

The Volunteering Journey

An inclusive workbook
for people who are interested
in volunteering

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Welcome to the Volunteering Journey

Volunteering can be an amazing journey for people to take. It's a great way to get out and get involved in your community. It's a journey where you can meet new people and discover talents that you may have never known you had.

This workbook is designed to help you prepare and take the first steps on your volunteering journey. You can use this workbook on your own or you can ask a helpful person in your life to go through the workbook with you.

- The workbook will help you remember lessons you have learnt if you have volunteered before.
- It will help guide you to find the best direction to take on the journey when you're faced with choices.
- It will help you to remember ways that you can take care of yourself as you continue on the journey.
- It will also share practical ways to help find the right volunteering role for you and how you can apply to be a volunteer.

We hope you enjoy the journey and make some great discoveries along the way. We encourage you to take the journey at your own pace.

All the best
Volunteering ACT

For further information please contact:

[Volunteering ACT](#)

Level 2, 202 City Walk, Canberra City (PO Box 128, Civic Square ACT 2608)

Phone 6251 4060

Email: customer.service@volunteeringact.org.au

What's volunteering all about?

Volunteers give their time and energy to make a difference in their world. They make a difference in all kinds of ways. Some volunteers help to fight bush fires, some deliver meals to elderly people, some visit lonely people, some plant trees and others collect donations that help fund organisations.

Q: Do you know any volunteers? What do they do?

A:

Each volunteer has their own story about why they volunteer. Here are some reasons people have given about why they want to volunteer. They've included:

- Wanting to get out of the house and get involved in something
- Wanting to make friends
- Wanting to make a difference
- Wanting to help others
- Wanting to build up skills that will help in finding a paid job
- Wanting to discover new skills



I'm interested in volunteering. How do I begin to find the role for me?

The first step in the journey can be found in your answer to these four questions:

Q: Do you want to volunteer?

A: _____

Q: Why do you want to volunteer?

A: _____

Q: Do you have any hobbies or things that you're really interested in doing?

A: _____

Q: Have you come across any volunteering roles that you're interested in?

A: _____

Volunteering will only work if you really want to do it. In the beginning you might not know exactly what kind of volunteering you want to do but you might have some ideas about why you would like to try it. You probably also have hobbies and things you're interested in doing. You might not think your hobbies and interests fit into the world of volunteering but sometimes you can be surprised!

The answers you have given for these three questions are like a compass needle. They will help you find out the direction that's best for you.

I tried volunteering before and I loved it. Can I find another role like that?

One of the greatest discoveries we can make is finding out what we love. It helps us find a very strong sense of direction. It's good to make a record of your discovery. If you tried volunteering before and loved it, take a minute and answer these questions.

Q: What volunteering did you do?

A: _____

Q: What was it about that volunteering role that you loved? Was it something about the job you were doing, the people you were with, the place where you were doing the job or something else?

A: _____

Sometimes people return to organisations where they used to volunteer. They go back to those roles because they loved what they did and the organisation was able to take them back. Sometimes organisations aren't able to take people back. Often it's because they don't have room for any more volunteers. Don't lose heart if that's your experience! There might be other volunteering roles out there that are similar to the volunteering role you loved doing.

Q: It might be good to brainstorm other organisations that might be a good fit for you. Write down any other volunteering jobs you might love:

A: _____

I tried volunteering before and I really didn't like it. Why should I try again?

If you tried volunteering before, and didn't like it, then you have made a really important discovery in your journey. You've discovered a direction in the land of volunteering that wasn't the right one for you. It's good to make a record of your discovery. If you tried volunteering before and didn't like it, take a minute and answer these questions.

Q: What volunteering did you do?

A: _____

Q: What was it about that volunteering role that you didn't like? Was it something about the job you were doing, the people you were with, the place where you were doing the job or something else?

A: _____

Having another try at volunteering is your choice and it's OK to say no. It's important to remember that there are many different kinds of volunteering. People often try all kinds of volunteering roles before they find the one that suits them best. If you still want to find a volunteering role that you like then it's worthwhile keeping on with the journey.

*If at first you don't succeed,
try, try again!*

I'd like to volunteer but I'm not sure if I'm going to be able to do it.

It's not always easy starting a journey, especially when it means going somewhere you haven't been before.

At the beginning of a journey it's important to make a list of the things you need. These questions are to help you make a record of what you might need for the journey.

Q: What are the things that you think might make volunteering hard for you?

A: _____

Q: What has helped you to do the things you want to do in the past?

A: _____

Q: Who are the helpful people in your life? How have they helped you do the things you want to do?

A: _____

Q: What things would help you to volunteer?

A: _____

I tried to get a volunteering role before but the organisation didn't accept me

Acceptance is a powerful and important experience in our lives. It's hard to put ourselves forward and then feel that we haven't been accepted. It might be hard to believe but even the experience of not being accepted can lead to important discoveries. Take a minute and answer these questions and let's see what might be discovered.

Q: What was the volunteering role you wanted to do?

A: _____

Q: How did you let the organisation know that you wanted to volunteer with them?

A: _____

Q: Did you have a chance to talk to someone from the organisation about volunteering with them?

A: _____

Q: Did you have any feedback from the organisation explaining why you weren't given a volunteering role with them?

A: _____

The information you've written could be helpful the next time you try to get a volunteering role. It's especially helpful if you are given advice about how you could improve the way you applied for that role. It's also helpful if the organisation has given you feedback about why the role might not have suited you or other roles that might suit you more. You can use good feedback to improve your chances next time.

How do I find out what kind of volunteering roles are out there?

One of the best places to start, in Canberra, is Volunteering ACT.

There are three ways you can find out about volunteering:

- Ring Volunteering ACT on (02) 6251 4060 to make an appointment
- Drop into the office on Level 2, 202 City Walk, Canberra to make an appointment
- You can visit their internet site: www.volunteeringact.org.au

You will see, on the website, that there's a section on the right of the screen with the heading "Want to help? Become a volunteer."

If you press the search button then you will see a long list of volunteering jobs. This will give you a good idea of some of the different volunteering roles around Canberra.



I've seen a volunteering role on the Volunteering ACT website that I'd like to do. What's my next step?

Click on the job you like. You will then arrive at a description of what the volunteering role is about and what a person needs to be able to do that volunteering role. There will also be information about when and where the volunteering role happens.

When you look at the description it's important to ask yourself some questions.

Q: Are you interested in the volunteering role which is described? What is interesting about it?

A: _____

Q: Will you be able to do the things that are expected in that role? If you think you might be able to do the role with help then what kind of help would you need?

A: _____

Q: Are you available at the times the organisation needs you to be available? Can your timetable be changed so you could be available when the organisation needs you to be there?

A: _____

Q: Are you able to travel to the place where the volunteering is happening? Have you thought about all the ways you might be able to get there?

A: _____

I'm interested in the volunteering role. I think I'm able to do it. I'm free at the right time and I can get there. What's my next step?

There should be a button called **Express Interest** underneath the description of the volunteering role. **Press the button.**

After pressing the button you will arrive at a page where you can fill in your name, email, phone number and date of birth.

Once you've filled in those details you will need to fill in the section called Skills and Qualifications. This is the section where you can tell the people at the organisation why you are able to do their volunteering job.

In this section you can write down:

- Any training that you have done that might be helpful in that volunteering role.
- Any volunteering you have done before, especially if it was similar to the role you're applying for now.
- Other skills that you have that you imagine would be helpful in this volunteering role.

Once you have filled out all the about you questions there's one thing left to do. If you're happy with what you've written press the send button!



I'm interested in volunteering for a particular organisation. What do I do?

A good first step is to gather information about the organisation and what they do. If you have a computer you can use Google to find the organisation's website. Sometimes it's not easy finding information about volunteering on some organisation's websites.

Here are some likely places to find the information:

- It's easy if there's a button for Volunteers on their front page – go there!
- Volunteering might also be found in sections on the website with names like:
 - Get involved
 - Work with us
 - How can you make a difference?

If you don't have a computer, or find the website too difficult you could try ringing up the organisation. Let the person you talk to know that you are after information about volunteering for them. It's good to be prepared before you make a phone call. It can sometimes be helpful to write down what you want to say before you make the phone call.

Here's an example:

Hi. I'm _____

I'm interested in volunteering.

I would like to find out what kind of things volunteers do in your organisation.

Can you tell me about this or should I talk to someone else?

You might also ask the person if they could post you some information about volunteering (most organisations will have a brochure about their volunteering programs).



I applied for a volunteering role and someone from the organisation wants to meet me. What do I need to do to prepare for the meeting?

People can feel all sorts of things when they are going to have a meeting. Some people might find it very exciting. Some people might feel a bit nervous.

Q: How do you feel about this meeting?

A: _____

Q: If you feel nervous – what are some things that you have done in the past that have helped you when you were feeling that way?

A: _____

It's important to remember that this meeting is a chance for you to find out more about what the organisation is like and what you would have to do in the volunteering role. People from the organisation will also use the meeting as a chance to get to know you better. Here are some important things about meetings:

- If you're running late or can't make it to the meeting make sure you ring the person who asked you to the meeting so they know.
- Smile!
- If you're feeling nervous it can sometimes help to tell the person how you are feeling. Most people are even friendlier when you're honest about being nervous.
- You might also find it helpful to take a list of reasons why you think you can do the role.

Remember to breathe! Take a sip of water when you need to and make sure you mention the great things about yourself and the reasons why you want to volunteer.

I had a meeting but I haven't been told if they want me as a volunteer. Should I do anything?

If the person you met said that they would get back to you by a certain date then wait until that date before contacting them. Once that date is over it's fair enough to give the person a quick and friendly phone call.

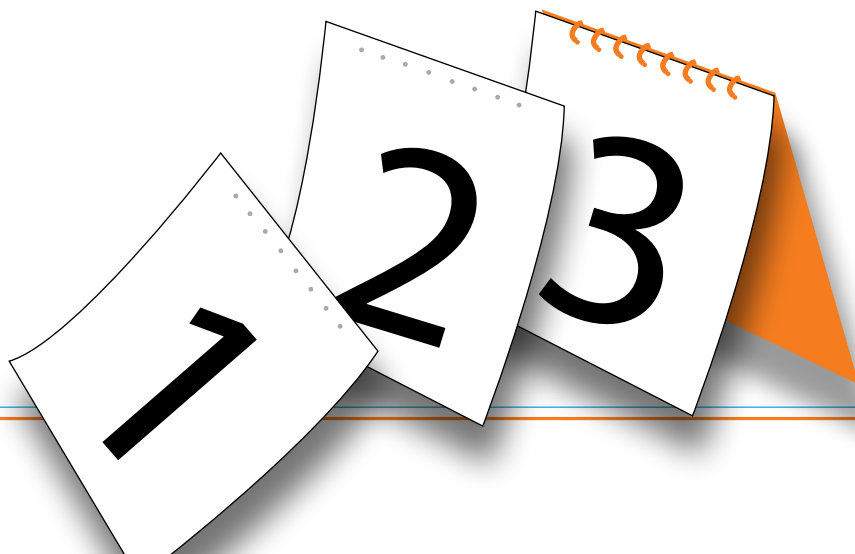
You might say something like this:

Hi. I'm _____.

I had a meeting with you about volunteering.

I was just wondering if you have made a decision about my application.

- If the person says they haven't made a decision yet, you could ask them when the decision is likely to be made.
- If the person says your application is successful then it's still your choice whether you want to go ahead with the volunteering role. If you want to volunteer and know when you would like to start then you can let them know straight away. If you need to work out the best start time then you can tell them you will ring them back and let them know.
- If the person says your application was not successful then it's OK to ask why. They might be able to give you information that will help then next time you apply for a volunteering role. At a time like this it's important to make use of those skills you have that are all about taking care of yourself on the journey.



I need some extra help to find the right kind of volunteering role. Where can I find it?

Volunteering ACT's Inclusive Volunteering Program is designed to help people from these three groups:

- People with disabilities
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

If you belong to one of these groups then you are welcome to give the Inclusive Volunteering Program Coordinator a call on (02) 6251 4060 to see if the program is a good choice for you.

WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM DO?

- People are referred to the program. Sometimes they refer themselves. Sometimes family members, carers or organisations organise the referral. Give the Coordinator a call for a referral form.
- Fill out the referral form and send it back to Volunteering ACT. The Coordinator will meet you to see if this program is the right one for you.
- The Coordinator will ask you about your goals and your skills and a few other helpful questions. This information will help in finding a volunteering role that's right for you.
- The Coordinator will then contact volunteer involving organisations that have the kind of roles that fit in with your skills, goals and interests. He will let you know about the roles that he's found to see if you're interested.
- Once a volunteering role has been found, that you're interested in, the Coordinator organises a meeting between you and the volunteer involving organisation.

It's important to remember that it can take time to find the right kind of volunteering role. Once you have signed up with a volunteer involving organisation you are part of that organisation.

Looking after yourself on the journey

It takes courage and energy to step into the unknown and there can be both joy and disappointment along the way. It's important that people, on journeys, remember the things they can do to care for themselves along the way. Some people find going for a walk helps them feel better when they're sad or disappointed. Some find it helpful to keep busy when they have to wait for news to arrive.

Q: What are some of the things you do to take care of yourself:
When you feel sad or disappointed?

A: _____

When you have to wait for news and feel frustrated?

A: _____

When you have been busy and feel tired?

A: _____

Q: Can you think of other times when it was really important to remember to take care of yourself?

A: _____

It's always important to remember the things you can do to take care of yourself. You can't keep going on your journey if your batteries are flat!

Brave steps equal success. Celebrate the journey you have made.

Journeys are often a tricky business. Sometimes you end up at exactly the place you had always planned to reach. Sometimes you end up at a completely unexpected destination.

It's important to stop and celebrate the success of all the brave steps you have taken on the volunteering journey.

Q: What's been the best part of this journey?

A: _____

Q: What have you discovered about yourself along the way?

A: _____

Q: Are there any things that you have done that you feel proud about?

A: _____

Q: Were there any moments when you were particularly brave?

A: _____

Q: Has this experience given you any ideas for future journeys?

A: _____

The Volunteering Journey

*Well done and best wishes
for all your future journeys!*

