

Project Name	More Volunteers with Us
Partner Organisation	3rd Space
Project Period	January - December 2023
Project Status	Completed
Project Budget	\$59,500.00

Project Overview

3rd Space Brisbane is a day-time drop-in centre where people experiencing or at risk of homelessness find support, friendship, and dignity. 3rd Space service's focus is on breaking the cycle of homelessness.

The aim of this project was to work toward two improvements in relation to volunteers:

- Strengthen cultural safety and build capacity within the organisation to become an attractive organisation for First Nations persons to volunteer with.
- Recruit and retain more volunteers who more appropriately reflect the diverse group of visitors we help.

Main impacts

- ✓ Review of policies, systems and practice of the centre from the First Nation's perspective, to ensure cultural inclusiveness, cultural capabilities, and retention of volunteers from the First Nations cohort. The review showed that although they were deemed appropriate through cultural inclusiveness and capabilities lenses, they were not implemented in a consistent manner. The review also found that volunteer positions descriptions had limited mention to First Nation importance, cultural diversity, knowledge or understanding to the 3rd Space client group and the role 3rd Space volunteers play in the support provided for our First Nation clients.
- ✓ Changes to application forms for volunteer positions were introduced, to identify the level of knowledge about historical and contemporary issues that impact First Nation people (e.g. intergenerational trauma, closing the gap). These questions help in identifying needs, experience, and skills gaps within the volunteers.
- ✓ Volunteer's induction process was amended to include a conversation about historical and contemporary issues that impact First Nation people, not to assess the knowledge of the volunteer, but to provide an opportunity to have a discussion and create learning opportunities for the volunteer and staff members performing the induction process.
- ✓ 83 volunteers completed the training in Indigenous Cultural Awareness from Your Mob Learning as part of the onboarding process. Informal feedback from staff was that this training is informative, covers a lot of ground in an accessible format. For many, remote access allows the learner to set their own pace, skipping over topics they are more familiar with and focusing on areas that interest them more.

Highlights

- *Knowledgeable advisory.* The project was developed under the advisory of a First Nation person, Corey Walker, descendant of the Gubbi Gubbi of the Sunshine Coast area and the Wakka Wakka Tribes of the central Burnett region. The advisor has 30+ years' experience working with First Nation communities from Youth Homelessness, Youth Justice, Community Development and Community Capacity building to education and Outdoor Adventure Based learning programs in a direct programming role and training roles.
- *Identification of factors that impact in the attraction and retention of First Nations People as volunteers, through community consultation and research.* 10 interviews were completed with a focus group made of First Nations people working professionally in several different sectors as well as First Nations' individuals from the wider community. The outcomes of this consultation are presented below.
- *Training and events to foster cultural awareness and cultural safety within staff and volunteers.* After established the importance of these two factors, plus the gaps found within staff and volunteers regarding cultural capability, the centre implemented the following strategies:
 - Online cultural awareness training modules in onboarding process (Your Mob training modules)
 - Organising First Nation Mental Health First Aid training (Certified and accredited training)
 - Organizing community celebrations and awareness events (Community events were organised in concomitance with National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week respectively)
- *Targeted recruitment of volunteers.* Different efforts were implemented to recruit volunteers from First Nations people.
 - In person workshop with QUT psychology students
 - Online workshop with South Bank Tafe Community services students
 - Radio advertisement.
 - Internal program with 3rd Space's First Nation guests.
 - Engagement and support from a local First Nation owned Branding and Marketing firm. (Carbon Creative)
 - Partnership with local radio stations with audience identified within the First Nation People. (4ZZZ)

- Successful alliances.
 - Engagement and support from a local First Nation owned Branding and Marketing firm (Carbon Creative).
 - Partnership with local radio stations with audience identified within the First Nations People. (4ZZZ)
- Marketing strategy for volunteer roles specifically designed for First Nations people. Under a pro bono agreement. Carbon Creative developed a marketing strategy built around the brand of 'Deadly Volunteer', including newly designed roles such as 'Aunty' and 'Uncle', and the commission of bespoke Aboriginal artwork. A targeted social media recruitment campaign was conducted over two weeks through LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram under the concept developed by Carbon Creative and utilising the artwork and pieces they designed.



The overarching objective of the campaign was to engage people who would be good candidates to be volunteers. (By the end of November 2023) There have been seven (and counting) legitimate expressions of interest. Most importantly, the calibre of applicant is extremely high, this could be due to the defined targeting for these specific roles as demographics such as interest in social work, volunteering, social justice, and health care.

Challenges

- Attracting volunteers from the First Nation Cohort was time demanding and required the trial of multiple avenues as mentioned previously. Thanks to the alliance with a local First Nation owned Branding and Marketing firm (Carbon Creative) it was possible to find expert advice in attracting the required cohort. It was also very important to be able to establish a relationship with 4ZZZ Radio station, thanks to the mutual relationship with Volunteering QLD.
- Time. The creation of cultural safe environment requires multiple efforts that cannot be developed in a short period of time as they require preparation and investment of human and financial resources. These efforts should also be continued for a long period of time to be embedded in the environment of the day-to-day work of the centre.
- Training and community events were crucial to strengthen cultural safety and promotion of cultural awareness. However, the centre does not always have the financial availability to guarantee them along with the delivery of the services. For example, from an organizational perspective, the First Nation Mental Health First Aid training presented higher cost barriers as well as logistical barriers having to coordinate dates and attendees in a way that would not impact on service delivery at the centre.

Lessons learned.

- Engaging a trusted First Nation adviser was critical to the implementation of this project. 3rd Space was in privileged position to be able to gain invaluable knowledge and to establish relationships through an identified, highly skilled Project Officer. Leveraging the expertise of a trusted First Nation professional or officer boosted the organisation's confidence and helped navigate ethical dilemmas.
- Training can be costly. However, there are also often free or low-cost pathways to get closer to the learning goal. Funding opportunities may also be available. At the time of reporting, 3rd Space was successful in applying for funding to cover costs of training beyond the scope of this project timeline.
- There are many opportunities for partnerships and pro bono support in the right circumstances. While the variables are countless, it is worth reaching out and grabbing opportunities when they present.
- The partnership with Volunteering QLD entailed unprecedented resources for the Volunteer Program and was critical in the realisation of this project. Not all initiatives lead to success, and some strategies were resource and time intensive. In the absence of funding, it is difficult to envisage how this work could have happened.
- External political and environmental factors had an impact on the life of team members and the project. For instance, the project we reported on took place in the lead up to the 'Voice' Referendum. This had repercussions on burn out, morale and focus on the tasks.
- It is realistic to conclude that there is appetite among First Nation people for volunteering. An explicit call out, as well as using language that conveys cultural meaning were very effective strategies to attract attention and interest.