



Issues Paper: Volunteering in the service industries

■ Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to raise and discuss the topic of workforce development of volunteers within the context of the service industries. In doing this, Service Skills Australia will:

1. Describe current research and data on volunteers and workforce development of unpaid labour.
2. Make some broad conclusions from this research.
3. Present a series of questions for stakeholders to consider and provide feedback on.
4. Encourages stakeholders to provide feedback on the issues paper and to raise any other questions that may be relevant in addition to the points mentioned in the document.

■ Background

As stated in Service Skills Australia's (SSA) Environmental Scan 2009, many sectors of service industries under the scope of SSA depend heavily on volunteer/ unpaid labour in management, development and support roles.

From analysis of the available research, the extent and numbers of volunteers in the service industries have not been properly quantified and described. From the perspective of SSA this suggests a need for a more wide ranging investigation into capacity and capability building of volunteer/unpaid labour in the service industries. Possible topics for this research may include:

- Attracting, recruiting and retaining volunteers.
- The best way to support, develop and engage the skill of volunteers (this is potentially a critical topic linked to the retention and attraction point and the issue is reportedly more pressing in rural and remote volunteering organisations).
- Possible responses to increasing governance and regulatory requirements on retaining quality volunteers.
- The support that the nations education and training system provides to volunteers and volunteer utilising organisations (VUOs). SSA notes that the current vocational education and training system does present volunteers with a number of barriers to full participation in skill development.

Existing research available

Existing research and data on Australian volunteer activity is provided primarily by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Volunteering Australia (VA). This data mainly focuses on quantifying volunteers and their activity. It may be that the focus of



research on workforce development for volunteers is underpinned by a greater need to more accurately describe the effort and activity of unpaid labour and its contribution to Australia.

The suite of data includes:

- ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006 / 2000 / 1995
- ABS 4440.0.55.001 - Volunteers in Sport, Australia, 2006
- ABS 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 2008
- ABS Sport Volunteers, May 2005 (prepared for the Standing Committee on Recreation and Sport)
- VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008 / 2007 / 2006
- VA Australian Journal on Volunteering Vol. 13, Nb 1 and 2, 2008 (Research papers “Volunteer motives and retention in community sport (Australian rugby clubs)”, “The motivation of volunteers: Australian surf lifesavers” and “Volunteer satisfaction and dissatisfaction”)
- Research papers “Conceptualising volunteer rewards”, “Event volunteers” and “Organisational and occupational commitment: Implications for volunteer coaches’ wellbeing” from the Second National Research Symposium for Volunteering.
- Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, June 2008, Review of the Registered Clubs Industry in NSW
- Research papers including:
 - “Conceptualising volunteer rewards”, “Event volunteers” and “Organisational and occupational commitment: Implications for volunteer coaches’ wellbeing” from the Second National Research Symposium for Volunteering
 - Managing Leisure Apr-Jul2007, Vol. 12 Issue 2/3, Mentoring volunteer festival managers: Evaluation of a pilot scheme in regional Australia
 - Sport Management Review Sep 2006: Vol. 9 Issue 2, Reconsidering the role of training in event volunteers' satisfaction
 - Prepared for NSW Sport and Recreation, 2008, Volunteers in Sport: Issues and Innovation

In addition to this, the Federal Government has commissioned the Productivity Commission to construct a new tool to measure the contribution of the non-profit sector to communities and the economy (<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/not-for-profit>) in September 2008. The outcomes of this work could have implications for discussions on workforce development of volunteers.

Through analysis of the above listed sources, SSA has identified a range of issues with the data which are important to highlight. These include:



- Data is not available for every sector of the service industries,
- Data regarding training (in-house, on-the-job or external) is very limited and
- The most current data from ABS is from 2006.

There are also some challenges in definitions of “service industries” in the data, for instance:

- ‘Sport and recreation’ are definitions used by both VA and ABS with reasonable consistency.
- The sectors which come as close as possible to tourism, hospitality and events (as understood by SSA and its stakeholders) are ‘arts/culture’ (VA) and ‘arts/heritage’ (ABS). However work associated with volunteering in a school kitchen (hospitality) is classified by the ABS collection as ‘education and training’.
- Volunteering activity associated with the wholesale, retail and personal services (WRAPS) industries is collected in a range of areas. In the VA survey activity for these industries is found in ‘business/professional/union’, whereas in the ABS survey it is contained in ‘others’ (‘others’ including Business/professional/ union, International aid/development, Law/justice/political, and ‘Other’ (unspecified)).

The data collection regarding volunteers in the primary research collections presents some challenges for analysis and interpretation. To that end, it may represent limited value for the discussion on workforce development.

■ Findings from existing data

Taking into account the above mentioned concerns, the data on volunteering activity shows that:

1. According to the VA survey, *4% of all respondents were volunteering in the sport / recreation sector in 2008, compared to 14% in 2007 and 10% in 2006¹.*
2. According to ABS, *34.4% of all volunteering involvement was in a sport / physical recreation organisation².* The four most common types of organisation for which people volunteered, namely sport and physical recreation, education and training, community/welfare and religious groups, accounted for three-quarters (74%) of volunteering involvements³.
3. In 2008, 6% of all respondents were volunteering in the arts / culture sector, compared to 6% in 2007 and 5% in 2006. 1% of all respondents were volunteering in the business / professional / union sector, the same percentage as in 2007 and 2006, both *representing stable percentages⁴.*

¹ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008

² ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006

³ ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006

⁴ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008



The volunteer itself

General data describing volunteers (gender, age, etc) is available, however seldom sector specific (with the exception of sport and recreation).

Gender and age

According to ABS 61.7% (1,084,300) of sport volunteers were male, compared to 49.5% (7,176,500) of volunteers being male across all sectors⁵. 207,200 persons volunteered in 'arts/heritage' organisations with the majority being female (63%) with a median age of 49 years (female 44 years, male 55 years)⁶. 279,200 persons volunteered in 'other' organisations. In these organisations the number of female and male volunteers was equal and the median age was slightly younger than for 'arts/heritage' (45)⁷.

Comparing this data to the median age of the Australian population (36.8 years at June 2007⁸) it shows that in some sectors VUOs have problems attracting and recruiting younger volunteers. As a result of Australia's trend towards an ageing population the recruitment of younger volunteers and succession planning will be a challenge in the future.

According to other ABS data,

- 16% of all sport volunteers were in the age group 40-44 years,
- 13.4% each in the age groups 45-49 years and 35-39 years, followed by
- 12.1% in the age group 18-24 years⁹.

VA data shows that of sport and recreation volunteers:

- 29% were in the 45-54 age group,
- 26% in the age group 55-64 years and
- 24% were between 35 and 44 years old¹⁰.

The variance in distribution of the ABS and VA surveys reflects the different coverage of the surveys.

ABS also finds that:

- 59% of all sport volunteers were employed full time,
- 22% were employed part time
- 17% were not participating in the labour force and
- 2% were unemployed¹¹.

⁵ Sport Volunteers, May 2005

⁶ ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006

⁷ ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006

⁸ ABS 3235.0 - Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, 2007

⁹ ABS Sport Volunteers, May 2005

¹⁰ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008



The fact that most volunteers are in full time employment suggests that time constraints exist which may require more flexible and innovative approaches to workforce development in order to engage volunteers in capability building activity.

Motivators

Research on reasons why Australians volunteer usually covers a very specific group of volunteers and tends to focus on qualitative arguments rather than quantitative information.

For the sport and recreation sector, intrinsic and altruistic factors are important for volunteering, such as 'doing something good for the community'¹².

Volunteers who participate in community events typically identified three major motivators: interest in the theme of the event (for example a specific kind of music), the community and the aim to help¹³.

The motivation to volunteer may come from a shared goal or value between the individual and the VUO. In 67% of all respondents the goal of an organisation was a major reason to get involved¹⁴. This fact may have a range of implications for VUOs particularly for those who may be considering changing their mission and goals. In addition, it enforces the need to clearly and understandably communicate and market what an organisation stands for and which goals and values it represents.

In its National Survey of Volunteering Issues VA asked if the work as volunteer has increased the sense of 'belonging to a community' for the volunteers. 86% of respondents said yes which indicates a high importance of this factor to continuing volunteering¹⁵.

The limited availability of data around key motivators to volunteering is a concern. Better data in this area may assist in developing appropriate strategies for the recruitment and retention of volunteers. In order to retain and develop existing volunteers it is important to know 'why' people are volunteering. Better information on motivators may also help to create attractive communication strategies which can be adapted to the VUO's target labour group.

Regional and metro

Whilst data from VA indicates that 58% of responding volunteers were in a metropolitan area¹⁶, data from ABS described below shows the volunteering rate is higher in areas outside capital cities¹⁷.

According to the ABS survey¹⁸,

- ACT and Queensland had the highest proportion of volunteers in 2006, with 38% of their population volunteering.

¹¹ ABS Sport Volunteers, May 2005

¹² VA Australian Journal on Volunteering Vol. 13, Nb 1, 2008, research papers "The motivation of volunteers: Australian surf lifesavers" and "Volunteer motives and retention in community sport (Australian rugby clubs)"

¹³ Research Papers "Event volunteers" from the Second National Research Symposium for Volunteering

¹⁴ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008

¹⁵ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008

¹⁶ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008

¹⁷ This discrepancy in spreading may be based on different information structure from VA in the metropolitan areas;

¹⁸ ABS 4441.0 - Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006



- Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory had a 36% volunteer rate.

Volunteering was more common among those living in parts of the state outside the capital city. The volunteer rate was 32% for capital cities overall compared with 38% outside the capital cities.

- South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania exhibited this pattern, but the differences were greatest in Victoria and New South Wales.
- The proportion volunteering in both Sydney and Melbourne was 30%, but in the rest of the two states the proportion was 41% in Victoria and 37% in New South Wales.
- Queensland (38%) and the Northern Territory (36%) each had volunteer rates that were the same for both types of areas.

State/Territories	Volunteering rate (ABS)
New South Wales	32.7%
Victoria	32.7%
Queensland	37.8%
South Australia	31.4%
Western Australia	36.3%
Tasmania	36%
Northern Territory	35.8%
ACT	38.4%

Interestingly 33% of all sport volunteers were residents of NSW, 24% of Victoria, followed by 19% living in Queensland and 11% from WA¹⁹.

In terms of the development of the volunteer workforce, there may be a set of implications on distribution of workforce development activities that account for the higher levels of engagement in rural and regional areas of Australia.

Volunteer Utilising Organisations (VOU) Type

Throughout all respondents 31% were volunteering in a national organisation and 30% in a state based organisation²⁰. Regarding the size of the volunteering organisation, 24% of all respondents are engaged in organisations with 300 or more volunteers and 23% in organisations with 1 to 19 volunteers. The remaining

¹⁹ ABS Sport Volunteers, May 2005

²⁰ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008



percentages were spread evenly throughout the organisation sizes in between those two poles²¹.

Types of volunteer activities

Around a third of sports volunteers spent most of their volunteering time involved in coaching, refereeing and judging. Further activities which sports volunteers undertook included administration, clerical, recruitment and information management tasks (16%), as well as fundraising and sales (15%)²².

Throughout all volunteers the main task (46%) were administration/clerical duties, followed by education / tutoring / mentoring and fundraising / retail (each 32%)²³.

Consequential opportunities may lie in the targeting of workforce development activity around particular sets of activities that volunteers in the service industries typically engage in.

Volunteers in governance roles

A unique volunteering role is that of board members or directors. Volunteering as a board member or in a director roles is a major issue as it demands specific know how and financial management skills.

A report by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal²⁴ on Registered Clubs Industry in NSW identified the board's financial skills as imperative to the club's financial viability. Stakeholders indicating that corporate governance in clubs could be improved if boards operated more effectively. The key challenges to board effectiveness identified were:

- deficiencies in director skill sets
- difficulties in attracting suitably skilled and experienced directors
- difficulties in electing suitably skilled and experienced directors.

The report recommended several initiatives to address these challenges, including compulsory core professional development training for directors (with recognition of prior learning).

Furthermore it also recommended initiatives to improve the existing club-specific training available to directors and managers, such as offering accredited training for directors, offering more flexible delivery options for director training, and increasing the promotion of the training options available.

²¹ VA National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008

²² ABS 4441.0, 2006

²³ National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008, multiple answers possible

²⁴ Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales, Review of the Registered Clubs Industry in NSW, June 2008



Development of volunteer workforce

Data regarding training for specific sectors is very limited.

In the National Survey of Volunteering Issues 2008:

- 85% of all respondents said that an orientation process exists
- 88% stated that training for volunteer roles and skills development processes are available.
- 54% said that volunteer appraisal / performance management processes are in place - similar numbers of volunteers (83%, 83% and 57% respectively) were very satisfied or satisfied with those processes.

Respondents from volunteering organisations showed a slightly higher percentage in all three points mentioned above (96%, 92% and 55% respectively). This may indicate that either more volunteer respondents were from volunteers in organisations which do not have these workforce development processes or that not all volunteers are aware of the processes in place in their organisation.

Regarding opportunities to develop skills:

- 57% stated they had accessed available training opportunities
- 31% that they know that training opportunities were available
- 9% that they were not available and
- 4% that they didn't know.

Research regarding event management showed the need to train volunteer festival managers to enhance the management and focus the artistic direction of their festivals²⁵. Another report stated that training of event volunteers should be conceived and designed as an opportunity to build a sense of community among volunteers to enhance volunteer commitment and satisfaction²⁶.

Lacking knowledge and skills about the sport and/or administrative processes to operate a club was also noted by volunteers surveyed for the report 'Volunteers in Sport: Issues and Innovation'²⁷.

On a positive note, a survey of 375 Australian Rugby Union clubs showed that clubs that reported more extensive use of planning practices and training and support practices were likely to report significantly fewer perceived problems in the overall retention of volunteers²⁸.

²⁵ Managing Leisure Apr-Jul2007, Vol. 12 Issue 2/3, Mentoring volunteer festival managers: Evaluation of a pilot scheme in regional Australia.

²⁶ Sport Management Review Sep 2006: Vol. 9 Issue 2, Reconsidering the role of training in event volunteers' satisfaction.

²⁷ Prepared for NSW Sport and Recreation, 2008, Volunteers in Sport: Issues and Innovation

²⁸ Sport Management Review Sep 2006: Vol. 9 Issue 2, Volunteer Management Practices and Volunteer Retention: A Human Resource Management Approach



■ Conclusions

From the above data following conclusions can be drawn about volunteers in the service industries:

- The population of volunteers in the service industries tends towards elderly age groups compared to the Australian population (with exceptions such as life saving).
- Data regarding the motivation to volunteer and to continue to volunteer exists marginal. Small samples suggest that motivators are altruism rather than employment or career progression.
- Volunteers undertake their unpaid labour across the country and are more likely to be undertaking that work in regional areas. Volunteers in the sport sector are though more likely to be working in NSW in areas “off the field” including coaching, officiating and administration.

In terms of workforce development, the immediate available data indicates that volunteers do typically engage in basic training and that ongoing training is available. However, a significant part of those training opportunities do not appear to be accessed.

There is no data to describe why training is not accessed, nor is there data on the use of accredited training for skill development.

FOR DISCUSSION



■ Key Questions and Issues

You can provide feedback to the **Key Questions** at our website:
www.serviceskills.com.au/volunteer

- **Data**

There are a range of key questions emerging from the available data. SSA is not able to find data to answer these questions and therefore proposes that these be the subject of further investigation.

Key questions for consideration:

What other data exists that can inform Service Skills Australia about the workforce development needs of volunteers in the service industries?

What further data should be collected to inform the workforce development discussion on volunteers?

- **Policy Settings**

Currently, the National Training System does not fully support the education and training needs of unpaid labour in the service industries. This is a major concern for many VUOs and volunteers also because skills recognition can be a big opportunity for volunteers. A key barrier faced by volunteers is that the federal, state and territory funding mechanisms which are used to implement the National Training System do not accommodate their specific needs. For example, if there is no paid employment outcome there is no eligibility for publically funded training.

However many VUOs develop contracts with volunteers and incur workers compensation costs as a result of *employing* these volunteers. Interventions, such as traineeships, which require a paid employment component, are incapable of resolving the skill development needs of the volunteer workforce and thus volunteers are significantly disadvantaged.

Key question for consideration:

What policy settings need to be in place to more effectively support the development of the volunteer workforce?



- **Workforce Development**

In an address to the Volunteering Australia Conference²⁹ Senator Ursula Stephens Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector stated that in the development of a national volunteer strategy, there would need to be:

A commitment to building the skills and capacity of volunteers, which might include achieving national consistency in training, accreditation and standards;

In addition to this, the announcement of the Human Capital Reform element of the National Reform Agenda was a significant catalyst for the review of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process within the National Training System. At its February 2006 meeting, COAG agreed to work towards a more flexible and responsive training system. Specifically to:

...make the most of existing skills in the workforce, COAG has agreed that a better process to recognise the existing skills of all people entering training will be introduced by January 2007, so that workers do not have to repeat or undertake training for skills they have already acquired on the job. New funding to be agreed between the Commonwealth and States and Territories on a bilateral basis will be provided to help training organisations and assessment centres establish or improve recognition processes.

A major outcome of this agreement was the review of the Australian Quality Training Framework, resulting in AQTF 2007. The revised standards have an expanded emphasis on quality outcomes and a reduced administrative and compliance burden for training providers, including the provision of an allowance for streamlined RPL processes.

In addition to the research information on training activity and workforce development on volunteers this paper also notes that in developing the capability and capacity of VUO's workforce development strategies and approaches should:

- Be flexible and innovative to accommodate paid work patterns of most volunteers
- Build on shared goals between the volunteer and their VUO
- Be driven on a keen understanding of the motivators of volunteers that the VUO works with
- Leverage off the existing and preferred activities that volunteers currently engage in
- Accommodate the distribution of volunteers in rural and regional areas of Australia

²⁹ Senator Ursula Stephens, Address to the Volunteering Australia Conference 5th September 2008

**Key questions for consideration:**

Do the above points provide a reasonable starting base for workforce development principles for volunteers?

What effective practices do currently exist for the development of the volunteer workforces in the service industries?

Why is the range of existing and available training materials not used?

What new information or discussion should occur on the topic of workforce development for volunteers?

Should there be priority areas for skills development in volunteers? Do the Governance skills of volunteer boards need particular attention?

FOR DISCUSSION



■ Next Steps

Service Skills Australia seeks feedback to this issues paper and the points raised. As the Industry Skills Council for the service industries we are interested in stakeholders' opinions on effective workforce development of volunteers and any available information that may be available to support this activity.

Service Skills Australia will be undertaking a sample focus group early August to build upon available data. The outcomes of focus group will feed into the existing data and instigate, together with feedback to this paper, a range of activity to respond to the needs of the service industry.

It is envisaged that that responses to this paper will provide Service Skills Australia with the opportunity of working with industry to more strongly advocate for the skill and workforce development needs of volunteers. Knowledge gained from this discussion paper and other activity will also enable Service Skills Australia to work with industry to develop better training products and services for volunteers.

This paper is available for comments until **14th August 2009**.

Any comments may be addressed to Service Skills Australia by the following contacts:

Daniela Jaron (Research Leader)

Service Skills Australia

Level 10, 171 Clarence Street, Sydney 2000

Email: djaron@serviceskills.com.au

Phone: 02 8243 1200

To provide feedback go to our website at www.serviceskills.com.au/volunteer