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Onboarding is the *process* where a *new volunteer learns everything they need to know* when they first enter a Brigade, Group, or Unit (BGU).

Through proper onboarding, new volunteers will gain:

- **KNOWLEDGE**: What they need to know.
- **SKILLS**: What they need to learn.
- **ATTITUDES**: How they should think and feel.
- **BEHAVIOURS**: How they should act.

### Benefits of onboarding

- It helps new volunteers to understand what they will be doing
- It helps new volunteers to feel satisfied with their role
- It improves new volunteers’ ability to perform tasks
- It helps new volunteers to fit in with the group
- It helps new volunteers to feel valued by the group
- It increases the chances of new volunteers staying long-term
Research Approach to Resource Development

- Academic research
  - Onboarding theories and strategies
  - Existing DFES documents
  - E.g., Induction manuals
  - Non-academic sources

Interviews

- 22 interviews
  - Registration
  - Induction
  - Social support
  - Training
  - Engagement

Development

- Reviewing the research
- Revising the process
- Creating the onboarding resources
- Seeking feedback
- Amending the resources

Key Insights from Interviews

- No consistent practices in place for onboarding new volunteers
- New volunteers reported a need for more information and clarity
- Need for more social and training support
- Need for recognition and acknowledgment of contribution and efforts

- "There is no consistent process, some BGUs have info nights, and some don’t."
- "It’s important to manage expectations, and provide volunteers with a clear definition of their role, and what they will be doing."
- "Some people leave due to lack of support."
- "Getting my name badge and uniform was a memorable time for me. It was a material thing, but it meant a lot to me."
You can onboard new volunteers using the five-step process shown below:

1. Registering
2. Inducing
3. Supporting
4. Training
5. Engaging

Probation (3 – 6 months)

: 4 - 12 months

The Onboarding Resources

**Handbook**

- How-to tips and evidence-based recommendations
- Onboarding checklist

**Templates**

- Two induction templates
- Instructions on how to use the templates
Let’s go through one of the onboarding steps!

**Step 2: Inducting your New Volunteers**

An induction describes the practices that will help a volunteer adjust and perform in a new environment.

**Why is a formal induction beneficial to new volunteers?**

- It can help new volunteers gain more information and knowledge about the BSU.
- It allows new volunteers to address any concerns they might have.
- It helps new volunteers to clarify their role.
- It helps new volunteers to engage with their role.
- It gives new volunteers the chance to bond with other volunteers.

**Benefits**

**Definition**

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**How-to tips and recommendations**

**How to: Induct new volunteers**

- **Give new volunteers a formal induction**
  - Show new volunteers around the BSU.
  - Introduce new volunteers to the senior volunteers to help the new volunteers feel supported and welcomed by others in the BSU.

- **Provide new volunteers with all the information they need to know**
  - Using the templates included with this handbook, give new volunteers all the information they need to know either through:
    - A presentation, and/or
    - An induction booklet.

**Recommendations: Information to include**

- Unit overview
- Mission, vision and values
- Management and operational structure
- Roles and responsibilities
- Expectations
- Code of Conduct
- Induction information
- Rosters information
- Occupational Health and Safety Policies
- Insurance Protection
- Social Media Policy
- Funding
- Volunteer Support
- BSU Social Support System
  - Wellness, Stress and lineWidth:
    - Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Peer Support Programs (PSP), etc.,
  - Uniform and Equipment Use
  - Commonly used abbreviations/terminology
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Real-world case studies

Here are some examples of how BGUs have inducted new volunteers:

- **Fremantle VMR**: Gives their volunteers an induction booklet with all the information they need to know. Afterwards, volunteers are invited to a meeting to discuss all the information that was included in the booklet.

- **Wanneroo-Joondalup SES**: Holds an Information Night where volunteers are shown realistic scenarios. These scenarios are intended to represent the types of tasks the volunteers will be doing when they become an active volunteer.

- **Pingelly VFRS**: Practices one-on-one inductions to ensure that each volunteer gets all the information and support that they need from the start.

**Real-world volunteer examples**

**Variation of BGU locations and services**

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Editable templates: Induction

**Table of Contents**

- Brigade/Group Unit Overview
- Expectations
- Code of Conduct
- Probationary Information
- Training Information
- Roster Information
- Occupational Health and Safety Policies
- Insurance Protection
- Social Media Policy
- Funding
- Volunteer Support
- Uniforms and Equipment Use
- Community Uses: National/Regional
- Weekly/Weekly (Different Areas)
- Extra Information
- Notes

**Volunteer Support**

- Include information on:
  - What social support system does the BGU have in place?
  - How does it work?
  - Personal Support
  - Volunteer Coordination
  - What can they expect from it?

**Expectations**

- Use this section to lay out the expectations that the BGU has for their volunteers. This includes (and is not limited to):
  - Expected number of hours to commit to training
  - Expected number of call-outs to respond to, etc.

**Social Media Policy**

- Any rules or expectations on the use of social media should be highlighted under this section (e.g., not taking photographs of a car accident scene on social media platforms).

**Funding**

- Include information on what funding the BGU receive, how it is used and what use the volunteers have financially ventured for.
Onboarding Checklist

Inducting your New Volunteers

- A formal induction session was held for the new volunteers:**
  - (Either as a presentation and/or with a booklet)
    - Information on the training pathways was given.
    - Information on the Wellness support services available was given.
- New volunteers were shown around the unit.
- New volunteers were introduced to senior volunteers.
- New volunteers were given the opportunity to voice their concerns and questions, and they received clarification.
- New volunteers have been asked if they have any prior skills they could contribute to the unit.

Benefits of Using the Resources

- Made for volunteer leaders
- Recommended, not prescriptive
- Pragmatic and allows personalisation
- Based on academic research and volunteer feedback
- Uses real-world volunteer case studies

“'The template increased the usefulness of the induction booklet, and we handed it out to recruits 12 months ago, and we received positive feedback on it. We put pictures of the leadership team, and put personal bios of what they do outside of volunteering, and just really personalised them.”
Thank you!