

Project Name	Breaking Down the Barriers
Partner Organisation	Volunteering North Queensland
Project Period	March - September 2023
Project Status	Completed.
Project Budget	\$30,000.00

Project Overview

This project aimed to identify the barriers to volunteering for people from the three initial VMA cohorts: People with disability, First Nations people and new arrivals in the multicultural community. The area of action was Townsville Regional Council.

Based on the barriers identified, the project intent was to run training workshops and run one-on-one meetings with volunteer managers of the organisations in the area. The project focused on ensuring the volunteer managers were equipped with the skills of knowing how to work with a diversity of cultures and people with different skills and abilities to ensure the volunteers themselves are confident, and to attract new volunteers of all backgrounds to the organisations.

Main impacts

- ✓ Barriers to volunteer in Townsville Regional Council were identified through hearing feedback and consulting with the community.

WHO GAVE THEIR INPUT?

- › Business Case Study on:
 - › Little Starfish (All Abilities Nippers)
 - › Townsville Multicultural Support Group
- › Surveys to volunteers and VIOs
- › Focus Groups including organisations such as:
 - › Cores Queensland
 - › Red Cross Well-being Centre
 - › PCYC
 - › Community Information Centre
 - › Musical Theatre
 - › QFES
 - › Stable on the Strand
 - › Fire and Rescue
- › Community Service Organisations such as:
 - › St Vinnies – Drug and Rehab
 - › Relationships Australia
 - › Open Arms
 - › Queensland Youth Services
 - › Relationships Australia
 - › Selectability



- ✓ For some barriers it was also possible to identify easy solutions like coordination of volunteer shift times with the public transport schedules.

MOST COMMON BARRIERS & SOLUTIONS

BARRIER	SOLUTION
RED TAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Vetting process done by VNQ hold required documentation etc Keeps on hand blue cards, licence etc, > Pre-empt the potential issues that organisations could have, and develop cheat sheet or solution > Some NFP groups have to follow constitution regarding volunteering, VNQ might have to have heads of agreement with large organisations that have these conditions. > Large Organisations may also have to go through their HR department, thus creating a layer of costs.
TRANSPORTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Volunteering opportunities from along bus route with bus pass included. > Set volunteering times around bus times. > Volunteer ingroups where organisations can organise carpooling
TIME & OTHER COMMITMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Creating opportunities or position volunteering as part of families "normal schedule" > Communicate that roles that are flexible with time and location > Be flexible but understand the time is precious
ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Treat organisation like a business with. > Clear organisation profile, values, and goals. > Clear position descriptions, policies, guidelines, inductions

- ✓ Opportunities to be implemented by VNQ and VIOs in Townsville.
 - Specific networking functions where volunteers are matched with volunteer organisations.
 - Teach volunteer coordinators how to make positions listed on the VNQ website exciting and clear on what is required of a volunteer for that role.
 - Introduce tags or categories on the VNQ website so organisations can select the specific barriers they accommodate and assist with.
 - Organisations to include roles that allow for the whole family to volunteer OR that have allowance for young children to attend.

Highlights

- The project gathered insights from volunteers and volunteer involving organisations through focus groups. The sessions explored answers to the following questions.
 - What are the barriers to volunteering?
 - Why people do or do not want to volunteer?
 - What are the challenges to volunteering in 2023?
 - What can we learn from volunteering success stories?
- The learnings from the focus groups were shared with across VIOs to equip all managers with the skills needed to handle diverse cultures and individuals with varying abilities.
- Training was offered to VIO volunteer managers in the area. These trainings were focused on:
 - Volunteer recruitment
 - Improvement of the volunteer experience
 - How to create templates to facilitate administrative work
 - How to create application forms online and make applications available.

Challenges

- Administrative challenges from the project partner VNQ. They experienced difficulties appointing a manager and relocating to new premises during the delivery of the project.
- VNQ lack of recourses to improve their IT equipment impacted the productivity of the staff and volunteers.

Lessons learned.

- Effective solutions require us all to think differently. Through the delivery of the project and the consultation with volunteers and VIOs, VNQ identified the following tips to boost volunteering within their community.

Promote volunteering around the holiday season.

- **Give your time as a gift this Christmas.**
- **Pledge to volunteer as your New Year's Resolution**

Incentives for volunteers

- Skills and training
- Friendships and helping with loneliness.
- Bi-monthly lucky prizes
- Introduction to the organisation with family day or night session
- Be flexible for the needs of volunteers

How to encourage youth to volunteer?

- Promote a school's program that creates a want to volunteer - introduce a local little champion.
 - Year 4 to Year 7: Volunteering with their parent/guardian one – two hours a week
-

- Moving forward we will continue to utilize the information sharing to enable more VIOs to become more resilient and sustainable.
- We will be using more on-line tools that already exist on the Volunteering Queensland website.