Volunteers and Hawkesbury Skills Youth Advisory Committee @ Hawkesbury Skills (HSYAC)

Young people (youth) are generally regarded as those people between 12-24 years. Youth account for almost one in five of the Australian population (approximately 3.5 million persons) (Muir et al. 2009). In 2006, almost one in three young people 18-24 years (30%) did some unpaid volunteer work over a period of one year, increasing by approximately 13% in 1995 (Muir et al. 2009). while young people volunteer, the proportion of young volunteers who regularly volunteer is much lower than the adult population (Muir et al, 2009).

Volunteering is any activity in which time is given for free to benefit another person, group or organisations (Brown, Lipsig-Mumme and Zajdow 2003). Muir et al (2009) created a young volunteer profile based on the General Social Survey (2006), defining the specific activities that youth volunteer’s participant in including sports coaching/assistance (23%), religious activities (19%), fundraising (8%), assisting the elderly (8%), tutoring without pay (6%), babysitting (4%), arts (4%), clerical (4%); cleaning (2%), environmental (2%), animal welfare (2%) and ‘other’ category (19%) (i.e. working in youth groups, women’s shelters, surf life-saving and online forum moderation (Muir et al 2009). In their discussion, Muir et al (2009) explain that there are no significant differences between young males and female volunteers; students are more than twice likely to volunteer as their non-studying counterparts (43% and 20% respectively), particularly during school hours and if they have completed Year 12; young people who live outside major cities, are born overseas and those who speak English are also more likely to volunteer; as are those with higher socioeconomic status, those who have access to print media and young volunteer’s who fathers are employed. In summary, young people are most likely to volunteer if they are female, in education and paid work, have completed year 12, who live outside major cities and who speak English at home (Muir et al. (2009).

Volunteering Issues Related the Recruitment, Selection, Supervision and Retention

The National Survey of Volunteering by Volunteering Australia (2011) identified 11 major issues related to volunteering in Australia. This essay will now explore five of these and how they relate to the recruitment, selection, supervision and retention of volunteers.

1. **Diverse Representation**

A targeted **recruitment strategy** and **selection process** reaches out to the desired population to ensure that there is diverse representation of backgrounds, skills and life experiences on the committee in an attempt to represent the youth population (e.g. age, gender, indigenous and CALD population, ethnicities, disadvantaged youth such as same-sex attracted or homeless youth as well as high achieving youth and those from challenging situation including those suffering mental health problems) in the community and interests of their peers (The Forum of Youth Investment 2007; Texas AgriLife 2009). All youth, regardless of their background or life experience, have unique perspectives to offer authentic stories on what it takes to help and ‘be’ young people (The Forum of Youth Investment 2007; Texas AgriLife 2009). People from disadvantaged backgrounds for example frequently have deep insights into problems and powerful recommendations for change (The Forum of Youth Investment 2007).

1. **Relationships between Staff and Volunteers**

One of the three most important aspects that contributes to volunteers continuing in the future in the Volunteering Report (2011) was the importance of matching volunteers to their interest and/or skills and the values of the organisation. This makes the relationship between staff and volunteers an important issue in the supervision of a volunteer program. This relationship is influenced by supervision mechanisms, keeping communication lines open, providing informal briefs as well as coaching, supporting, facilitating regular feedback to get to know the volunteers better (The Forum For Youth Investment 2007). Managers must provide an opportunity for both staff and volunteers to voice their issues, fears, concerns and grievances (Crissman 2011); Merrill 2005) at the same time as encouraging young volunteers to share of interests, skills and passion to encourage further self-development and improve their performance (Merrill 2005; Gregor, Geale & Creyton 2011). Feedback is an opportunity to make improvements to the program, and see the impact that volunteers are having on the program (Merill 2005). Only 10.7% of organisational respondents said they had given feedback about the volunteer’s contribution or their value as a team member (Volunteering Australia 2011).

1. **Recognition, Incentives and Rewards**

The National Survey of Volunteering Issues (2010) stated the importance of being recognised. 43.2% of volunteer respondents said that being accepted as a valuable team member was the most important form of recognition. Being acknowledged, recognised and rewarded is an important part of retaining volunteers as it provides an incentive to motivate volunteers and gives them something to strive towards (Whitehouse City Council 2010; Crissman 2011). Being rewarded includes providing a letter of acknowledgement, recommendation or a reference upon completion of their time on the committee. Talented and committed youth volunteers may also be offered part-time staff positions, apprenticeships, traineeships, training, scholarships and internships (The Forum of Youth Investment 2007). Other methods of incentives include an ambassador program, a mentor scheme, young volunteers could be invited to join existing committees (such as Hawkesbury Skills) and attend forums in local community (e.g. Hawkesbury Community Care Forum) as well as ensure that they become a part of a peak youth organisations (e.g. NSW Youth Advisory Council), conduct focus groups at their school or lead projects (Volunteer Queensland 2011).

1. **Involvement, Belonging and Purpose**

The National Survey of Volunteering (2011) discusses the importance of creating belonging and purpose to retain volunteers. The survey summarised that 9 out of 10 volunteers found the volunteering was satisfying, largely due to the difference they make to the community and the sense of purpose their volunteering gives them. Gregor, Geale & Creyton (2011) confirmed this fact, stating that being involved in volunteering encourages a sense of ownership, accountability, commitment, loyalty and satisfied young volunteers. As a result, managers must delegate and give youth volunteers responsibilities and authority for tasks, projects and programs so that they become involved in the committee and develop a significant sense of belonging (The Forum of Youth 2007; Merrill 2005; Gregor, Geale & Creyton 2011).

1. **Training and Support**

The National Survey of Volunteering (2011) also highlighted the importance of providing access to training, education and support to encourage the retention of volunteers. Amongst Australian volunteers, training gave the majority of the volunteers the necessary skills for their role (78.9%), contributed to personal development (45.1%) and was one of the 3 top priorities most frequently mentioned by respondents (Volunteering Australia 2011). An ongoing planning and training process that begins in induction, is therefore necessary when working with staff, mentors and committee members to educate them about their role as well as build strengths, life-skills, leadership skills and confidence of youth volunteers (Gregor, Geale & Creyton 2011). Providing information and opportunities to build communication, planning, teamwork, research and analytical tools will ensure that young people are well-prepared to fulfil their responsibilities on the commitee (Gregor, Geale & Creyton 2011).

Communication Barriers

There are many communication barriers that youth volunteers and staff may encounter when undertaking a volunteer program including:

1. **Language Barriers**

Young people who are born overseas and who do not speak English as a main language at home are significantly less likely to volunteer (Muir et al, 2009). This suggests that there may be potential language barriers for finding out about and/or undertaking volunteering positions (Muir et al, 2009). As a result, it is important to be mindful that English may not be their first language and reading and/or writing may be better or worse to particular individuals. As a result, advertisements should be bilingual and maximise the number of people who can receive and understand the message and using a buddy systems may be used to help someone overcome language barriers.

1. **Staying connected between face-to-face meetings**

It is important the youth volunteers, the manager and mentors stay connected between meetings. To keep them connected and informed between face-to-face meetings, technology must be made available (e.g. email, phone and social media), providing a social media presence (e.g. Facebook and/or Twitter), a blog, an up-to-date and accessible website as well as the possibility of conference calls, weekly emails as well as sharing pictures, videos and stories by applications such as Snapchat. These can all help stay connected, engaged and informed between meetings to maintain awareness of the activities of the committee and the events that are being organised (Queensland Volunteers 2011).

1. **Reaching Disadvantaged communities**

A barrier to effective communication is reaching socially, financially and geographically disadvantaged communities or those various attributes that may contribute to disadvantage, including those with mental illness, living in a remote/isolated area, unemployed, poor, Indigenous and CALD communities. This can be done by researching through various means of consultation that gets into all areas of the community and all community groups that provides a true representation to reach disadvantaged communities ().

Volunteer Role

The Hawkesbury Skills Youth Advisory Committee (HSYAC) is a leadership forum of 22 school and other representatives aged between 13-18 from the Hawkesbury District. Meetings will be held monthly at the Hawkesbury Skills premises in Richmond. By collaborating with other youth leaders, the HSYAC aims to collaborate, conduct dialogue, share information and engage youth in the community; provide leadership training and development associated with community consultation, advocacy and so on; act as a steering committee to help organise and participate in community events; make recommendations on youth-related issues to council and peak bodies; as well as set an agenda for action (Menenzes 2012).

Job Description

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| --- | --- |
| Title of Role | Youth Leadership Representatives |
| The Need for the Role | Young people offer a fresh perspective, new skills and abilities, energy, enthusiasm and a different perspective to the community, yet they are largely under-represented in decision making processes in Australian communities and there is shortage of youth-focused projects in the Hawkesbury district. In an attempt to meet the needs of the youth in the Hawkesbury District, The Hawkesbury Skills Youth Advisory Committee (HSYAC) will provide the youth with a voice in the local community and the decisions that affect them. It will provide a forum for young people to contribute advice and guidance to the local council and NSW Advisory Council so that the members feel that they are making a contribution to society, are playing a role in influencing local policies and programs, are helping identify positive solutions for youth issues and interests relevant to them as well as ensuring that they are engaged, participate in and empowered, providing input into the activities and events that occur in the Hawkesbury District. |
| Time Commitment | Flexible; 2-4 hour monthly meetings; Roughly 2-12 hours per week required outside meetings. In between face-to-face meetings and events, contact will be maintained through email, Facebook, Twitter and other means of communication technology. It is expected that members maintain regular contact with the group. Focus groups will be conducted around specific topics throughout the year, and it is expected that the members will be involved in at least 2 focus groups a year either through face-to-face focus groups at schools, through email surveys or web-based discussion. Maximum 2 years terms. |
| Reporting and Supervision | The Hawkesbury Skills Community Advisory Committee (HSCAC) will be staffed by one full-time director with 4 other experience voluntary mentors with youth development backgrounds to help steer the committee and provide support. The director can be contacted to deal with inquiries as well as any information about Hawkesbury Skills, volunteer roles and the process of becoming a volunteer. The mentors will be provided with training and will be accessible by email or face-to-face contact, making arrangements between the person requiring support and the mentor. Other experts will be called upon to bring additional experience, utilise available resources and provide missing elements from local TAFE, university, P&C committees, youth church organisations (or other religious institutions), social workers, school educators, school administrators, leadership trainers, sports administrators as well as people from businesses, organisations, chamber of commerce and youth agencies. |
| Roles and Responsibilities | * Participate in monthly meetings
* Be prepared to undertake leadership development training
* Be open and willing to participate in email, Twitter and Facebook discussions
* Help design and update a community blog and website (some members)
* Prepare, organise and participate in activities
* Be an active community advocate, raise awareness, educate the broader community and promote youth development, issues and challenges
* Liaison with youth groups, local council and other youth advocacy committees in NSW.
* Be involved in community activities and charities
* Communicate with the media as a media spokespeople on youth issues
* Members may speak at public functions, local schools, community forums and conferences
* Attend meetings of existing committees and forums to report findings and stories back to the committee
* Liaison, network with and become part of various peak youth organisations
 |
| Selection Criteria | Hawkesbury Skills (Richmond) is recruiting 22 school-aged youth (aged 13-18) from the Hawkesbury District with vision, community spirit and leadership potential to join a team of experienced mentors. The group aims to provide a true representation of the Hawkesbury District with a mix of ages, genders, young people from Indigenous backgrounds, different cultural and language backgrounds, a broad range of life experiences (including same sex attracted young people and experience of homelessness), history of mental illness, substance use or abuse. Hawkesbury Skills will be recruiting:* 12 representatives from high schools in the Hawkesbury District (i.e. Colo High School, Richmond High School, Hawkesbury High School, Windsor High School, Bede Polding College, Arndell Anglican College and Kuyper Christian School).
* 1 sport association representative.
* 2 spirituality based representatives from a local religious organisation (e.g. local church, Muslim group, Buddhist etc.).
* 1 youth from disconnected background (e.g. out-of-school youth, homeless youth or teen-mother).
* 1 Indigenous Australian Representative.
* 1 Person with a disability (mental or physical).
* 1 representative from a juvenile justice program.
* 3 representatives from other youth-based organisation or from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background.
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| As an individual you should* Have an interest and passion for the local community and a desire to represent the interests of youth in the Hawkesbury.
* Be able to think about the big picture.
* Be able to work in a team, work independently and participate in group discussions.
* Be motivated, willing and committed to participate on an ongoing basis.
* Have good communication skills
* Be able to balance responsibilities outside the committee (such as school work, employment, family and demands of the position)
* Have easy and regular access to the internet and phone
 |
| There are no specific qualifications required but various experiences will help in applications. Parental (or Guardian) consent is needed however, as all participants are under 18 years of age. |
| Benefits of The Role | The benefits associated with joining the Hawkesbury Skills Youth Advisory Committee (HSYAC) including having a chance to: * Represent, make a difference and give something back to the community.
* Develop experience.
* Use and develop various skills and talents including working in groups and representing the needs of your peers.
* Network and develop contacts.
* Meet new people.
* Build the resume that may result in higher education aspirations.
* Meet with prominent community leaders and advocates for youth issues.
* Receive training in leaderships and specific areas of interest.
* Increase employability, possibility for receiving apprenticeships, traineeships, scholarships and internships.
* Become engaged and empowered in the community.
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| Training and Education | There will be ongoing training to build strengths, life-skills, leadership skills and confidence. Training will be provided on:* Youth Issues, Concerns and Development
* Transition into work / Getting a Job
* Leadership Skills and Personal Development
* Advocacy, Policy and Planning Training
* Public Speaking Skills
* Social Media
* Communication Skills
* Business Planning
* Consultation Strategies
* Youth Participation
* Teamwork Building Exercises
* Research Skills and Strategies
* Forming Partnerships, Networks and Contacts
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| Further Considerations | Youth members will be required to fulfil ‘homework’ tasks such as researching and contacting other youth organisations, youth advisory committee members and youth peak organisations. Time must be taken to read articles and reports assigned to them at monthly meetings and occasionally create power point presentations for group discussion. Also as part of their liaison role they may facilitate and scribe focus groups and provide a report from other community forums attended  |

Steps to Recruiting a Volunteer

The recruitment strategy and selection process is concerned with getting the right people in the program (Whitehouse City Council 2010).

1. **Planning for Recruitment**
* Confirm that funding exists for the position.
* Obtain necessary approvals to staff the position.
* Determine best method for recruiting.
* Determine selection panel.
* Manage recruitment position and establish recruitment criteria.
* Appoint director so that interested volunteers can contract them to deal with initial inquiries, provide information about the organisation, educate interested parties on the roles available and the process of becoming a volunteer.
* Director collects information about each inquiry including name, contact details, how they heard about volunteering with the organisation and their area of interest.
* A panel must be appointed to provide a more impartial, broad-based picture of the application.
1. **Advertisement**
* Develop organisations message to promote and attract new volunteers through advertisement, a marketing campaign and promotional material.
* It is important to know the product, identify and address a target audience as well as identify how one will communicate with your target audience.
1. **Job Description**
* Describe the purpose, main duties and responsibilities and boundaries of the role.
* Determine Selection Criteria based on the job description including the essential experience and skills, knowledge, experience, qualification, personal attributes and essential competencies that a candidate needs in order to meet the requirements of the job description. The selection criteria creats the benchmarks that will be used to screen prospective candidates and select the most preferred person for the job.
* Determining interests, motivations, complementary skills and background experience of young volunteers.
* Understand the interests, reasons and motivations for people joining the position.
1. **Shortlisting**
* The selection panel shortlists the application assessing prospective candidates against the required competencies of the position.
* Documentation kept in confidential file and referred to if there are any inquiries or complaints regarding the selection process.
1. **Interview**
* Prior to the interview volunteers must be clear about the screening, selection processes, selection criteria, outline of the job.
* Ask all candidates the same questions to gather the information required to make a decision on the preferred candidates.
* Determine the suitability of a potential volunteer for a role or match volunteers with roles
* Explore applicant’s potential and capability
1. **Screening Mechanisms**
* Risk management strategy verifying the background, qualifications, skills and experienced of individuals prior to appointment
* Reference checks, police record checks, driving record or other checks (e.g. psychometric tests, psychological assessments.
* Referencing provides information that a candidate may be unlikely to reveal about themselves and provide another perspective on their performance in previous roles.
1. **Making an Offer**
* Choose best candidate for position.
* Start date needs to be agreed upon and all other candidates and advised in writing
* Feedback is provided in their interview if not successful
1. **Induction and Orientation**
* Volunteers must get an orientation to the organisation being filled in on its policies and procedures and receive appropriate training for their volunteer position.
* Volunteers should be:
1. Issued with an organisational procedures manual
2. Be told about the organisations complaints, dispute resolutions and grievance strategies
3. Be told about the emergency procedures and resources and
4. Be training for any job that requires specialist knowledge

Summary

This assignment has explored five issues to consider when involved in the recruitment, selection, supervision and retention of volunteers including determining the methods associated with determining membership; the importance of a targeted recruitment strategy and selection process; the processes required to create effective relationships amongst staff and volunteers; methods of recognition, incentives and rewards such as delegation and leadership programs; as well as the various activities required to provide training and support. It then explored factors that can be barriers to effective communication with volunteers such as language, reaching disadvantaged communities and staying connected between face-to-face meetings. The final three parts of the assignment provided a focus in designing a role on the Hawkesbury Skills Youth Advisory Committee (HSYAC), providing a job description to match this role and briefly describing the steps used to recruit a volunteer. This assignment has created a relevant and practical approach to designing a meaningful way for youth in the Hawkesbury to form a Youth Community Advisory Committee that could provide the opportunity for youth to fulfil leadership capabilities and have a ‘voice’ in their local community.

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Appendix

Identify Target Audience (Demographic)

* Age
* Employment Status: student, part-time, Retired, Full-time
* Experience: background
* Gender
* Membership Status: community members, club members

List what is in it for them

* Being a reference
* Something to add to their resume
* Training
* Meeting new people
* Personal satisfaction
* Helping a cause they believe in or
* Learning new skills

Guidance Tools

* **Guidelines**: the suggested minimum requirements
* **Mission statement**: establishing goals for their work and detailing how it will be achieved
* **Charter**: a consensual document to formalise their operations, structure and appropriate roles for members to form a governing structure
* **Action Plan**: a strategic set of activities that accurately reflects the agenda and surrounding community concerns

Reasons Why Volunteers Donate the Time and Talents

1. Making a difference
2. Use a skill or talent
3. Develop experience or contacts
4. Have a more balanced life
5. Give something back to the community
6. Meet new people
7. Personal growth and self-esteem
8. Supporting the community
9. Being a ‘voice
10. Being looked as a leader in the community
11. Strengthening scholarship possibilities
12. Building a resume that will result in higher education prospects

Role of Volunteers

* Community Consultation
* To engage communities
* Recommend best practice and a need support at the local level
* Reflect the diversity encountered within local communities
* Capture and share the collective experience to date, build on this existing background and strengthen the links with local stakeholders
* Program to reflect the perceptions and needs of local community

Means of Recognition

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Informal | Formal |
| INDIVIDUAL | Thank you noteCertificateBirthday CardPersonalised MugLotto TicketGreeting on ArrivalPositive comments About the AchievementsSmilesTaking a Personal InterestOffering a Coffee or drink | MedalHonour BoardVolunteer of the Month AwardPromotionNewsletter ArticleLetter of Appreciation TrophyRepresentation of OrganisationPresenter of a Training sessionAppointing them as Mentors |
| GROUP | Morning/Afternoon TeaNotice BoardInvolvement in Decision MakingBanner to Celebrate AccomplishmentInformal Chats with Organisations | PlaqueIncentive SystemTraining OpportunitiesUniformNewspaper ArticleProviding Effective EquipmentTeam Building Workshop |

Recruitment Options

* Local newspaper volunteer listings
* Paid advertisements
* Human interests stories on your program in print or broadcast media
* School newsletters
* Professional associations
* Club Newsletters
* Senior citizens clubs
* Employee Newsletters
* Places of worship and their newsletters
* Speciality publications
* Radio and TV public service announcements
* Posters on community bulletin boards (i.e. at libraries, shops, community centres, sports clubs)
* University campuses
* Open house tours
* Brief talks at community or professional organisation meetings,
* Public talks
* Public recognition of your volunteers
* Stalls at community events and festivals
* Special announcements at association’s other events
* Current clients, staff, board an volunteers
* Website

**Purpose of the Webpage**

The web site would be created specifically for the members of the committee to find:

* Meeting information
* Minutes of past meetings,
* Meeting agendas
* Contact information for staff and commission members
* Announcements
* Current and past projects
* A member roster
* Directions to events
* Funding opportunities,
* Outline all projects
* Allow young people to share their stories
* Provide information to the public about the activities of the committee a
* Make important links to young people