

LEADING THE WAY:

Making change in your
organisation for volunteers
with disability



Volunteers - hidden in plain sight

Almost 1 in 3 Victorians volunteer. That's a workforce of over 1.5 million people contributing over 200 million hours. Volunteers underpin our workforce, run many of our clubs and organisations, and support a wide range of sectors.

-  Culture
-  Libraries & museums
-  Health & aged care
-  Law & order
-  Education & training
-  Heritage
-  Festival
-  Political
-  Welfare/community
-  Sports & active recreation
-  Environment
-  Tourism
-  International aid & development
-  Business/professional/union
-  Emergency services
-  Animal welfare
-  Disability support services
-  Faith-based
-  Arts
-  Parenting, children & youth
-  Board & committee leadership

Snapshot of disability in Victoria



What is so special about volunteering?

Volunteering is a unique way of participating in our economy and community

Volunteering is cause-based: The act of volunteering provides more meaning to a volunteer's life. Volunteers directly or indirectly improve all our lives through contributing to causes and charities.

Volunteering enables autonomy and agency: There is a greater degree of choice and control over a person's life that comes with being a volunteer. Volunteering does not have the same constraints, formality and motivation for payment that comes with employment.

Volunteering provides endless opportunities: Volunteering roles are available in nearly every sector. Roles range from informal, simple, one-off roles to formal, ongoing, highly skilled volunteering roles. There are simply more opportunities to choose from compared to employment.

Volunteering is active participation: As with employment, volunteering similarly allows people to be active and productive participants in our communities and workforce.

Volunteering upholds human rights: Volunteering that is inclusive, accessible and without barriers, supports dignity, freedom and equality – all fundamental aspects of human rights.

Benefits of inclusive volunteering for your organisation

In addition to providing essential services for many organisations, volunteerism brings numerous benefits to organisations. Ensuring your volunteer workforce is inclusive and accessible will also have benefits for your paid workforce.

Some of the many benefits of inclusive volunteering include:

- Increased access to a bigger talent pool, tapping into more diverse skills and perspectives for your organisation.
- Improved organisational reputation in the community, so long as tokenism is avoided. Organisations with an inclusive workforce better reflect the communities they work in.
- Greater understanding of diversity and challenging stigma. Working alongside people with disability creates greater awareness of specific disabilities and discrimination. Non-disabled people often become advocates for the disability community too.
- People with disability are highly conscious of safety, have less accidents and make fewer compensation claims.
- When given the opportunity to volunteer, people with disability display more loyalty to the organisation and have fewer absentee days.
- Disability can affect anyone at any time. Making workplaces as accessible as possible is just good business.

Benefits of volunteering for volunteers with disability

Greater confidence, increasing self-esteem and self-belief

More social connections

Opportunities for networking

Better psychological health

Improved physical health outcomes

Improved quality of life

Development of skills & work experience

Pathways to employment

Leading the way in your organisation:

8 actions you can take

01

Develop a Disability Action Plan. Many organisations have a Disability Action Plan in place. However, these plans often do not include actions to make their volunteer workforce more inclusive and accessible for people with disability. A Disability Action Plan does not have to be lengthy or require substantial investment. A small number of sustained improvements to your organisation's volunteer program accumulate to big changes over time. For a template visit the Victoria ALIVE website.

02

Diversify your organisational leadership. Do your governance committees represent the diversity of the communities you serve? If not, there are ways you can diversify your governance leadership. Find people with disability to serve on your Board through organisations such as the Disability Leadership Institute or Voice at the Table. If your organisation has a committee focused on paid employees, such as a diversity committee, include a person with a disability and a representative from your volunteer workforce.

03

Train your staff and volunteers. The Victoria ALIVE project has developed an online package of "micro-credentials" for inclusive volunteer management. These online modules are free of cost and online now! For these and other resources, visit the Victoria ALIVE website.

04

Join our #WeAreAble campaign on social media. Social media can be a powerful tool to get your message out there. Victoria ALIVE's #WeAreAble campaign put inclusive volunteering for people of all abilities in Victoria at the top of the agenda. Your organisation can contribute to the conversation by sharing posts and your own stories of inclusive volunteering to similar campaigns or create your own. Visit the Victoria ALIVE website for more information about the campaign.

05

Improve your user experience with lived experience. Engage people with disabilities and volunteers in business planning processes and building redevelopments. Survey volunteers with a disability on what could be improved in your organisation. Include questions around disability and volunteering in your member surveys and other consultation mechanisms. Inclusion is always good business.

06

Support pathways to employment. Where your volunteers have a goal to gain employment, support them by providing relevant work experience and skills development. Develop pathways to employment for volunteers. As committed contributors to your cause and communities, invite your volunteers to access and apply for internally advertised paid roles.

07

Recognise your volunteer workforce and promote diversity. Nominate volunteers with disability for awards. Promote good stories in your newsletter. Recognise your volunteers' contribution at work events. Put your organisation forward as a disability champion.

08

Recruit volunteers with disabilities! The best way to learn and grow as an organisation is to work with people of all abilities.