

Working with volunteers

An important question to ask is “Why do people want to volunteer for our club?”

For most voluntary positions, clubs do not have the constitutional power to recruit individuals. Clubs are bound to elect board/committee members, but usually can appoint some members to sub-committees on an ex-officio basis. Being able to attract a pool of qualified people can be a challenging task.

Volunteers need to understand the size and nature of the task ahead of them before deciding to commit their time and energy to a position. This is where an adequately prepared job description is very helpful. Details should include things like meeting times, major tasks and average weekly or monthly time commitments for the position.

Inducting volunteers

Taking up a new position is a critical period for new volunteers and for the club. Volunteers are making a transition from being an outsider to an insider or moving from a peripheral to a core position within the club.

New volunteers cannot be expected to understand the requirements of their new position or how the club functions on a day-to-day basis. A well designed induction process reduces stress on new volunteers, makes them feel welcome and is likely to improve their performance as a volunteer.

Induction is based on the process of socialisation, which is about influencing the expectations, behaviour and attitudes of a new volunteer in a manner considered desirable by the club. Socialisation begins with induction to key aspects about the club and its policies and procedures, the position and the board/committee and sub-committee responsibilities.

Induction checklist:

- Provide a copy of the current constitution and regulations or by-laws;
- Provide a copy of the current strategic plan (if applicable);
 - Discuss the club’s aims, financial performance, members, other customers and decision-making processes;
- Provide a copy of the club structure including board/committee, sub-committees and staff (if applicable);
 - Outline the roles and responsibilities of key board/committee members, sub-committee members and staff;
 - Provide copies of minutes from previous meetings;
 - Introduce key staff;
 - Detail the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of the volunteer in their new position (job description);
 - Committee member code of conduct;
 - Health, safety, risk management and insurance; and
- Familiarise volunteers with club facilities, services, equipment and resources.