

Volunteer recruitment and screening

Volunteer recruitment

Recruiting volunteers for your organisation is often one of the most stressful and time-consuming parts of a coordinator's role. Find below some tips for what to include in your volunteer advertisement, and where to post it for maximum impact.



What to include in your advertisement

Creating a strong advertisement can help your organisation to stand out and ensure that you're attracting the right type of people. The following tips will help with this.

- ✦ Use key words to make your advertisement searchable. These might include 'EAL', 'tutor', 'refugee', and 'education'.
- ✦ Keep your advertisement to-the-point and informative. Consider attaching a more detailed position description to the advertisement.
- ✦ Weed out unsuitable volunteers by being clear about the requirements and expectations of your program, including days and times, commitment timeframes, and location.
- ✦ Include information about your screening procedures and child safety standards.
- ✦ Promote the benefits of the program for students and volunteers.

It's also a good idea to include a child safety statement in your advertisement. This states the organisation's commitment to child protection, and can help to deter people who pose a risk to the safety of children and young people.

Where to advertise for volunteers

The cost and effort of advertising in the following ways will vary. It's also worth thinking about the demographic of volunteer you are trying to recruit, as different groups will be more likely to access the following platforms. It's a good idea to include a question on the application form about where a prospective

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volunteer saw your ad, to determine which platforms are effective advertisements.

Websites

Websites like [GoVolunteer](#), [Ethical Jobs](#), [weVolunteer](#) and [Volunteering Victoria](#) are all useful places to advertise your position. You could also consider local community websites and groups, such as through Facebook.

Media and social media

Using media and social media to promote your OSHLSP and recruit volunteers can also be effective, as they'll often be eye-catching and are easily accessible to young audiences. In your advertisements, create social media tiles that can be easily shared across platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Keep in mind that you'll need to have someone monitoring the messages on these platforms, and ensure that if any images of students or volunteers are used, you have the signed permission of the subjects and/or their guardians.

Local councils

Your local council website or newsletter can also be great places to post advertisements, and are free of charge. They also ensure that volunteers live locally. Many councils also have a volunteer engagement officer who can help direct volunteers who approach council to your organisation, so it's a great idea to be on their radar.

Word of mouth

Word of mouth is one of the most effective means of volunteer recruitment. You can ask your existing tutors to reach out to their networks, and have initiatives like a ready-made email for them to send around and add a personal touch to. You could also consider holding an 'invite a friend' day, as a way of existing volunteers showcasing the organisation to their friends or family.

Volunteer resource centres

Regions across Victoria will have their own volunteer resource centres. As well as providing further advice on volunteer management, these centres can help to direct volunteers to your organisation. Find a list of local volunteer centres [here](#).

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Universities and TAFEs

Many courses at TAFEs and Universities require students to do a placement as part of their course, and this is something that you can capitalise on by reaching out to course coordinators, and advertising on university platforms. Look for local universities and TAFEs in your area, and consider reaching out to departments including teaching, education support, youth work and social work.

Other platforms

You could also consider posting eye-catching flyers at local community centres or shopping centres; posting advertisements in school and neighbourhood house newsletters; or contacting local charity groups, such as Rotary or Lions Clubs, or local faith organisations.

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Why to screen volunteers

A thorough screening of volunteers helps to save time and energy. It is also an integral part of ensuring that you recruit volunteers who are safe, and therefore protect the children and young people in your program, as well as volunteers who have the required skills and attributes to be an effective tutor with your organisation.

The screening process

Application Forms

The Volunteer Application Form is a key tool to conduct preliminary screening. It can be used to assess volunteer motivations, relevant knowledge, skills and experience, and written communication skills. The form should cover: motivation for volunteering; relevant training and experience; and the details of three referees, at least one of which should be a professional referee.

The interview process

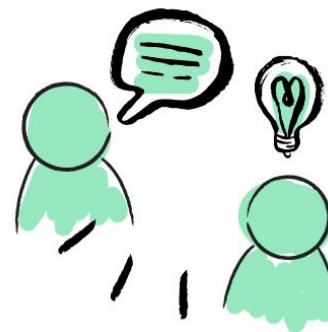
The interview process has the dual benefit of making sure the applicant is right for the role, as well as ensuring that your program meets their expectations. Here are some tips to ensure the interview is effective and efficient:

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- Decide on key questions before the interview. Use open questions and avoid leading questions (see examples below).
- Plan questions around the selection criteria mentioned in the job description.
- Identify the kinds of answers you want.
- The interview should feel professional but not overly formal. You should aim to make the applicant feel as comfortable as possible.
- Make sure you have read the application form. It can be used as a conversation starter at the start of the interview – encourage the applicant to talk more about experiences mentioned on their application.
- Use the interview as an opportunity to explain the role in greater detail. You should be honest about the challenges of the role to ensure that the applicant has realistic expectations.
- Keep notes on each interview.

Find below some example interview questions. You should add any questions that are particularly relevant to your program.

- Why do you want to volunteer?
- What is it that attracts you to this particular role?
- What have you enjoyed most about previous work opportunities (both paid and unpaid)?
- What are the most important things you can offer the program and the students attending it?
 - Can you tell me about a time when you worked with a child you found difficult and how you dealt with it?
- What child safety measures would you expect our program to have in place?



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Reference checks

You should aim to conduct at least three reference checks on your tutors, including at least one professional referee. Here are some tips for conducting reference checks:

- Checks should be always conducted by phone
- Take the time to build rapport to make the referee feel comfortable
- Ask about relevant key dates and make sure they correlate with the volunteers' application form and resume
- If the referee sounds doubtful or hesitant, follow up with probing questions
- Pause and leave enough time for the referee to think about and answer the question
- Develop a standard list of questions to ask all referees – use open questions and avoid leading questions (see examples below)
- Explain the role carefully to referees – ask about the person's suitability in relation to specific aspects of the role



Example reference questions:

- How long have you known X and in what capacity?
- What would you say are X's strengths?
- What would you say are X's weaknesses?
- (after describing the role) How strongly would you recommend X for this role?
- Would you have any reservations in engaging X in this role?
- Is there anything else you think we need to know when considering X for this role?

Working with Children Checks and Police Checks

It is a legal requirement that all volunteers over 18 years of age in Out of School Hours Homework Support Programs over 18 years of age have a valid Working with Children Check. Many homework clubs also choose to screen volunteers with Police Checks, as there are a number offences covered by a

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Police Check that may not be covered under a Working With Children Check. Find more information [here](#).

Induction

The induction is an important process in adequately preparing new volunteers for their role, and in further minimising the risk of abuse in your organisation. Apart from providing an opportunity to provide relevant information concerning the operation of your homework program, the induction also allows you to instill volunteers with an understanding of the organisation's values and attitudes related to the children and young people in its care. Talking through your organisation's Child Safe policy should be an integral part of the induction process.

Code of conduct

A Code of Conduct is used to make volunteers aware of the responsibilities and boundaries associated with their role. It is fundamental in ensuring the safety of children and young people attending the program, as well as protecting volunteers and the organisation in general. You should go through the code with volunteers as part of their induction and ensure they understand each condition, before asking them to sign it.

Conclusion

While volunteer recruitment and screening can be a lengthy and labour-intensive process, the importance of onboarding the right volunteers for your organisation cannot be underestimated. Setting up strong processes and procedures, and making connections with other organisations can help to make the process more efficient and safe, to ensure your OSHLSP has the best volunteer support possible.