

Building Community: Gifting Time Project Volunteer Resource

Building Community: Gifting Time is a pilot project under the umbrella of the Sunshine Coast Community Co-Lab model. The Co-Lab model is a pilot initiative and partnership between Sunshine Coast Council and the University of the Sunshine Coast (UniSC).

Sunshine Coast Community Co-Lab is a best practice engagement model that aims to bring together the resources of the Sunshine Coast community, council, UniSC and their students to share knowledge and collectively respond to local challenges and opportunities. The program aims to open a dialogue on items that matter to the community and invites them to co-create locally appropriate responses.

Between 18 October and 7 December 2022, a comprehensive community engagement program was delivered both in the community and online. There were three key community engagement activities in the volunteer project, Building Community: Gifting Time:

- Community Survey (open from 18 October to 29 November 2022)
- Public Seminar (held on 27 October 2022)
- Young person's focus groups (hosted between October and November 2022)
- Community Forum (held on 7 December 2022)

A series of Topic Area Resources have been compiled utilising the comments collected at the Community Forum supported by some of the findings from the Community Survey.

Topic Areas

- **Topic 1 – New Residents**
- **Topic 2 - Promoting volunteering opportunities**
- **Topic 3 - Creating welcoming environments**
- **Topic 4 - Overcoming the barriers**
- **Topic 5 - Virtual volunteering**
- **Topic 6 - Reducing red tape**
- **Topic 7 - Informal volunteering**

References

[Volunteering Australia, Key Volunteering Statistics, 2022](#)

[Health Direct, Benefits of Volunteering](#)

[Social Media Statistics for Australia \(Updated January 2023\) Genroe](#)

[Volunteering Australia, National Survey of Volunteering Issues, 2008](#)

[Volunteering Australia, The Volunteering Perspective, 2022](#)

[The Conversation, Article-How can we bolster Australia's depleted army of volunteers, 2023](#)

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List of potential volunteer opportunities

- Sports clubs
- Museums
- Galleries
- Community Halls
- Community Gardens
- Schools
- Community Centres
- Community Libraries
- Visitor information
- Hospitals
- Events and festivals

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Topic 1 – New Residents

Moving to a new location can be both exciting and daunting. There are so many things for new residents to consider from settling into a new home, work, school and finding their way around an unfamiliar location. It may take some time before people think about volunteering in their new community, despite volunteering being a great way to meet new people, form friendships and learn more skills (*Key Volunteering Statistics, February 2022, Volunteering Australia*). The findings in the Building Community: Gifting Time Survey (the survey) indicated this is the case in the Sunshine Coast Region.

Length of Residency and Volunteering

We know that with increasing residency, a greater proportion of people tend to offer their time in formal volunteering. For respondents to the survey, this ranged from 60% among those who have lived in the region for up to 2 years increasing to 84% for those with 10 or more years on the Coast. It takes time to settle into a new community, seek out places and activities of interest but it does appear from the survey data that a large proportion of relatively new residents are willing to engage in volunteering.

How can we encourage new residents to the Sunshine Coast to get involved in volunteering? This is the question that was posed for the Market Place activity at the Community Forum.

What strategies can be used to encourage new residents on the Sunshine Coast to engage earlier in volunteering opportunities?

Promotion, Awareness and Communication

Some of the suggestions from the community forum were around communication, promotion, and awareness. Letter box drops are one way to disseminate information locally but very labour intensive. Check what newsletters are being delivered already. Neighbourhood Watch might be an avenue to explore and incorporate any messages about volunteer opportunities and activities in their regular newsletter.

Churches and spiritual centres, schools, pre-schools and kindies also have notice boards and notices to parents/members, and this might be another opportunity to spread the word to new residents. Everyone needs to buy groceries. Ask if notices about volunteering opportunities and local volunteer events can be left at local shops.

Events and Activities

Events and activities are a great way to attract people to your organisation and provide you with an opportunity to promote the benefits of volunteering for you. Open days, come and try days, trivia nights, bare foot bowls... the list goes on. Check out some of the ideas in the resources section.

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Volunteer Stories

The power of stories cannot be underestimated. Take the time out while you have people at your event or activity to gather and listen to volunteer stories and how they have made a difference to your organisations and their local community. Use stories in your social media posts and other promotional material to attract new volunteers.

Flexible Approach

Be prepared to offer flexible volunteer arrangements and a variety of tasks to keep the volunteers interested and happy. Information and communication were key themes from the community forum. Regular catch ups with volunteers and open communication are seen as essential.

Resources

Facebook

Facebook can be a great way to promote volunteering opportunities. Here is a small selection of well supported Community Facebook pages.

[Sunshine Coast Hinterland Community Board](#)

[Sunshine Coast Community Board](#)

[Sunshine Coast Mums](#)

[Sunshine Coast Australia – Official Community Notice Board](#)

[Sunshine Coast Local Life Community](#)

[Neighbourhood Watch Queensland](#)

[Sunshine Coast Neighbourhood Watch](#)

Event Ideas

[Community Events Ideas](#)

[50 Ideas guaranteed to Inspire Your Next Social Event](#)

[Event Ideas and Formats to Inspire Your Next Great Event](#)

Event Websites

[Events Sunshine Coast](#)

New Resident Help pages

[New Residents](#)

Residents' Association

[OSCAR Inc](#) (peak body)

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Topic 2 – Promoting volunteer opportunities

Volunteering benefits both the community and those who gift their time. For the volunteer the benefits can include:

- Providing a sense of achievement and purpose
- Feeling part of the community
- Feeling better about yourself by improving self-esteem and confidence
- Sharing talents, learning new skills and creating a better work life balance
- Combating stress, loneliness, social isolation, and depression
- Meeting new people, which can help with feeling more connected and valued (*Benefits of Volunteering, Health Direct*)

The age range for the Building Community: Gifting Time Survey (the survey) was from 21 to 86 years. Findings from the survey suggest that volunteers have better health outcomes and are generally happy people. 70% of respondents who volunteered reported having very good/excellent health compared with 56% of non-volunteers.

How can organisations better market the benefits of volunteering through communications and storytelling and effectively promote volunteering opportunities? This was the question posed for participants at the Community Forum.

What strategies can be used to promote volunteering opportunities?

Storytelling

The power of storytelling cannot be overstated. Personal stories evoke emotions, connect people and help us relate to other experiences, events and locations. Utilise the stories of volunteers and the people they serve through your organisations to attract new recruits. There are numerous ways to tell the stories - print media, videos, podcasts, websites and social media.

Reaching Your Audience

There is no doubt that social media is a great vehicle for marketing and the table below shows some of the social media platforms in ranked order of preference. The highest users of social media by age are people aged 25 - 34 years. Usage drops dramatically at age 65+ years as a proportion of the total population (*GENROE*).

Australia's Most Favourite Social Media Platforms (in ranked order) (<i>GENCOE</i>)	
1 YouTube	5 WhatsApp
2 Facebook	6 TikTok
3 Instagram	7 Snapchat
4 Messenger	8 Twitter

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Social media is not going to be effective for everyone and other options will need to be considered to reach the target market. Notice boards, newsletters, community radio and popular print media are still popular forms of communicating volunteer opportunities. LinkedIn may also be a way to attract professional and corporate volunteers.

Networking and Social Events

Opening your doors and bringing people together for open days and social events is another opportunity to share stories and experiences and showcase your organisation. The [Sunshine Coast Council Grants Program](#) may be able to assist not-for-profit organisations with funding to support one off events.

Resources

Social Media

[GENROE](#) – Social Media Statistics for Australia

Podcasts

[Kawana Library](#) – Podcast Studio

Storytelling

[Volunteering NZ](#) – How to create a good story

[Creative Volunteer](#) – The importance of Storytelling in the Non-profit Sector

[CauseInspired](#) – The power of storytelling in Non-profit Marketing

Community Radio

[Sunshine FM](#)

Sunshine Coast Print Media

[Hinterland Times](#)

[Glasshouse Country & Maleny News](#)

[Mary Valley Voice](#)

[Seniors Today Sunshine Coast](#)

[My Weekly Preview](#)

[Sunshine Valley Gazette](#)

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Topic 3 – Creating welcoming environments

Gifting time to volunteer with an organisation is not a decision people make lightly. The online survey indicated there are a number of reasons for choosing to volunteer including learning new skills, giving back to the community, gaining understanding and meeting new friends. The desire to volunteer does not always translate into registering with an organisation though as there are a number of barriers and uncertainties to overcome.

Barriers to Volunteering

Some of these relate to time constraints, transport difficulties, bureaucracy, family commitments, and personal conflict. Approximately 12% of respondents to the Building Community: Gifting Time Community Survey (the survey) cited feeling unwelcomed as a reason for not volunteering. At the Community Forum the task set for participants was to share ideas about how organisations can foster inclusive and welcoming environments for volunteers.

What strategies can be used to ensure volunteers feel welcomed in organisations?

Volunteer Recruitment

Creating a welcoming environment starts with the recruitment process. There is only one chance to make a first impression so make it one that is friendly, honest, and open. Although it is very important to clarify the volunteer roles and responsibilities, it is also as important to listen to the volunteer and gain an understanding of their interests and skills.

Easy Paperwork

Official paperwork cannot be avoided and on top of this there will be induction and orientation training. Always explain why this is required. Try and make the process as simple as possible, for example have online and paper forms available for new volunteers to complete and avoid collecting unnecessary information. Let them know from the outset what other opportunities are available to them for professional development or learning new skills.

Accessible and Inclusive

Create a work environment that is welcoming for people of all abilities, cultures and backgrounds.

- What physical barriers are there that may prevent a person with mobility challenges from volunteering?
- Do barriers exist for people with hidden disabilities such as vision or hearing impairment, people who are nonverbal or have an intellectual disability?
- Are there volunteering roles that people with small children could participate in?
- Are there opportunities at your organisation that enable people to volunteer from home?

Consider including cross cultural training and similar courses to become a more inclusive and welcoming organisation.

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Support for Volunteers

Making volunteers feel welcome will be enhanced by providing them with a mentor or buddy to help them find their feet for the first few days or weeks. Make them feel part of the team with branded clothing, regular team catch ups and social activities, and share organisational values, vision, and structure and if appropriate involve volunteers in strategic planning.

Reward and Recognition

Volunteers gift their time to your organisation for a variety of reasons. Reward and recognition of their valuable contribution to your organisation is key to retaining existing volunteers and recruiting others. Volunteers that feel valued and welcome in your organisation will be more likely to stay longer and share their positive experiences and encourage others to volunteer.

Resources

Accessible Environments

[A way with words: Guideline for the portrayal of people with a disability](#)

[Inclusive Volunteering – Carers Queensland](#)

[Creating Accessible and Inclusive Communication - Includeability](#)

[Creating an accessible and inclusive workplace – Includeability](#)

Training

[Cultural Training – TribalLink](#)

[Cultural Training – Multicultural Australia](#)

[Multicultural Advisory Team – Sunshine Coast](#)

[Psychological First Aid – Red Cross](#)

[Disability Awareness Training](#)

[Dementia Australia – Dementia Friend Training](#)

Celebrations

[National Volunteers Week](#)

[International Volunteer Day](#)

Support

[Volunteering Resource Hub – Volunteering Australia](#)

[Volunteering Queensland](#)

[Volunteering Sunshine Coast](#)

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Volunteer Resource

Topic 4 - Overcoming the barriers

The barriers to volunteering have long been understood to include lack of interest, transportation, financial considerations, health issues and other commitments (*Volunteering in Australia 2022 – The Volunteer Perspective, Volunteering Australia*). Respondents to the Building Community : Gifting Time Community Survey (the survey) confirmed these barriers still exist for both volunteers and non-volunteers living on the Sunshine Coast. Time constraints was the highest response at 45% followed by bureaucracy, family commitments, travel and personal conflict. Respondents were divided on the benefits of the digital age for volunteering. Some seeing this as negative and removing the face-to-face interaction while others saw greater opportunities to volunteer remotely. Participants at the Community Forum were asked to share creative ideas to help overcome the key barriers that exist for non-volunteers.

What strategies can be used to overcome barriers faced by volunteers or people interested in volunteering on the Sunshine Coast?

Flexibility

Flexibility and variety in volunteer tasks are important factors in maintaining the interest of volunteers. Consider creating smaller or shorter tasks to accommodate volunteers who are time poor or may have physical or health limitations. Also be flexible with rostering volunteers to shifts, being mindful they're giving up their time. Providing volunteers with opportunities to gain experience and learning new skills is also important. Consider posting volunteer opportunities on your website and allowing volunteers to self-select the jobs and times they wish to work. Make allowances for volunteers to take time out from their commitments. Look into virtual volunteering and if this will work for some of your volunteer tasks.

Time and Transport

Transport and the cost of travel are key barriers for volunteers. Public transport on the Sunshine Coast has long been an issue due to the long distances and the time taken up with travel will exacerbate barriers to volunteering. Volunteers having to use their own transport can place financial pressures on people and in turn influence their decisions to volunteer. Bring staff and volunteers together and talk about transport and travel issues to seek solutions such as car-pooling. If it is feasible for the organisation, investigate a minibus to transport people, particularly if they are engaged in the same activity or at the same location.

Volunteer Support, Training, and Incentives

Reward and recognition go a long way to retaining volunteers and can take many forms. Create a sense of belonging by providing branded work wear. Build the capacity of volunteers through training and personal development. Offer service period incentives for specific milestones reached (e.g. gift cards for 12 months service). Have regular opportunities where staff and volunteers can get together for work and social activities.

Support volunteers where possible with mentors or buddies to assist them in learning about the role and your organisation. Investigate other ways to support volunteers such as day care facilities, financial compensation for transport or out of pockets expenses, discounts and give aways.

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Volunteer Resource

Focus on the volunteer. Provide opportunities to get to know the people who volunteer or wish to volunteer. What are their skills, motivations, expectations, ambitions, challenges, and requirements? Find out what it is they have to offer your organisation and what you have to offer them to overcome barriers and provide support.

Resources

Training

[Volunteering Queensland](#)

[TAFE Qld](#)

[Volunteering Australia](#)

[Volunteering Sunshine Coast](#)

First Aid

[Allen's Training Sunshine Coast](#)

[Sunshine Coast First Aid](#)

[National First Aid](#)

Volunteer Incentives and Support

[Volunteer Incentives and Engagement Ideas](#)

[Salvation Army](#)

[Volunteering Australia](#) – National Strategy

Volunteer Registers/Databases

[GoVolunteer](#)

[FreddyMatch](#)

[EV CREW](#)

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Topic 5 – Virtual Volunteering

Virtual or remote volunteering can open new opportunities to engage volunteers from any location. Although the Building Community; Gifting Time Community Survey (the survey) reported on respondents' positive and negative opinions about online technologies, it can nevertheless provide alternative options for people who are well versed in the use of technology or willing to learn something new.

Virtual volunteering can overcome barriers such as time, transport and, to some extent, bureaucracy. Participants at the Community Forum were asked what opportunities exist such as virtual and remote volunteering, to make volunteering more accessible for everyone in our community?

Strategies to encourage more virtual volunteering on the Sunshine Coast

Virtual Volunteers

Many traditional volunteering roles may lend themselves to virtual volunteers and may make it easier for people interested in volunteering but constrained by distance, time, commitments, and other barriers to volunteering.

Training in the use of technology to take advantage of virtual volunteering needs to be tailored to suit the audience. As volunteers age or experience ill health, and on-site volunteering is no longer a possibility, virtual volunteering may be a way to keep them engaged. There are examples in the Resources section of different roles that can be completed remotely. Complete an audit of the volunteer tasks in your organisation and determine which of these may be suitable for undertaking remotely.

It is important that those in leadership roles and volunteer management are familiar with virtual volunteering to promote opportunities and support their virtual volunteers.

Creating online communities

Some of the reported motives for volunteering in the community survey relate to meeting new people and feelings of a sense of belonging. Organisations may need to consider how they include virtual and remote volunteers in their social and work-related gatherings, so they do not feel excluded and can build community connection. Reward and recognition will be as important to virtual volunteers and another way to make them feel included.

Resources

Examples of Virtual Volunteering

[Australian Museum](#)

[Australian Volunteers](#)

[Vollie](#)

[The Smith Family](#)

[Be My Eyes](#)

[Career Village](#)

[Friends of the Earth](#)

[Translators Without Borders](#)

Building Community: Gifting Time Project Volunteer Resource

Topic 6 – Reducing Red Tape

The Building Community: Gifting Time Community Survey (the survey) reports that one of the major barriers to volunteering is the onerous regulations and requirements to become a volunteer. These requirements, while essential, can also be problematic for organisations in keeping the volunteer engaged throughout the process. Participants at the Community Forum were asked how can organisations reduce the requirements or red tape associated with volunteering participation, whilst keeping people safe?

What strategies can be used to reduce the red tape for volunteering organisations?

Simplify the Process

Many of the comments at the Community Forum were concerned with simplifying the process where possible. If completing the necessary paperwork is time consuming, consider splitting this up into two sessions and perhaps combining with another activity that introduces the prospective volunteer to the team and organisation. Consider also how much can be completed online and what requires face to face interaction. Appoint an existing volunteer to assist with the process and ensure that only paperwork essential to the volunteer's role is completed.

It is a requirement when working with children that both paid and non-paid staff have a valid Blue Card. The application process used to be a very lengthy due to the number of checks that were required. The waiting times have improved and through the online portal, approval time is around 5 business days and there are no fees for volunteer applications. This is a National Card. A link is provided in the resources that explains when a Blue Card is required and how to apply.

Ensure prospective volunteers know at the outset what forms and applications need to be completed and the potential waiting time before they can begin their volunteer duties. Explore ways to maintain their interest and enthusiasm during this period. Are there any tasks they can perform online as virtual volunteers? Refer to Topic 5 – Virtual volunteering.

Insurance for not-for-profit volunteer organisations was also mentioned at the Community Forum as a costly necessity and that there was a need for specialist not-for-profit insurance. There is a list of not-for-profit insurance providers in the resources section. Both Guild and Local Community Insurance state they are not-for-profit specialists.

Resources

Paperwork and Requirements

[Working with children card \(blue card\) - Queensland](#)

[Volunteering Resource Hub – Induction \(and more\)](#)

[Human Services Quality Framework - Overview](#)

[Promoting and recruiting volunteers](#)

[VQ – Volunteer Management Essentials](#)

Building Community: Gifting Time Project Volunteer Resource

Online Solutions for Volunteer Management

[Volaby](#)

[MyPass](#)

Insurance for Not-for-profits

[Local Community Insurance](#)

[NFP Insurance Brokers](#)

[GIO](#)

[AON](#)

[VERO](#)

[ACS Financial](#)

[Guild Insurance](#)

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Topic 7 – Informal Volunteering

The definition of informal volunteering is "unpaid care or support provided to people outside your household and not within the context of a formal service organisation" (*Volunteering Australia*). Informal volunteering is not restricted to times of crisis. There are many opportunities to volunteer for and within groups with shared interests. Some of the areas of informal volunteering reported in the Building Community: Gifting Time Community Survey (the survey) survey included:

- Helping support friends or neighbours
- Providing emotional support
- Undertaking domestic work (for others)
- Assisting sports, recreation and art/performance group (e.g., clubs, choirs)
- Supporting online groups/forums
- Participating in environmental causes (e.g., looking after plant/wildlife)
- Participating in disaster prevention or recovery

Of respondents to the survey, 67% indicated that they had engaged in informal volunteering. This is a significant proportion and could suggest that these informal volunteers have strong social connections in their local communities where most informal volunteering takes place.

According to an article published by [The Conversation](#) in May 2023, informal volunteering is on the rise due to the flexibility of choice and time. Although there was a decline in formal volunteering during the COVID 19 pandemic, this crisis triggered a rise in people within communities helping those affected with shopping and other domestic tasks (within the restrictions imposed). Community Facebook pages were places where needs could be expressed and met.

Council's At Home in my Neighbourhood program, provides a number of resources that can assist in getting to know your neighbours and introducing yourself. Getting to know one another and engaging in street or neighbourhood activities can break down social barriers and make it easier for people to reach out to neighbours either offering or seeking help.

Resources

[Volunteering Australia – The Story Project – Australian Multiculturalism Through the Prism of \(Informal\) Volunteering](#)

[Sunshine Coast Community Gardens](#)

[At Home in my Neighbourhood](#)

Facebook

Facebook can be a great way to connect with your local communities and engage in informal volunteering. Here is a small selection of well supported Community Facebook pages.

[Sunshine Coast Hinterland Community Board](#)

[Sunshine Coast Community Board](#)

[Sunshine Coast Mums](#)

[Sunshine Coast Australia – Official Community Notice Board](#)

[Sunshine Coast Local Life Community](#)

[Neighbourhood Watch Queensland](#)

[Sunshine Coast Neighbourhood Watch](#)