

# Engaging Newly Arrived Migrants

## REFLECTIONS & ACTIONS FOR LEADERS OF VOLUNTEERS

As a Leader of Volunteers, you play a critical role in ensuring everyone feels welcome, supported and included. This resource draws on real feedback from newly arrived migrants about their experiences with volunteering in Victoria.

Use the sections below to reflect on and identify practical steps to improve inclusion and engagement in your volunteer program.

### 1

#### Getting Involved in Volunteering

##### What we heard:

Most newly arrived migrants found out about volunteering through family or friends, community groups, or online.

##### Top channels mentioned:

- Family or friends
- Cultural or community organisation / group
- Online and social media
- Direct contact with a volunteer organisation
- School, TAFE or university
- Local community event

**Activity:** Consider how and where people discover your roles.



- What channels are most trusted by new migrants in your local community? Are your volunteer opportunities being shared through these channels?
- How could you build or strengthen partnerships with different cultural groups, education providers, or local networks?
- What changes could you make to your online or social media presence to better attract newly arrived migrants?

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#### Motivations for Volunteering

##### What we heard:

Many newly arrived migrants started volunteering with the hope of building a new life in Australia – connecting with others, learning new skills, and opening up pathways to work.

##### Top motivators:

- Meeting new people and forming social connections
- Gaining experience and learning workplace skills
- Improving English and communication
- Building networks that could support future employment



*Volunteering 'provided me the opportunities that changed my life'*

– Uzma, Pakistan



**Activity:** Align recruitment and onboarding with volunteer motivations.



- Do your recruitment messages clearly reflect these motivations?
- How can your volunteer program enhance social connection opportunities for volunteers?
- Do you co-design personal goals for each volunteer and ways they can be implemented?

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#### Benefits of Volunteering

##### What we heard:

Once involved, many newly arrived migrants described how volunteering helped them grow personally, feel more confident, and some even took real steps towards paid employment.

##### Top benefits:

###### Connection and wellbeing

- Meeting new people and making friends
- Feeling welcomed and integrated in the community
- Improved health and mental wellbeing

###### Growth and development

- Growing confidence and sense of purpose
- Learning new skills and enhancing existing skills
- Learning to navigate different accents and work styles

###### Employment

- Gaining local referees and experience
- Learning about Australian work environments
- Boosted confidence in job-seeking

**Activity:** Make volunteer benefits visible and achievable.



- How could you showcase real stories that reflect these outcomes?
- How could you create opportunities for volunteers to reflect on their growth?
- How could you help volunteers leave with evidence of their contributions (eg: references, certificates, feedback)?

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#### Implementing Inclusive Support

##### What we heard:

Great support came from people – not just processes. Mentors, friendly welcomes, and patient guidance mattered most to newly arrived migrants.

##### What helps:

- Clear overview of the role
- Opportunity to learn without judgement
- Peer support or buddy systems
- Ongoing feedback and encouragement
- Informal networking and social connections

*[The organisation] provided me with the knowledge I needed to get employment, boost my confidence level, and showed my worth.*

– Mariyam, Pakistan

**Activity:** Review the supports offered to volunteers.

- What measures could you put in place to ensure new volunteers feel supported, welcomed and encouraged early on?
- How could you adjust your welcome materials to ensure they are clear, culturally sensitive, and easy to understand?
- What role could buddy systems or peer support play?

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#### Key Takeaways

##### What we heard:

Migrant volunteers appreciate clear communication, flexibility and understanding the benefits of volunteering.

##### Top tips from volunteers:

- Provide clear guidance and regular feedback
- Offer flexible schedules and tasks where possible
- Consider the images and language you use when advertising roles
- Ask volunteers about their goals
- Promote the benefits of volunteering widely
- Share stories of volunteer impact to inspire others

**Activity:** Review your volunteer engagement strategy.



- How could you share your volunteers' impact with the broader community?
- Are there ways you can build more flexibility into your volunteer program?
- How are you regularly asking volunteers what they hope to achieve, and acting on that?

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#### Your Action Plan

Drawing on your reflections above, identify the actions you will take to improve the volunteer experience at your organisation.

#### Activity: Putting plans into action!



- What are some small changes you could trial in the next 3 months?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Who will you involve in planning and implementing those changes?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How will you know if the changes are working?