sensitivity is required, as not everyone will either feel competent or wish to appear as an expert on their culture. How many Australians would be able to stand up and speak on Australian culture?*

For further discussion: We all have 'culture'

Some participants may feel that Australians do not have a 'culture'. The following definitions will help show that culture is a bit like 'oxygen' – we only notice it when it changes its composition.

Culture is...

...that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society (UNESCO website/Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology, Seymour-Smith, 1986)

...the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings, which is transmitted from one generation to another (Macquarie Dictionary)

Notes for the trainer

The following is taken from the Toolkit for Involving Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds *(Volunteering Australia, 2007). You may wish to use it as the basis for a group discussion during the training session, or as a handout for participants to use in further training within their organisations.*

> **What do we mean by 'culture'?**
>
> Cultural differences can be seen not just in our material lifestyles or in how we express ourselves artistically, but in what we think and believe; in the activities and learning we value; in how we speak and behave; and in how we treat each other and expect others to treat us.
>
> If you are managing a volunteer program involving culturally diverse volunteers, you need to be aware of and sensitive to the ways different customs and cultural norms can shape attitudes and behaviour, so that you can work with them and manage their impact in the workplace. Here are some examples:
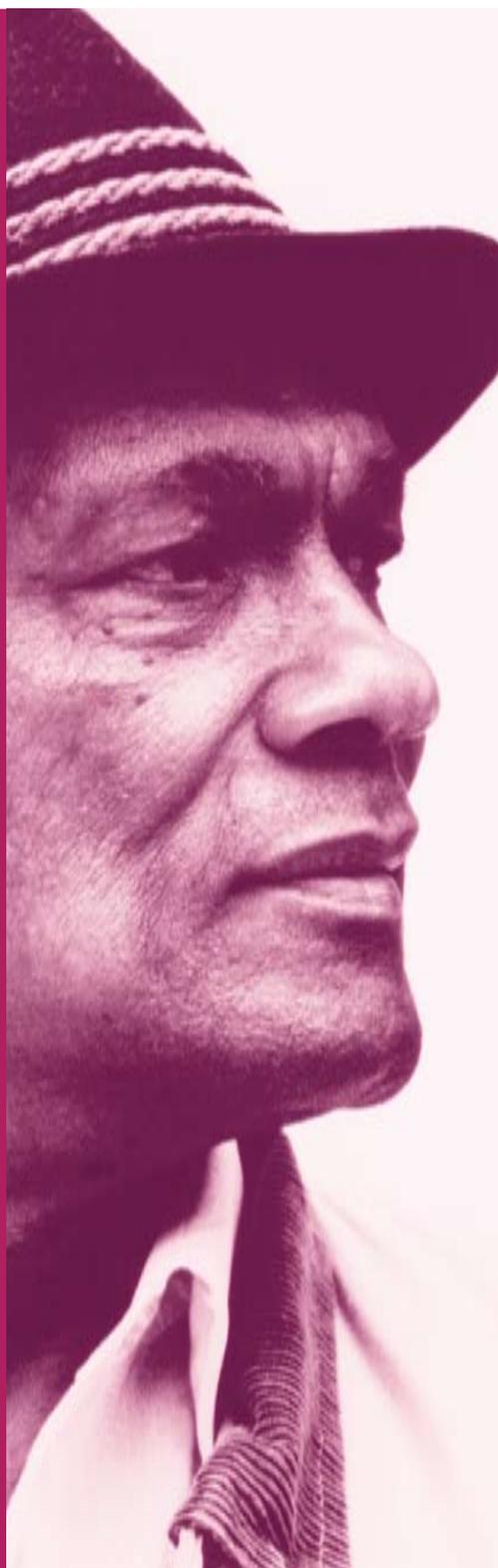
Communication

The informal Australian style of calling people by their first names will appear disrespectful to some, so finding out how people prefer to be addressed is important. Office or tea room chat can involve discussing home life, partners and family members, but to some people this could seem improper, or even threateningly intrusive (e.g. to those who have come as refugees from oppressive regimes) and they will not want to join in.

Some cultures value politeness over frankness, which has implications for feedback and discussing problems. Or outspokenness and combativeness in debate may be valued, and this can be experienced by others as rudeness, affecting how well people get on. Some are willing to give their opinions but only when asked. Some cultures value silence as much as speech, and when people do speak they may expect it to be given more weight than in cultures where people talk a great deal.

Social interaction

Older people may expect younger people to defer to them or show them more respect, and women may be expected to defer to men. This can create problems with, for example, younger people supervising older volunteers, or women supervising male volunteers.

Whether it is acceptable to touch another person, stand close, stare, or hold a person's gaze while speaking can vary between cultures. So can the acceptability of various physical habits like coughing, or blowing one's nose. While on one level these are trivial, they are also the most basic and visible forms cultural difference can take. These can be the things that give rise to tension or conflict and so often need to be covered in cultural awareness training.

Religious and moral attitudes

Religious restrictions, observances and taboos can affect how people dress, when they are available to volunteer, and what they can eat at social gatherings. It is also important to be aware that casual swearing, jokes about certain topics, or certain kinds of display material may also offend particular belief or value systems.

Consultation and decision making

Your staff consultation and the way decisions are made in the organisation may not be readily understood by people from some cultural backgrounds. For example, those with high respect for authority and hierarchy may be reluctant to have any input and expect you just to make decisions and give directions; others from collectivist cultures may be uncomfortable giving their personal views in isolation and may prefer to participate in more organised group discussions aimed at building consensus.

Regularly scheduled cross-cultural training will do much to create a welcoming environment for volunteers from people from a language other than English background.

What's 'different' about Australian culture?

Lots of Australians see their way of life as just 'normal' and that 'culture' is something only other people have. Here are some specific aspects of Australian culture that new arrivals to Australia can be surprised, puzzled or shocked by:

↗ the obsession with sport

↗ the fact that people often do not live near, socialise with or even stay in very close touch with other members of their immediate family

↗ the fact that a large percentage of Anglo-Celtic Australians seem to have no religion, do not regularly attend religious services, and do not celebrate religious festivals

↗ being asked to a function and then being expected to contribute the food and even equipment ('bring a plate')

↗ being expected to get actively involved in children's schooling, rather than leaving it to the experts

↗ having complete strangers ask 'How are you today?' during a transaction (e.g. at the bank or supermarket check-out).

Try exploring some of the ways in which Australians are 'different' from other cultures during cross-cultural awareness training with your paid and volunteer staff.

Source: *Toolkit for Involving Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds* (Volunteering Australia, 2007).

Key Action 2

Move from 'them and us' to 'us'

Why?

Staff are likely to be welcoming, but they may still be slightly apprehensive about the practical problems of working with newly recruited volunteers who they think may have English language difficulties, or whose names they cannot pronounce.

Regularly scheduled cross-cultural training will do much to create a welcoming environment for volunteers from people from a language other than English background. However, you may become aware of some resentment and perhaps even racist attitudes and discrimination. If that is the case, it will need to be addressed directly, in the same way that any instance of discrimination would need to be addressed.

How?

Leading by example, managers of volunteers need to model a welcoming and confident approach when they communicate with volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds. The following tips may be helpful:

↗ If you do not know how to pronounce someone's name – admit it, then take the time to learn. Do not mumble and rush through the name.

↗ Give the clear message that names are important whether they are Mary Smith or Hung The Nguyen.

Managers encountering racism or discrimination from paid staff and volunteers should seek support from Human Resource Management colleagues. The organisation should have relevant policies in place – if not, then the situation they are facing highlights the need for such policies.

> **Group exercise**
>
> What other actions would help create an environment where 'we are all one'?

Notes for the trainer

These are some strategies; participants may suggest others:

↗ Examine the organisation's social activities – can social functions be alcohol-free? What other options are there?

  Remember that an occasion meant to create cohesion may do the exact opposite if people feel deliberately excluded.

↗ Explore what is negotiable with respect to dress code.

  An example is a volunteer wearing a head scarf for religious purposes who negotiated with her manager that she would pin the scarf back when preparing morning tea in the kitchen. The manager was concerned about the possibility that the scarf would create OHS problems in an industrial kitchen.

↗ Advocate for your volunteers outside your organisations. Work with organisations your volunteers may come into contact with so staff in these are aware of potential cultural differences (such as dress code).

↗ Train and support volunteers acting as buddies to be advocates for their co-workers and empower them to deal with potential resistance from other volunteers and with low-level discrimination. Serious instances of discrimination should be brought to your notice for you to act on.

↗ Incorporate stories about volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds into the regular newsletter, but focus on the tasks they are performing rather than their cultural background.

> **Small group exercise**
>
> *For groups of three or four. Have participants report and compare their strategies.*
>
> You recruit a woman from a particular cultural background for a role in which she performs well, but your existing volunteers are unwelcoming and exhibit hostile behaviour towards her. What could you do to help her be accepted and fit in?
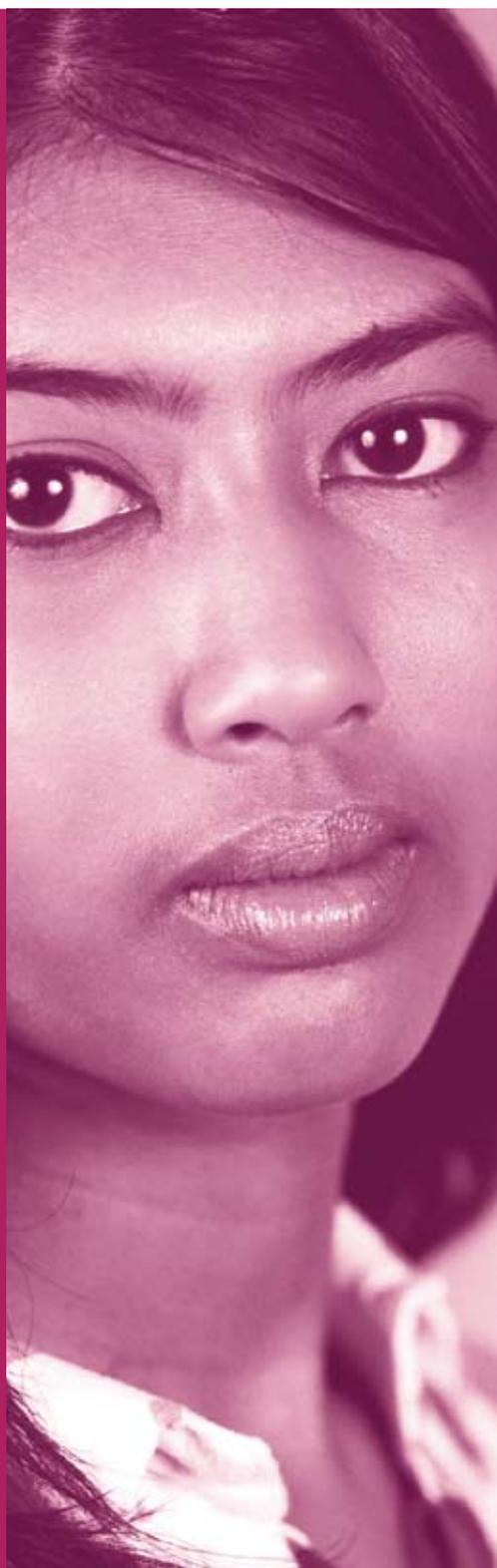
There are many reasons why a volunteer may not be performing at the level required.

The manager should review her working conditions to try to identify the cause of the problem and take appropriate steps to try to rectify the situation.

Notes for the trainer

Things to consider:

↗ *Does the organisation have a written policy on occupational health and safety for its volunteers?*

↗ *Does the policy address harassment and discrimination in the workplace?*

↗ *Is there a discernible reason why the existing volunteers are acting this way? Could it be that they feel threatened/uncomfortable/excluded by the new recruitment strategy?*

↗ *Have existing staff and volunteers been given cross-cultural training?*

↗ *Have volunteers been consulted about and had input to the new strategy?*

Group exercise

A team of volunteers is performing well, except for a woman volunteer from a culturally and linguistically diverse background who is performing unsatisfactorily.

What organisational practices would help her manager avoid such a situation in the future?

Notes for the trainer

There are many reasons why a volunteer may not be performing at the level required. The manager should review her working conditions to try to identify the cause of the problem and take appropriate steps to try to rectify the situation.

Things to consider:

↗ *Is there a documented inducted procedure for volunteers? Was the volunteer properly inducted?*

↗ *Is there a position description for the role the volunteer is performing? Does she understand her responsibilities?*

↗ *Does the position description need to be translated?*

↗ *Has the volunteer been trained for the role she is performing? Did she understand the training? Does she require additional training?*

↗ *Is there an established procedure for giving volunteers feedback or managing performance?*

↗ *Are there any cultural issues or misunderstandings that may be affecting her performance? Are there any factors in her work environment that may be interfering with her performance? How can these issues be addressed?*

Scenario: Exercise

A large hospital has a coordinator of volunteers who is herself a volunteer and is working with few resources. She needs to get support for a formal volunteer program and in particular, support for building cultural and linguistic diversity into the program. Management is not willing to resource the volunteer coordinator or the proposed program.

These are the other issues facing the coordinator:

↗ The current volunteer base at the hospital is drawn from an ageing population.

↗ There is a lack of management recognition that volunteers play a valuable role in the hospital.

↗ There is a need to replace current volunteers and broaden participation in volunteering.

↗ Needs of patients from diverse cultural backgrounds are not currently met because the current volunteers lack cultural diversity.

↗ The hospital relies heavily on patients' families to support patients.

The coordinator of volunteers decides that she has to come up with a new plan to address these issues. What needs to be in her new plan?

Scenario developed during a training workshop by participants Rick Barry, Jenny Lord, Gwenda Lawther and Jason Twomey.

Notes for the trainer

Some possibilities:

↗ *redesign volunteer roles*

↗ *conduct comprehensive cost-benefit analysis for management*

↗ *examine ways to get more from existing hospital resources, i.e. regarding allocating costs*

↗ *integrate new recruits with older volunteers (buddy up culturally and linguistically diverse volunteers with existing staff)*

↗ *gain buy in from existing paid staff (e.g. by highlighting benefits of increased and more diverse volunteer involvement)*

↗ *community-based recruitment campaign*

↗ *market positive aspects of volunteering to union representatives*

↗ *identify organisational champions for the initiative.*

Individual exercise: Implementing the action plan

Consider what key actions your organisation needs to have in place to ensure a coordinated, whole-of-organisation response to support volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Action plan – how these strategies are to be put into effect				
What	**Why**	**By whom**	**By when**	**Cost**