Breaking Down Barriers to Volunteering

OUTCOMES I STORIES I LEARNINGS

Project Partnerships Program

Acknowledgements

The Centre for Volunteering
Level 3, 40 Gloucester St Sydney NSW 2000
T: 02 9261 3600
E: info@volunteering.com.au
W: volunteering.com.au

The Centre for Volunteering acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodian and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

VolunteeringACT
an inclusive Canberra
volunteeringact.org.au

The Centre for Volunteering
volunteering.com.au

volunteering queensland
volunteeringqld.org.au

volunteering TASMANIA
volunteeringtas.org.au

volunteering VICTORIA
volunteeringvictoria.org.au

volunteering sa&nt
support grow celebrate
volunteeringsa-nt.org.au

volunteering WA
volunteeringwa.org.au

Welcome

A Message from the CEO

The Centre for Volunteering is pleased to present this report highlighting the outcomes of the first round of the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) Project Partnerships Program.

The Centre for Volunteering launched a VMA project-based grants program to support Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) and volunteer managers, to engage volunteers from communities including First Nations Peoples, Newly Arrived Migrants, People with a Disability, youth and older persons.

For this partnership round, organisations were invited to apply to develop supports and resources for VIOs and volunteer managers, to build their capacity to engage volunteers in these key communities in a meaningful and respectful manner.

We are pleased to share some of the outcomes, stories and learnings from these projects in this report.

We thank our project partners and congratulate them on their achievements. They are wonderful examples of how integrating inclusive practices into volunteer programs can support meaningful contributions from volunteers to their communities and the organisations they assist.

We hope these case studies and insights inspire more VIOs to enhance the inclusivity and accessibility of their programs, while actively engaging diverse volunteers in the future.
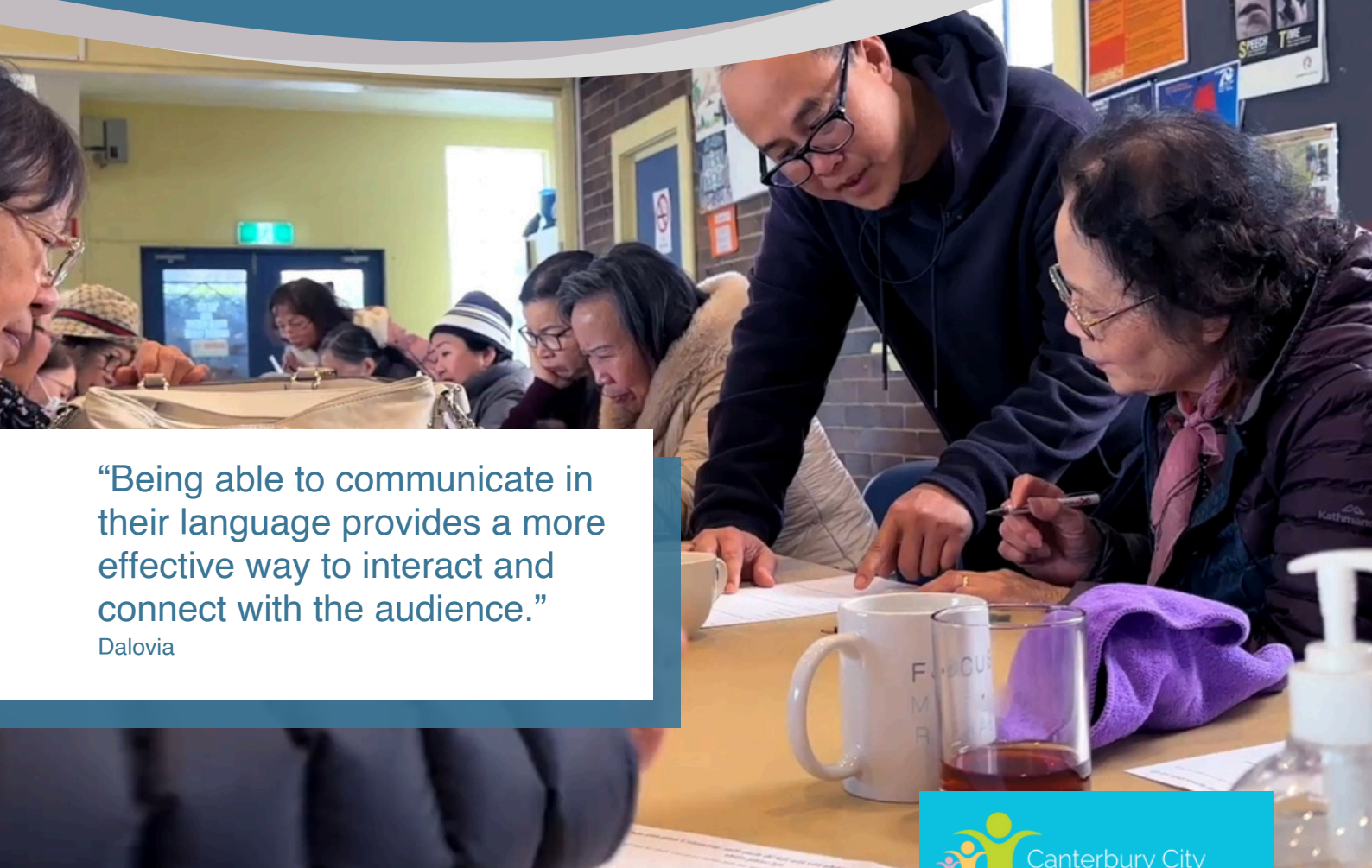
Gemma Rygate
CEO, The Centre for Volunteering

For more information, training and resources, visit our website: volunteering.com.au

New to Australia? Come Volunteer!

Canterbury City Community Centre (4Cs)

4cs.org.au

> "Being able to communicate in their language provides a more effective way to interact and connect with the audience."
>
> Dalovia

About the Project

An understanding of the concept of volunteering already exists in many cultures, however, newly arrived migrants may not be familiar with the concept of volunteering in Australia, what volunteering may look like, or how to become a volunteer.

This project assists VIOs to engage and recruit new migrant volunteers by providing them with a range of accessible in-language resources to help them understand the history, concept, requirements, rights and responsibilities, and benefits of volunteering in the Australian context.

Consisting of a series of five videos and factsheets – available in plain English and four community languages (Urdu, Vietnamese, Chinese and Arabic) – these tools can be used by volunteer leaders to help break down barriers to engage with new migrants so they can connect with the community and also build local experience and supports in a new country.

Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: New to Australia? Come Volunteer!

Approach

A key feature of this project was extensive consultation with networks, councils, service providers, volunteer leaders and newly arrived migrant communities to ensure the resources are relevant and accessible. Community leaders provided insights into cultural considerations and nuances.

Migration data from Government and census information was researched to identify current migration patterns and choose the selected languages.

Information collated from the consultation and research phase led to the development of video concepts which were then adapted by a filmmaker to create scripts for filming – which featured existing migrant volunteers. This ensured that the videos would be relatable to the audience. Fact sheets were developed to complement the videos.

During the consultation phase, many commented that the resources have potential for broader application as a stand-alone resource for Volunteer Managers to support engagement with all volunteers.

A truly collaborative approach! There was a lot of goodwill and enthusiasm demonstrated by services, workers, volunteers and clients during the development of the project resources, which are the first of their kind in to be translated in Australia.

Expected Learning outcomes

- Provide VIOs with accessible in-language resources to facilitate education, engagement, recruitment and support for new migrants as volunteers.
- Provide information for new migrants to understand the history, concept, requirements, rights and responsibilities, and highlight the benefits of volunteering in the Australian context.

Dalovia – Volunteer Manager for a Community Service Organisation

Dalovia works for an organisation that provides a wide range of social and welfare services and activities for people residing in Metropolitan Sydney and Wollongong. The organisation has over a thousand volunteers that play an essential role in all aspects of the organisation, ranging from looking after governance or helping in day-to-day operations, to providing casual support.

Dalovia's role is to look after the recruitment and training of volunteers. Most volunteers are for activity groups which support elderly people by providing information, exercises, activities and support – thereby reducing social isolation and loneliness. She engages mostly with volunteers from East Asian backgrounds and was excited to discover this suite of language resources produced through the Project Partnerships Program.

One example of Dalovia's use of these resources was during her presentation at an information session about career building through volunteering, which was part of a 15-week program for about 50 newly arrived migrants. Held in Cabramatta, Western Sydney, she made use of the Vietnamese version of the resources by playing the video and distributing the factsheet to the audience.

"People don't have a big attention span, so the short videos are great for getting the message across succinctly." Dalovia said.

At the end of the information session, ten people registered to volunteer with her organisation. This was a great outcome for Dalovia. She was able to see the immediate impact of the resources.

"Being able to communicate in their language provides a more effective way to interact and connect with the audience."

Dalovia continues to use the resources and has shared them with colleagues and others within her network who are engaging with new migrants.

Volunteer Voices

Settlement Services International (SSI)

ssi.org.au

> Everyone's volunteering journey is different."
>
> Saba

About the Project

This project combines research with the knowledge of subject matter experts and people with lived experience of volunteering to promote inclusive practices and help VIOs consider how they can continue to build inclusion in their volunteer programs.

Highlighted by twelve lived experience stories of volunteering in Australia, this interactive e-learning features lessons and videos that guide users through the principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. It equips Volunteer Managers with practical skills and knowledge to engage with and support diverse communities.

An additional video was produced to introduce the e-learning and highlight some of the key takeaways for the audience – encouraging them to access the e-learning for the full experience.

Click to view the resources on the Knowledge Base: Volunteer Voices (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging).

Approach

The 2023 NSW Multicultural Volunteering Report highlighted the importance of lived experience in shaping future outcomes and fostering shared spaces for community feedback. This e-learning aims to enhance the inclusivity of volunteering programs by incorporating diverse experiences, including those who have faced barriers to volunteering.

To avoid a one-size-fits-all approach, the e-learning modules adopt an intersectional lens, ensuring a collective community voice. In developing the content, SSI engaged 12 volunteer ambassadors from a broad cross-section of the community including people with disabilities, newcomers, refugees, First Nations peoples, and older and younger Australians. At the start of the project the ambassadors received training in trauma-informed storytelling, ensuring a safe space for sharing their experiences of volunteering and marginalisation.

Four focus groups refined the storytelling approach, with subject matter experts (SMEs) providing research, resources and advice on language and cultural sensitivities to help build the stories. The e-learning modules integrate these stories within a diversity, equity, and inclusion framework, ensuring intersectionality is reflected throughout.

The editing process was a collaborative effort with the support of the volunteer ambassadors and SMEs to ensure best practice was maintained including language and cultural sensitivity. The e-learning was also reviewed for accessibility by People with Disability Australia, and includes captioning, transcripts, and design considerations for readability and different learning styles. It is also screen-reader compatible, with simple language and clear definitions for all learners.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Identify barriers faced by volunteers with lived experience.
- Integrate evidence-based practice into a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging strategy.
- Understand the support needs of volunteers and ways to create safe, inclusive spaces.
- Apply learnings to real life environments of a Volunteer Manager.
- Distinguish VIOs as evidence-based when practicing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging.
- Develop strategies for Volunteer Manager to continually improve inclusive practices by learning how to incorporate lived experience feedback and promote a sense of belonging through a whole of community approach.

"The resource presents volunteer managers with the opportunity to learn and develop their skills in leading and working with diverse groups of people. Volunteers come with different experiences, knowledge, skills and backgrounds and it's important that, as managers, we are champions of diversity, inclusion and excellence."

Mijica

Saba – Health Manager with a Multicultural Health Organisation

Saba arrived in Australia from India almost 10 years ago. Shortly after she began volunteering at a university to ensure international students could successfully integrate into tertiary and community life. She has experience informing State Government policy on volunteering and is also a former Manager within a government agency implementing policies and legislation that support diverse communities, where her recent work involved developing a model of care for refugee and migrant health.

In preparing to conduct focus groups and surveys to inform the development of the model of care, Saba discovered she had a lack of understanding about the appropriate language and cultural engagement strategies needed to connect with these groups.

After engaging with the modules in the SSI e-learning, Saba was reminded that everyone's volunteering journey is different. She said she felt equipped with practical tools and strategies for engaging with diverse groups and has become more aware of different cultural practices and traditions, leading to a more inclusive approach in her work, which includes having the confidence to connect on an emotional level.

Saba found the resource platform user friendly. "The modules are very flexible. The navigation makes it easy to click through to relevant sections of interest."

In particular the section about equity helped her refine the language used during focus groups and encouraged a more inclusive perspective, especially for younger generations and individuals with disabilities.

"Everyone's volunteering journey is different." Saba said.

She is now more aware of her gestures, body language, and speech, which has enhanced her overall cultural sensitivity. By deepening her understanding of cultural practices and honing her communication skills, Saba has been able to forge meaningful connections with refugee and migrant communities.

Mijica – Retail Volunteer and Volunteer Humanitarian Program Facilitator for a Community Service Organisation

Mijica migrated from Papua New Guinea to Australia at the age of 18, without any family members and English as her third language. Initially, she found western culture overwhelming.

To help overcome this, she became very passionate about volunteering, drawing from her island heritage to give back to her community. Mijica has volunteered with several organisations over the last decade where she works to raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering to ensure a positive experience for everyone involved.

After completing all the SSI e-learning modules, Mijca gained insights into the challenges of diverse volunteer teams, particularly cultural differences, communication barriers and individual needs, which has helped her manage diverse teams more effectively.

"A key takeaway was learning to embrace cultural differences and move away from a 'them versus us' mentality."

She also became more aware of behaviors that were previously overlooked, equipping her with practical solutions for creating a respectful, supportive environment where all volunteers feel valued.

Mijica says "The resource will clarify what managers think they know, whilst correcting myths, untruths, unconscious biases and prejudices...".

For Mijica the language around diversity and inclusion is now more accessible. Using the easy-to-read materials ensures users, regardless of background, can engage with the content. This helped her understand and apply new terminology in a way that felt natural and relevant to her volunteer environment.

Mijica's learnings have reinforced the importance of taking a holistic approach to volunteer well-being, from emotional and mental health to physical accessibility. She regularly checks in with volunteers to ensure they feel safe, heard, and supported. This approach has fostered a stronger, more resilient volunteer team.

Tools for Inclusive Volunteering

Sector Connect
sectorconnect.org.au

Individuals with ASD Checklist

Online Physical Access

1. Structure	Will this be helpful?		
	Yes	No	Comments
Information kept simple without unnecessary detail.			
Consistent layout of information so it can be followed.			
Information, navigation and content should all be predictable and provide feedback.			
Between each section, blank spaces should be used to separate			

	Will this be helpful?		
	Yes	No	Comments
such as sans-serif and n.			
sise its importance.			

"It's opened my eyes to the importance of going beyond simply avoiding discrimination to actively promoting a culture of acceptance and belonging."

Alice

About the Project

These resources aim to ensure VIOs can confidently involve and engage diverse groups of people to participate in volunteering. Consisting of three training videos and downloadable self-assessment checklists, they provide support for VIOs to implement inclusive practices to achieve positive outcomes for people living with disabilities

Topics include:
- Inclusive online Volunteering for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- Inclusion of Volunteers with Cerebral Palsy.
- Psychosocial Support and Inclusion for Volunteers going through life transitions (including puberty, gender affirming hormone therapy and menopause).

An additional video provides instructions on how to use the checklists and get the most out of the training videos.

Click on the links below to view the resources on the Knowledge Base:
- **Inclusive Online Volunteering for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder**
- **Inclusion of Volunteers with Cerebral Palsy**
- **Psychosocial Support & Inclusion for Volunteers Going Through Life Transitions**

Approach

In developing this project, Sector Connect leveraged their existing and emerging resources, combined with their extensive experience in supporting diverse groups in volunteering. The resources they created empower VIOs with tools and knowledge to engage with individuals living with disabilities and/or mental health concerns.

Building on their expertise in the disability and mental health space, Sector Connect was able to refine and enhance the tools and resources they had developed over the years. This included adapting content from a resource called the Missed Business Guide – developed in partnership with stakeholders and SMEs from disability services, Western Sydney University, Ageing, Disability and Home Care NSW (ADHC), Family and Community Services (FACS), Health and local Councils, and people living with a disability – to improve inclusion and access to businesses for people with disabilities.

This project allowed them to enhance the accessibility and adaptability of these resources for a broader range of users and create complementary content.

To ensure the training videos and access and inclusion checklists have a practical application for volunteer managers, they consulted people with lived experience of volunteering, various disability peak bodies and advisory boards, VIOs and SMEs. The developed resources, provide a guide for VIOs to assess their programs and identify gaps and areas for improvement in preparing their organisation to support inclusive volunteering.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Highlight the benefits of an inclusive workplace and guide organisations in implementing inclusive practices.
- Understand Cerebral Palsy and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and how to adjust support for volunteers.
- Explore life transitions and how to provide support during life transitions.
- Explore three key areas for role design and volunteer involvement: physical, intellectual, and social access.

Alice – Volunteer Coordinator for a Community Organisation

Alice's role as Volunteer Coordinator for a LGBTQIA+ community organisation's annual fundraising event was crucial to its success. Responsible for designing roles, recruiting, onboarding, and managing a team of approximately 25 volunteers, Alice's priority was to create a safe and welcoming environment and deliver a memorable, inclusive experience.

In preparing for this role, Alice engaged with the Sector Connect resources and said their impact has been significant. With a focus on inclusivity, having a better understanding and awareness of engaging volunteers from diverse backgrounds increased her confidence to engage, support and communicate with volunteers from all walks of life.

Learning about pronoun strategies further emphasised the importance of creating a space where everyone feels comfortable being addressed correctly. The presence of LGBTQIA+ symbols, the use of personal pronouns, and the overall focus on diversity helped create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for volunteers and guests.

"It's opened my eyes to the importance of going beyond simply avoiding discrimination, to actively promoting a culture of acceptance and belonging." Alice said.

Alice found the checklists a useful tool to help champion inclusivity and make the volunteering experience accessible, celebrate diversity and prioritise open communication.

Used in conjunction with other tools and information provided by The Centre for Volunteering, the Sector Connect resources have helped her build a more inclusive and welcoming volunteer program.

"A diverse volunteer team brings a wealth of perspectives and strengthens the overall program." Alice said.

By supporting the volunteers to feel valued and appreciated, their diverse team of all ages and abilities, played a key role in the event's success.