

Volunteer Reward and Recognition



Volunteers are generally not motivated to start or continue volunteering because of financial incentives. Their “payment” comes in other forms such as:

- Feeling their time is being used valuably to make a difference
- Being treated with respect and feeling their input is valued
- Feeling appreciated for their efforts
- Having opportunities to develop personal or professional skills and work towards goals.

Gifts and events are nice, (and should be budgeted for), but a lot of volunteers would prefer meaningful regular rewards and recognition from their organisations and adequate resources to do their jobs in preference to flashy and expensive displays that are not reflected in their day to day experience.

Here is a list of ideas that can start you thinking of ways to show your volunteers that you appreciate them.



No cost/time cost only

- Saying thank you
- Sending a message on their birthday or on the anniversary of their volunteering
- Remembering (or recording and looking up) their name and personal details e.g. volunteer preferences, partner’s name, kids, renovations, etc.
- Team meetings
- Inclusion in decision making e.g. by forming a volunteer reference group, holding consultation sessions and feedback surveys (and responding to/acting on their feedback)
- Newsletters
- Email updates
- Facebook page/group (may require time for moderating the group, or trusted volunteer moderators)
- Reviews/feedback meetings or phone calls
- Asking how volunteers like to be shown appreciation
- Asking about their goals, satisfaction levels, future intentions
- Facebook/social media/print media stories about volunteers
- Religious service/mass/prayer for volunteers (for religious groups)
- Inclusion of volunteer contributions to your annual report or other organisational documents
- Making sure staff are ready for volunteers when they arrive, have work for them to do, that volunteers have an available desk or work station, etc. or letting a volunteer know if you don’t need them that day

- Acknowledgement by staff, managers, CEO
- Nomination for external Awards.

Low–medium cost

- Monthly/quarterly meeting, light lunch/morning tea
- Information and training sessions or other professional development opportunities
- Coffee vouchers, gift cards, instore discounts, meal vouchers (source donations/ sponsorship from local businesses if possible)
- Certificates
- Plaques (could also be high cost)
- Postcards
- Thank you card/mail out
- Christmas cards and gifts
- Merchandise, corporate uniforms, lanyards (could also be high cost)
- Service pins
- Personalised cards signed by clients and staff
- Cards or certificated designed by your organisation (e.g. if you have a marketing department)
- Certificates recognising individual volunteer’s contribution
- Low cost gift ideas include finding a nice quote, or symbolic gestures like a gift of seeds or seedlings saying “thank you for helping our organisation grow” or lifesaver lollies with “thanks for being a lifesaver” (Pinterest has lots of volunteer appreciation ideas)
- Providing options for parking, travel reimbursement, meal allowances, etc. (may also be high cost)
- Tickets for sporting events or movies
- Volunteer mugs, chocolates, figurines.

High cost (but worth it)

- Events/Functions/Awards/Christmas Party/National Volunteer Week, etc.
- Service awards/Awards related to impact/contribution (not just number of years) including a perpetual plaque or honour board placed in a prominent location in your organisation
- Volunteer Conferences
- Dedicated paid Volunteer Coordinator/ Manager and adequate resourcing of the volunteer department.

Volunteer reward and recognition is not just a “nice thing to do” – in a sector where there is increasing competition for volunteer labour, it is in the best interests of organisations that rely on volunteers to also invest in them and show their volunteers they are appreciated. Volunteering is excellent value for money, but it is not free.



Further reading

- [The Queensland Volunteering Awards](#)
- Volunteer Pro - Volunteer Recognition: <https://volpro.net/volunteer-recognition/>
- Energize Inc - Recognising Volunteers: <https://www.energizeinc.com/art/recognizing-volunteers>
- Bribing volunteers: Should we be incentivising people for their time? By Rob Jackson <https://www.energizeinc.com/hot-topics/2018/june>



volunteering
queensland