



MODULE 1 RECRUITING

A GUIDE TO IMPROVING YOUR RECRUITMENT



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CONTENTS

This document collects only the PDF pages from Module 1: Recruiting, and does not include videos or other elements of the module. The numbering system used in this document corresponds to the topic folders in the larger Module 1: Recruiting.

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RECRUITMENT MODULE

REFLECTION EXERCISE

Take a moment to think back to **before** you were a volunteer in your group.

1. How did you first find out about volunteering with the emergency services?
2. What processes did you go through to become a volunteer (e.g., who did you speak to, were you interviewed?)?
3. What did you enjoy about those processes?





4. What did you **not** enjoy about those processes?





2A. MAKE YOUR VOLUNTEERING GROUP AN APPEALING PLACE TO BE

MYTH VS. FACT

What could you do to make your group a more appealing place to be?

What are some of the myths about volunteering in your service group that you think people in your community might believe? Ask your members if there are any they have heard!

Here are some common myths that we have found in our research and what the facts are:

MYTH	FACT
You need to be physically strong to contribute to the emergency services.	Some volunteering roles require physical strength, but there are many ways you can contribute, even if you're not physically fit and strong. For example, you could do radio operations, recovery efforts, or maps and navigation.
You need to be available at any time to volunteer with the emergency services.	Call-outs can happen at any time, but you don't have to attend every call-out to contribute.
You must be able to drive heavy vehicles to be a volunteer with the emergency services.	If you have specialised skills, they could be useful, but we can also train you in any way necessary.
You must be comfortable with working at heights or with danger to be able to volunteer with the emergency services.	Safety is very important for us. We allow our volunteers the opportunity and experience to be challenged, but you don't have to participate in activities that make you feel uncomfortable.





Can you think of other common myths? Write these down, then write a script you and your volunteers can use to bust these myths!

Ask your group members for other ideas of myths and facts. Maybe they have heard some myths from their friends or family.

MYTH	FACT
------	------





2B. PREPARE VOLUNTEER ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

THINKING EXERCISE

[Repeat this exercise for each role you would like to fill]

Think about a role that is available to fill in your group. The role could be part of an operational team, a non-operational team, and/or an administrative team.

1. What would you call this role if you were to give it a title (e.g., “Social Media Officer”)?
2. How clearly defined is this role? In other words, if somebody new came into this role, how easy would it be for them to figure out what they need to do? What resources could they look at if they wanted to learn more about it?





ROLE DESCRIPTION TEMPLATES

Once you have identified a role that needs filling, and you have given the role a name, you should list the necessary skills and capabilities required in a role description document. Think carefully about the key tasks and responsibilities for somebody in that role and note these down. Also consider the day-to-day responsibilities that may not be obvious or intuitive except to the person in that role. If somebody is already in the role, or performs part of the duties, have a chat with this person, to ensure that your information is accurate. Below are two example role descriptions: one for an operational role and one for a non-operational role. Use these examples to guide the role descriptions you can write using the blank template given. **Re-print the blank role description template given as many times as you need for the different roles you have in your volunteering group.**

Example Role Description 1: Non-Operational Role [Social Media Officer]

Role	Social Media Officer	
Reports to	Administration Officer	
Position overview	A Social Media Officer is responsible for using social media to keep the local community up to date with what's going on within the brigade/group/unit, as well as help to spread the word about safety.	
Time commitment	2hrs/week	
Expected busy months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• November to February• Bushfire and holiday seasons	
Benefits of volunteering in this role	As a Social Media Officer, you will have the opportunity to serve the community while also challenging yourself to increase your skills in engaging an online audience. You will experience planning and designing online content, while also meeting new people.	
What is needed for this role?		
Key skills	What is most important?	How is it done?
	Using technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use computers to design and post engaging online content• Use social media sites, such as Facebook, to engage your community
	Planning and organising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan tasks and content well in advance to meet deadlines and ensure a steady flow of content• Keep information and resources organised
	Following instructions and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow rules and procedures around posting content on social media• Follow appropriate instructions without challenging authority
Key tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using social media to create posts, upload photos, and post engaging content• Using social media to keep the community updated• Using social media to recruit new volunteers	





Physical demands	Strength	<input type="text"/> max kgs <input type="checkbox"/> Lifting <input type="checkbox"/> Carrying <input type="checkbox"/> Pushing <input type="checkbox"/> Pulling <input type="checkbox"/> If not listed, type in action here:
	Position tolerance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sitting <input type="checkbox"/> Standing <input type="checkbox"/> Bending over <input type="checkbox"/> Kneeling <input type="checkbox"/> Squatting/crouching <input type="checkbox"/> Working with arms over head <input type="checkbox"/> Working in confined spaces <input type="checkbox"/> If not listed, type in position here:
	Mobility	<input type="checkbox"/> Working at a fast pace <input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive squatting <input type="checkbox"/> Walking <input type="checkbox"/> Running <input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive kneeling <input type="checkbox"/> Crawling <input type="checkbox"/> Climbing steps, stairs or ladders <input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive trunk rotation while sitting/standing <input type="checkbox"/> If not listed, type in action here:
	Other	If not listed above, type in physical demand here:
Mental demands	<input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with own distress during emergencies <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with distressed individuals <input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
Training provided	Introduction/Induction courses	
Probationary period	N/A	
Other requirements	<input type="checkbox"/> Working with children's check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Police check <input type="checkbox"/> Medical check	

Example Role Description 2: Operational Role [Officer in Charge]

Role	Officer in Charge
Reports to	District Manager
Position overview	An Officer in Charge is responsible for the overall operational leadership and management of their brigade/group/unit. This person plays a vital role in the safety of their local community through the development of an effective brigade/group/unit and the overseeing of incidents.
Time commitment	20+ hrs/week
Expected busy months	This role is busy all year round.
Benefits of volunteering in this role	As Officer in Charge, you will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a leader in the community and play a vital role in keeping it safe • Develop your leadership skills in a new environment • Experience leading a team of people • Form strong bonds with your team members
What is needed for this role?	





Key skills	What is most important?	How is it done?
	Leading your team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give clear directions to your team• Let your team know what behaviour is expected• Delegate tasks fairly• Motivate team members to perform at their best
	Making decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make clear decisions quickly• Weigh up risks during an emergency• Take responsibility for your actions and others
	Strategising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and set strategies• Develop visions for the future• Work strategically to reach goals
Key tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead the team during operations and debrief the team after• Oversee that the team is working well in their assigned roles• Monitor team safety to provide safe work practices• Set plans regarding the development of the brigade/group/unit• Report on hazards, accidents, and near misses	
Physical demands	Strength	<div>30 max kgs</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lifting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carrying <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pushing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pulling</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> If not listed, type in action here:</div>
	Position tolerance	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Sitting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Standing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bending over</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kneeling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Squatting/crouching</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working with arms over head</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working in confined spaces</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> If not listed, type in position here:</div>
	Mobility	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working at a fast pace <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repetitive squatting</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Walking <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Running <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repetitive kneeling</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Crawling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climbing steps, stairs or ladders</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repetitive trunk rotation while sitting/standing</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> If not listed, type in action here:</div>
	Other	If not listed above, type in physical demand here:
Mental demands	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dealing with own distress during emergencies</div> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dealing with distressed individuals <input type="checkbox"/> Other:</div>	
Training provided	Leadership pathway	
Probationary period	3 months	
Other requirements	<div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Working with children's check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Police check <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medical check</div>	

**Blank Role Description Template [Re-print this template as many times as you need]**

Role		
Reports to		
Position overview		
Time commitment		
Expected busy months		
Benefits of volunteering in this role		
What is needed for this role?		
Key skills	What is most important?	How is it done?
Key tasks		





Physical demands	Strength	max kgs Lifting Carrying Pushing Pulling If not listed, type in action here:
	Position tolerance	Sitting Standing Bending over Kneeling Squatting/crouching Working with arms over head Working in confined spaces If not listed, type in position here:
	Mobility	Working at a fast pace Repetitive squatting Walking Running Repetitive kneeling Crawling Climbing steps, stairs or ladders Repetitive trunk rotation while sitting/standing If not listed, type in action here:
	Other	If not listed above, type in physical demand here:
Mental demands	Fatigue Dealing with own distress during emergencies Dealing with distressed individuals Other:	
Training provided		
Probationary period		
Other requirements	Working with children's check Police check Medical check	







2D. LEARN FROM THE PAST

REFLECTION EXERCISE

Think about your past recruitment efforts...

1. Can you think of some effective and ineffective examples of recruitment efforts that your group has done in the past?

EFFECTIVE EXAMPLES OF RECRUITMENT
(What has worked well)

INEFFECTIVE EXAMPLES OF RECRUITMENT
(What did not work well)





Here are some examples based on what we have seen in our research:

EXAMPLE 1	EXAMPLE 2
<p>A volunteering group currently have three roles they are hoping to fill. As a group, the volunteers discussed the importance of filling those roles and have brainstormed how they might do it.</p> <p>To get the word out there about the volunteering group, the group decided to host a stall at the local agricultural show. Brochures clearly explaining the different volunteer roles were prepared for the show and were given to community members. At the show, people who showed interest in volunteering had their questions answered by enthusiastic volunteers. Interested newcomers were then invited to the following training night.</p> <p>When the newcomers showed up, they were introduced to the group and were made to feel welcomed. Any expectations between the newcomers and the volunteer leader were also discussed. Before leaving, volunteers were briefed on how they can register to be a volunteer. By the following training night, three volunteers were recruited.</p>	<p>After a bushfire incident that occurred in the local shire, three newcomers expressed their interest to volunteer with the local fire brigade. Although the newcomers indicated a strong interest in volunteering, there was no follow-up on these expressions of interest at the time.</p> <p>After a month had passed, the group were short on volunteers as some volunteers had moved out of town. To fill these roles, the expressions of interest were followed up. By then, two out of the three people were no longer interested in participating as the bushfires had passed.</p> <p>The potential volunteer that was still interested was invited to come down to the next training night. When this person showed up, the volunteers were holding a meeting that the newcomer was not invited to join. Instead, the newcomer was given registration papers and were told a bit about the role. The newcomer did not sign up to volunteer in the end.</p>

2. Looking at the examples given above...

- What do you think went right in the recruitment process that was successful (Example 1)?
- What do you think might have gone wrong with the recruitment process that was unsuccessful (Example 2)?





c. What would you do differently in those two circumstances?

EXAMPLE 1

EXAMPLE 2





2E. FORM A PROMOTION STRATEGY

SELECT A “FIRST POINT OF CONTACT” TO PROMOTE AND FOLLOW UP EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

1. Choose a volunteer to be a “First point of contact” for interested newcomers.

Who in your group do you think would be a good first point of contact for recruitment? Think about who in your group is friendly, approachable, knowledgeable, likes to answer questions, and would be someone who will make a good first impression. Once you've got a person in mind...

Ask them if they would be interested, willing, and available to take on the role of being a first point of contact for new recruits.

Explain to the volunteer what the role involves:

- Explain that the role does not require them to go out and recruit people.
- Explain that new recruits will be directed to them, and that their role will require them to answer questions and follow up on Expressions of Interests (EOIs).

As the first point of contact is required to follow up on EOIs quickly, be sure to give them sufficient time and space to do this. If necessary, delegate some of the volunteer's additional tasks to another volunteer in the group for the time being.

2. Create consistent branding.

If someone were to express their interest, what materials would you have for them? Do you have a brochure, Facebook page, or website for your volunteering group?

Review these materials and make sure they are up to date and that the branding (e.g., group and service name, logo, and colour theme) is consistent with each other.

If you have a group member who is familiar with branding or marketing, ask them to help with this.

For any materials that are not up to date, either update the material or don't use it, as to not confuse potential volunteers.

3. Follow up on Expressions of Interest (EOIs).

The “first point of contact” individual will be responsible for following up on EOIs.

Expressions of interests should be followed up quickly, and any questions or concerns expressed by interested potential volunteers should be addressed.





Here are two examples. Example 1 shows how a “first point of contact” could fit into your recruitment process and Example 2 shows how they should not.

EXAMPLE 1	EXAMPLE 2
<p>Nora has always wanted to volunteer with her local State Emergency Service (SES) unit. To inquire more, she looked up the unit's Facebook page. On the Facebook page, there was detailed information on the different volunteer roles and responsibilities, and there was information on how to contact the unit for those interested in volunteering.</p> <p>Nora sent a Facebook message inquiring about a role advertisement for a Community Engagement Officer position she was interested in applying for. Immediately after sending a message, she received an automated reply stating that she will receive a response within 24 hours. A few hours after receiving the automated reply, she received a personalised response from the unit's first point of contact, Alex. Alex gave Nora more information about the role and invited Nora to attend the next training night the following Wednesday.</p> <p>When Nora showed up at the unit, Alex showed her around the place and sat down with her to answer all questions and concerns she had about the role and what would be expected of her as a volunteer. Before leaving, Alex passed Nora the registration forms and explained how the recruitment process would work in further detail. Nora left that night feeling informed, welcomed, and enthusiastic about the role. She handed in her registration forms within a week, and within a month, she was formally registered as a volunteer and had already begun her training.</p>	<p>Adam has always wanted to volunteer with the State Emergency Service (SES). To inquire more, he searched on the Internet to see if there was a local unit nearby him.</p> <p>One of his searches led him to a website page about the group. On the page, there was an advertisement for a non-operational role that got Adam's interest and attention. However, the pictures used alongside the role advertisement was of volunteers in trucks, which was inconsistent with the role being advertised.</p> <p>Confused, Adam searched the page for the unit's contact information to ask further questions and clarify the requirements of the role. Adam sent an email to the email address that was on the website. A week passed, and Adam had received no response.</p> <p>Upon searching up the unit again, Adam realised that the name of the unit had changed. He tried calling the phone number advertised on the website, only to find that the number had been disconnected.</p> <p>Frustrated, Adam gave up on trying to contact his local SES unit to become a volunteer.</p>





3B. TIP SHEET 1: RECRUITMENT CHANNELS

CHANNEL 1: TRADITIONAL MEDIA

What is traditional media?

Traditional media includes newspaper, radio, television, and billboard advertising.

When and how to use traditional media

Use traditional media to target your recruitment or gain a higher profile for your group.

When using traditional media, it is important to:

- » Include both the benefits and demands of the role,
- » Make sure people are encouraged to contact you and supply clear contact details, and
- » Have the work proofread because once it is released, it cannot be altered easily.

Pros and cons of traditional media

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has a wide reach and provides you with the ability to speak to the whole community.• Increases awareness of your brigade, group, or unit within the community, even if you don't successfully recruit.• Usually is more effective in larger communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short term impact (people stop thinking about your message shortly after reading it).• Not as appealing to younger audiences.

CHANNEL 2: SOCIAL MEDIA

What is social media?

Social media refers to any online community platform through which users can create and share information. Many volunteering groups use social media to promote activities or available volunteer roles. A few well-known examples of social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

When and how to use social media

Social media can be daunting to use, but it is a highly effective tool to target your audience. You can:

- » Target specific audiences (i.e., by location, gender, and interest) and
- » Include pictures and videos, in addition to text.

When posting recruitment content, try to be brief and write in an engaging manner. Single paragraph posts with short sentences and an engaging picture are likely to produce the best results. Posts with people featured perform the best. In any post about recruitment, be sure to provide a link to more information for people who are interested in finding out further details.





Pros and cons of social media

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows you to provide interesting and insightful content specific to interested volunteers.• Provides a more effective and targeted recruitment pitch.• Useful for raising your volunteering group's profile in the community.• Good for targeting younger audiences.• Free or very cheap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not suitable for providing detailed descriptions of volunteering opportunities.• Most effective when you regularly post new content, which means dedicating time and resources to your page's upkeep.

CHANNEL 3: COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

What are community outreach events?

These are activities that your volunteering group conducts out in the community. Examples include:

- » Running public training events,
- » Fire safety demonstrations,
- » Setting up stalls at sporting games or markets, and
- » Providing emergency services support at community events.

When and how to use community outreach events

- » Take the names of interested people to contact later and invite to an information night.
- » Have a supply of brochures and other promotional materials available and make sure you have added your local contact details in the spaces provided.
- » Create an open invitation to the next training night.

Pros and cons of community outreach

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These events are a good way for people to gain a deeper understanding of what volunteering at your volunteering group looks like and how they could help the community.• Allow the community to actively engage with current members and learn more about what volunteering involves from a friendly face.• Also allows community members to see things in action and ask questions and get responses immediately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recruitment is rarely the primary focus, and some types of events are harder to recruit at than others.• Less opportunities to deliver a focused pitch or story.• If planning to recruit, you must be prepared with printed materials, exhibits, and contact details for your dedicated recruitment point of contact.





CHANNEL 4: WORD OF MOUTH

What is word of mouth?

Word of mouth is when existing members spread the message about volunteering at your volunteering group. This could involve approaching people at social gatherings or at work about volunteering or giving a newcomer in the community a tap on the shoulder. Most volunteers started volunteering because they were asked by somebody they knew!

When and how to use word of mouth

Take a few minutes on a training night to discuss the group's recruitment goals to clarify the message, so that you can:

- » Raise awareness of the roles you are recruiting for, and
- » Ensure that members spread the word in a mostly consistent fashion.

Pros and cons of word of mouth

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Asking someone directly whether they would like to volunteer is the most effective way of getting somebody onboard.• Allows you to tailor your pitch to the needs of the potential volunteer you are trying to recruit.• You can prepare your volunteers with any information they need to recruit via word of mouth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Because you're recruiting from your own network, this method sometimes does not increase diversity or open up new avenues.• Can take a lot of time.• Most of the word-to-mouth recruiting happens naturally, which makes it unreliable to plan for.• Some volunteers feel uncomfortable about asking their friends (you may need to coach these people).

CHANNEL 5: VOLUNTEER JOB BOARDS

What are volunteer job boards?

Volunteer job boards are online platforms that allow you to advertise specific roles and raise the profile of your volunteering group in an accessible online environment. Your emergency services organisation may have a volunteer job board online that will help provide important information for people considering emergency services volunteering, service-specific information, and an advertising space for individual volunteering groups.

Volunteering opportunities could also be advertised on platforms, such as SEEK Volunteer and Go Volunteer.

When and how to use volunteer job boards

Use volunteer job boards to target your recruitment, advertise a range of support roles, and raise the profile of your volunteering group. Consider that these platforms lend themselves well to advertise some support roles that can be completed remotely through digital means, such as social media manager, planner, digital administration, or grant writer. Ask your emergency services organisation how you could use and administer advertising for your volunteering group on their website.





Pros and cons of job boards

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to lots of people.• The emergency services organisation's website should provide a space for extensive information to be given on what it takes to be an emergency services volunteer.• Can directly post detailed role descriptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relies on prospective volunteers actively searching for opportunities.





3B. THINKING EXERCISE

1. What recruitment channels will work best for different groups within your community?

RECRUITMENT CHANNEL	GROUPS THIS CHANNEL WILL WORK BEST WITH
Traditional Media	
Social Media	
Community Outreach Events	
Word of Mouth	
Volunteer Job Boards	

2. How will you promote volunteering for your group using these channels?

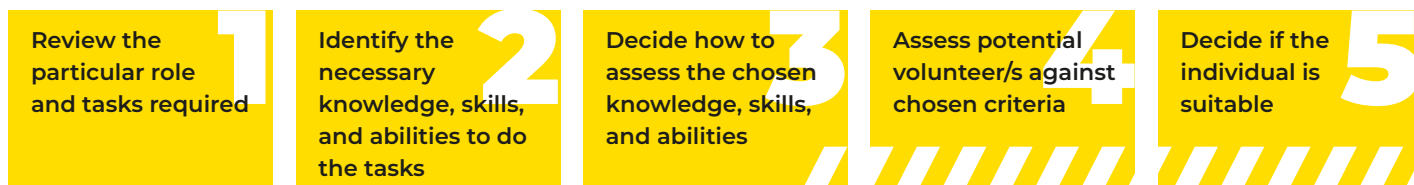
RECRUITMENT CHANNEL	PROMOTION STRATEGIES
Traditional Media	
Social Media	
Community Outreach Events	
Word of Mouth	
Volunteer Job Boards	





4. TIP SHEET 2: SETTING EXPECTATIONS

People will start forming expectations about volunteering right from their first contact with the emergency services or with your volunteering group. It is important to manage a new volunteer's expectations throughout the whole recruitment process – from promotional activities through to selection.



If people have unrealistic expectations about what volunteering may be like, it can lead to dissatisfaction when their experience is different to (or does not meet) their expectations. The following tips can help you to set clear expectations about volunteering throughout all stages of the recruitment process:

1. USE ACCURATE INFORMATION TO PROMOTE VOLUNTEERING

Not every moment of volunteering is action-packed excitement, so make this clear up front. Make sure that your promotional materials, from role descriptions to flyers, accurately reflect the role potential volunteers are signing up for and that all documents are up to date and aligned.

2. BE HONEST ABOUT THE CHALLENGES

Be honest with your potential volunteers about the challenges your volunteering group faces and the steps you are taking to address these challenges.

For example: If training availability is a challenge, be upfront and honest about this from the start so they won't be disappointed later on, if it takes a while to get them on a particular course.

3. PROVIDE REALISTIC PREVIEWS OF VOLUNTEERING

Potential volunteers may expect to spend most of their time attending call-outs, without realising the ongoing training and important administrative follow-up that is required.

Help them understand how their time is likely to be spent at your volunteering group by inviting them to training nights or social events and encourage current volunteers to share their experiences in a friendly and open way.



4. TIP SHEET 3: SELECTION PROCESS

Selecting potential volunteers involves the following steps:

1. REVIEW THE ROLE AND WHAT THE VOLUNTEER WILL BE REQUIRED TO DO

First, take a close look at what the role you are filling involves. Consider activities like driving, working under pressure, swimming, climbing, navigating, lifting heavy objects, training, teamwork, communication, interacting with stressed people, computer use, and cleaning or maintaining equipment.

A role description is a great place to start and job description templates for volunteer roles may be available within your agency. Otherwise, talk to other volunteers already doing that role and create a list of the tasks that make up their role, from the routine tasks to the unusual and one-off activities.

2. IDENTIFY THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES, AND OTHER ATTRIBUTES THAT A PERSON WOULD NEED TO DO THAT ROLE WELL

Once you know what the role involves, you can start to work out what it would take to carry out those tasks. The knowledge, skills, and abilities or attributes that firefighters may need will be quite different to those needed by a radio operator in a marine rescue group. For example, if a role requires lifting heavy objects, the volunteer will need the ability to lift a certain weight. If a role requires driving, the volunteer will need a driver's license. If the role requires teamwork, the volunteer will need to be able to work well with other people.

As well as helping you to select the right volunteer for a role, this step will also help you to determine what sort of training someone will need once they start. Some skills can be learned through training.

3. DECIDE HOW YOU ARE GOING TO ASSESS THESE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND ABILITIES

How are you going to work out if the potential volunteer has what it takes?

There are a number of different tools to help you do this, including:

- » Looking at their resume,
- » Giving them a work sample test, and
- » Carrying out an interview.

Not every attribute should be assessed the same way, so you may need to use a combination of tools.

4. ASSESS ALL APPLICANTS ON THE REQUIRED SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES, AND OTHER ATTRIBUTES

The next step is to assess applicants against the criteria you chose in Step 2. Regardless of which selection tools you decide to use, make sure that the process is fair for everyone:

- » Use the same selection tools and process for all applicants, and
- » Make sure the process does not indirectly or unfairly disadvantage certain groups of people (consider age, gender, ethnicity, disabilities).

Requiring people to complete a large part of the selection process online may disadvantage those who aren't as comfortable using technology.

Requiring a minimum number of years' experience would disadvantage younger volunteers who haven't had a chance to gain that experience yet.





5. DECIDE IF THE PERSON IS SUITABLE FOR THE ROLE OR CHOOSE THE MOST SUITABLE PERSON

Finally, you have all the information you need to make a decision. Consider:

- » Do they have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary, or do they have the capacity to learn them?
- » Are they aware of the requirements once they join and can they make the commitment?

At this point, it is important to evaluate the information you gathered as objectively as possible. It is tempting to choose a person because they are well-liked by the interviewers. But take the opportunity to compare the information you collected to the role descriptions that you have.

If someone doesn't tick a few important boxes, are they really suitable for the role, or could you offer them something else that better suits their attributes?





4A. TIP SHEET 4: INTERVIEW VOLUNTEERS

An interview helps you to understand why someone is interested in volunteering and it helps you identify any misconceptions they may have upfront. It also gives the applicant (i.e., potential volunteer) a chance to ask you any questions they may have and clarify their expectations.

1. STRUCTURING AN INTERVIEW

1. Start by introducing yourself and your position.
 - a. Thank the applicant for their interest and for making the time.
 - b. Tell the applicant the purpose of the interview and how long it is expected to take.
 - c. Let them know there will be a chance to ask questions at the end.
2. Start with an easy, open question as an ice-breaker.
 - a. E.g., "How did you hear about this opportunity?"
3. Move on to the main interview questions. These should cover 3 to 5 topics (e.g., teamwork, coping under pressure), with one or two questions per topic.
4. Finish by letting the applicant know what the next steps in the processes are for them and give them an opportunity to ask questions.

2. INTERVIEW STRUCTURES AND TYPES OF QUESTIONS

Interviews can vary from highly structured (asking every applicant exactly the same questions with very little prompting) to unstructured (questions vary between applicants with lots of prompting for more information) or somewhere in between. Interviews can also vary in terms of:

- » Their length,
- » The number of times you interview applicants,
- » The number of interviewers – a cross section of people from the volunteering group, to form a panel of three or four, can keep responses to applicants on track and objective,
- » How you evaluate the responses, and
- » The types of questions that you ask.

More structured interviews are better for assessing applicants. The more formal nature may feel slightly less friendly, but it will help to keep your process fair and objective. Explaining this to applicants upfront will reassure them.

There are two different types of interview questions that are frequently used to assess skills and attributes.

Behavioural or job-related questions

- » These are designed to assess specific behaviours based on previous experience. Knowing a person's past behaviour will help you predict how that person will behave as a volunteer in your volunteering group in the future.
- » People need to have some relevant experience to be able to answer behavioural questions well, so you will find this type of question most useful for assessing applicants with relevant experience.

EXAMPLE:

"This job often involves working in high stress and high-pressure situations. Can you tell me about a time when you have had to work under pressure in the past?"

- What was the situation?
- How did you cope with it?
- What would you do differently in the future?





Situational questions

- » These are hypothetical questions related to situations that may occur on the job. They are well suited for people with little experience because they talk about a hypothetical situation.
- » Answers are usually assessed against example answers and rated on a 1-5 scale, with a score of 1 reflecting the least desirable behavioural response and 5 reflecting the most desirable response.

EXAMPLE:

"You are part of a team responding to an emergency. The team leader gives you an instruction that would go against what you learned in your training. How do you respond?"

Whichever question format you use, prepare some example excellent, acceptable, and poor responses. You can then compare the examples to the response the interviewee gives to give the interviewee a rating.

The box below shows some examples for the question above:

Example answers:

1 (very poor) = Publicly accepts the instructions from the leader but then encourages the rest of the team not to follow the instructions.

2 (poor) = Publicly tells the leader he/she is wrong and encourage the team not to follow the instructions.

3 (acceptable) = Politely tells the leader that their instructions go against what you have learned in your training and encourage the team not to follow the instructions.

4 (good) = Pull the leader aside and explain to the leader that their instructions go against what you have learned in your training and ask if you could follow your training.

5 (excellent) = Pull the leader aside and explain to the leader that their instructions go against what you have learned in your training, explain why it is important to follow the procedures you were trained in, and ask for the leader's permission to proceed.





Other handy tips:

It is best practice to have more than one person taking part in the interview process. This helps with objectivity and quality control to ensure you are as fair as possible with all applicants. It also gives the applicant the chance to meet more than one other member of the group.

Make sure you take notes throughout the interview that you can refer to later.

Try to get more than one example of the behaviours you are most interested in.

Explore negative information – don't just ask about things they did well, but also explore the negatives or areas they feel they could improve on. You can do this by simply asking what they found most difficult or what they would do differently in the future and why. How someone reacts when things go wrong can often tell you more about them than their success stories.

Use probing and follow-up questions to get more information. Get them to elaborate on answers by asking how, why, or "can you tell me more about that?".

Look out for contradictory answers and compare answers to information from different sources.

Use open questions. Open questions often start with words like how, why, what, or tell me about. Yes/no type questions will be less informative.

Restate and summarise people's responses to make sure you've understood them.

Only ask one question at a time.

Avoid asking double-barrelled questions such as "What was the best part about that experience and what did you find the hardest?"

Do not offer a selection of responses for applicants to choose from.

E.g., "Do you want to volunteer to help the community or learn new skills?" – questions like this limit the answers someone can give you.





4B. TIP SHEET 5: GIVING FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS

Giving feedback to applicants on whether they got the role is so important. Not only does it help applicants be informed on whether they got the role, it helps to improve the application experience for potential volunteers and it leaves a good impression.

Informing applicants whether they were successful in getting the role could be done over the phone or over email. If you are contacting a lot of people early in the recruitment process, then an email would probably be acceptable. However, if the applicant has progressed through to the interview stage of the recruitment process, providing them feedback over the phone will be better received because it is more personal and sends a signal that you are invested in them. Remember, they took the time out of their day to meet with you, so you should respond in kind.

Giving feedback to an unsuccessful applicant can be challenging. Before having that conversation, consider whether there are other types of roles in your group that they could fill. Regardless of whether the applicant was successful in applying for a role, here are some tips on how you can provide applicant feedback:

1. PROVIDE FEEDBACK PROMPTLY

If you are to give applicant feedback, you need to give it promptly. As soon as the selection process is over, let the applicants know what your decision is. Do not leave the applicants waiting around.

2. SHOW GRATITUDE FOR THE APPLICATION

Express your gratitude. Thank the applicant for their interest in volunteering. Let them know that you appreciate the time they took to apply or participate in an interview.

3. ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR STRENGTHS

Acknowledge any strengths that you noticed during the interview. If the applicant is successful, explain how his or her strengths will contribute to the group.

4. PROVIDE SPECIFIC REASONS

If you are not offering the applicant a place in your volunteering group, provide specific reasons why they are not a good fit. Try not to be too negative or personal, but instead focus on how their skills or experience might not make them a good fit for your group and explain why that is.

Be empathetic when giving this feedback and keep a polite and compassionate tone.

5. RESPOND TO FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS PROMPTLY

If the applicant has any further questions or inquiries, respond to them promptly and professionally. Applicants are likely to reapply with your group in the future if they have the necessary information, so never burn your bridges as they may be a good fit for the role, or a different role, in the future.





6. END POLITELY AND COURTEOUSLY

Lastly, thank the applicant for their time and efforts. Show respect by wishing them well with their future endeavours. If applicable, you can also inform them when the next recruitment round is and let them know that they can apply again if you are interested in having them in your volunteering group.

7. NEXT STEPS

For successful applicants, once you have given them feedback on their strengths and responded to any questions they might have, explain to them what the next steps are and get them onboarded as soon as possible (see the **Supporting New Volunteers in Emergency Services** module).

Thank them for their time and efforts for going through with the process and let them know that you are excited for them to be a part of your team.





4B. CASE STUDIES

Assessing fit and providing feedback to applicants are so important in a selection process. Below are four examples of what you could do if a potential volunteer is or is not a good fit, and how you can best communicate that feedback to them.

GOOD FIT FOR VOLUNTEERING		POOR FIT FOR VOLUNTEERING
Example of providing applicant feedback effectively	<p>Matt applied to be a volunteer with his local fire brigade. To apply, he filled out a form expressing his interest. Shortly after, Matt was asked to visit the brigade for an interview. In the first 10 minutes, the three interviewers introduced themselves, gave an overview of the group's mission and expectations of volunteers, and asked Matt to introduce himself. Matt was then asked questions about his motivations for becoming a volunteer, as well as behavioural questions on how he works under pressure and in a team. Matt explained to the interviewers that he was motivated by a desire to help his community and that he had lots of experience in working in teams. He also provided examples of when he worked well under a lot of pressure.</p> <p>Matt gave a character referee to support his application. The referee confirmed that Matt was excellent at managing under pressure.</p> <p>Within a day, the volunteer leader called Matt over the phone. The leader gave Matt feedback on his strengths and how Matt would fit well within the team. The leader then invited Matt to formally register as a volunteer. Matt was thanked for his time and efforts for applying for the role, and he was told what the next steps would be.</p>	<p>Jason applied to be a volunteer with his local fire brigade. To apply, he filled out a form expressing his interest. Shortly after, Jason was asked to visit the brigade for an interview. In the first 10 minutes, the three interviewers introduced themselves, gave an overview of the group's mission and expectations of volunteers, and asked Jason to introduce himself. Jason was then asked questions about his motivations for becoming a volunteer, as well as behavioural questions on how he works under pressure and in a team. Jason explained to the interviewers that he was keen to join so he could build his reputation and status in the community, and because he always wanted to wear the uniform. Jason also provided an example of working under pressure where he had responded by trying to take control over his team members, and in the end upsetting them.</p> <p>Jason gave a character referee to support his application. The referee confirmed that Jason disliked it when his staff questioned his decisions.</p> <p>The next day, the volunteer leader called Jason to let him know that he was unsuccessful in his application. The leader explained that the group needed a volunteer who is more team oriented, that would work more collaboratively and listen to the concerns of his team when in high-pressure scenarios. The leader answered any questions Jason had and politely wished him all the best with his future endeavours.</p>





GOOD FIT FOR VOLUNTEERING		POOR FIT FOR VOLUNTEERING
Example of providing applicant feedback ineffectively	<p>Sarah applied to be a volunteer with her local fire brigade. To apply, she filled out a form expressing her interest. Shortly after, Sarah was asked to come down to the brigade for an interview. In the first 10 minutes, the three interviewers introduced themselves, provided an overview of the group's mission and expectations of volunteers, and asked Sarah to introduce herself. Sarah was then asked questions about her motivations for becoming a volunteer, as well as behavioural questions on how she works under pressure and in a team. Sarah explained that she was motivated by a desire to help her community and that she had lots of experience in working in teams. She also provided examples of when she worked well under a lot of pressure.</p> <p>Sarah gave a character referee to support her application. The referee confirmed that Sarah was excellent at managing under pressure.</p> <p>A month after the interview took place, Sarah was contacted via email to formally register as a volunteer. The email unfortunately landed in Sarah's junk mail folder. Despite not hearing back from Sarah, nobody from the group followed up until calling her one month later. By the time the recruiters spoke to Sarah, she had already signed up for other activities outside of her work to fill her time and was unsure if she could fit volunteering into her current schedule. She explained that because she had not heard back, she had assumed she was not going to be invited to join.</p>	<p>Cindy applied to be a volunteer with her local fire brigade. To apply, she filled out a form expressing her interest. Shortly after, Cindy was asked to come down to the brigade for an interview. In the first 10 minutes, the three interviewers introduced themselves, provided an overview of the group's mission and expectations of volunteers, and asked Cindy to introduce herself. Cindy was then asked questions about her motivations for becoming a volunteer, as well as behavioural questions on how she works under pressure and in a team. Cindy explained to the interviewers that she was keen to join so she could build her reputation and status in the community, and because she always wanted to wear the uniform. Cindy also provided an example of working under pressure where she had responded by trying to take control over her team members, and in the end upsetting them.</p> <p>Cindy gave a character referee to support her application. The referee confirmed that Cindy disliked it when her staff questioned her decisions.</p> <p>The interview panel decided that Cindy was not a good fit, but nobody from the panel followed up with her to let her know she was unsuccessful in her application. Eventually, Cindy followed up with the team to see if she was successful in getting the role. The volunteer leader told her that she was not suitable for the role as they found her motivations for wanting to be a volunteer to be "attention-seeking," and that her personality would not fit in well with the rest of the team. Cindy was very upset that she had to call to find out what had happened and felt insulted by the feedback she received.</p>





1. What would you do differently in these four circumstances?

	GOOD FIT FOR VOLUNTEERING	POOR FIT FOR VOLUNTEERING
Example of providing applicant feedback effectively		
Example of providing applicant feedback ineffectively		





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