



Volunteer Recruitment for Coastcare Groups

www.coastcare.org.au



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Volunteer recruitment can seem like a mammoth task. While at times, groups have reported feeling frustrated or disappointed with the recruitment process, fortunately it often just takes a few tweaks, a bit of planning on the front end and a handful more ideas in your back pocket to turn the tide and have a consistent flow of perfectly matched and enthusiastic volunteers heading your way.

Where do we start?

Think about your group and where you are heading. Your recruitment should fill actual needs as opposed to just broadly recruiting people “to help”.

Ensure you are recruiting to deliver towards your current and future plans.

If you have a strategic plan, look there to guide you on how many people you need, with what skills and when. Once you know what your gaps are and what your clear purpose for recruiting is, only then can you know where to start!

Detail tasks and roles

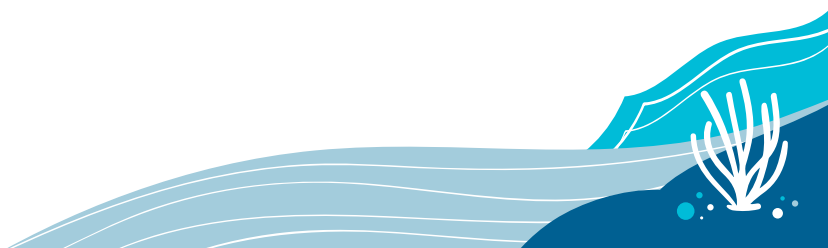
Get super clear on the actual projects, tasks and roles that your group requires.

It can be helpful to think in terms of “ideal” scenario but be willing to compromise if needed. As an example, you might find a great person, enthusiastic to be your secretary but they don't like taking minutes. Are there other ways to deliver on this important task? Can we rotate the minutes? Can we find a separate minute taker?

Break bigger projects into smaller chunks to have a more appealing ask of a potential volunteer. This can also help to get the right people doing the right things. As an example, rather than saying we need someone to build a website, consider “building a website” as a project and then look at the different roles within that project; someone to help us understand what needs to happen, someone to write content, someone to take and collate photos, someone to design and develop, someone to maintain and update.

Once you have a clear idea of what you are recruiting for and the detail behind it, then consider the types of people who might be likely to do that job. This will help you to target your recruitment efforts into the right places.

What do we need?	What will they do?	Who might be the likely audience?
Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take minutes• Keep membership list and records• Write newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retired admin person• Business administration student• Business owner
Plant 2000 tube stocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plant lots of plants• Water them in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workplace volunteering program• Student group• Local families
Film stories for social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capture footage at events• Edit footage ready for socials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Video enthusiast• Film student



Consistent presence for consistent recruitment

One of the best volunteer recruitment strategies your group can have is consistent long term and visible presence in your community. When people think how they might contribute to looking after their local environment, you want them to think Coastcare.

The more positive contact you have with your community, the easier it is to sustain relationships, raise funds, recruit volunteers, find partners and deliver big impactful projects.

While newspapers, signage, radio, TV and other more traditional outreach methods can still be hugely successful, the digital age has brought with it unique opportunities for becoming a consistent presence in our community through social media, email and text messages. With a little effort and some thoughtful strategy, Coastcare groups can have a consistent presence that creates authority, credibility, social proof and keeps volunteering for the sustainability of our coastlines at the forefront of people's minds.

3 Top Tips

1. Have a Facebook page

Many people now use Facebook in the same way we once used the Yellow Pages. Having a Facebook page is a great way to make new contacts and have meaningful conversations with your community.

2. Email is still king

A consistent newsletter emailed out to your membership will keep you front of mind and provide credibility through consistency. The not for profit space has the best email open rates of any industry. Consider using a platform like MailChimp to host your newsletter and database.

3. Signage

Having signage at worksites will help bring the presence of your group and its success' to the forefront of your community. You can access template banners on the Coastcare website.

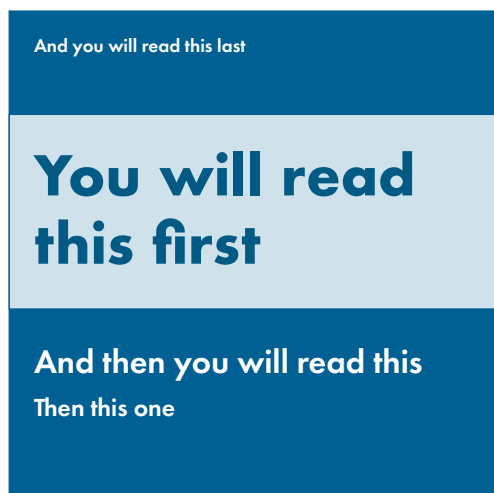
Putting the call out for volunteers

The secret to success here is to get your ask in front of as many eyes as possible. To do this, use multiple methods and track your results to see what works best for your group.

Posters and Flyers

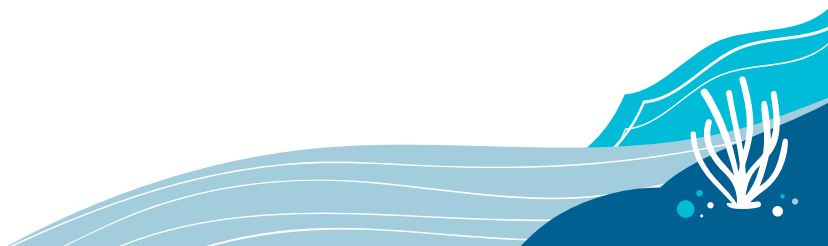
Posters and flyers can be pinned to community noticeboards, delivered in letter box drops, added to school and other groups' newsletters or ask local businesses if you can pop them in their window.

Graphic design is a true art and a good flyer should stand out, be easy to read, use powerful imagery and be clearly branded with the Coastcare or your groups logo.



3 Top Tips

1. Landcare Australia have a free templates that you can access <https://landcareaustralia.org.au/coastcare/>
2. More template flyers and posters such as those found at [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) will save you time when creating yourself.
3. Have a clear call to action that can be done right away. As an example, "Text your name, phone number and email address to XXXXXX to register for our event now".



Newspapers / TV and radio

Newspapers, TV and radio are powerful ways to get your message out, particularly if you have a great story. Unique stories of the success and challenges of our marine eco systems and the work being done by dedicated volunteers to restore and protect them, can be really attractive to media and can get your group great coverage. To give yourself the best chance of getting your story covered, do the work on your end to make it easy for the journalists.

3 Top Tips

1. Use Landcare Australia's media release template media release and simply insert your information and contact details and send it off – your media release has to tell a story that will grab the attention of the journalist and be of interest to their audience.
2. Supply great photos. Use crisp and clear photos with people smiling, sunshine behind them, not overly zoomed in. You may even choose to submit a before and after photo.
3. Select a great spokesperson for your group. You want someone who is charismatic and can come across well on camera, someone who is keen to take on the role to promote your group and project outcomes.

Volunteer support services

There are many great online services that offer organisations and volunteers a facilitated avenue to connect. Check out:

www.govolunteer.com.au

www.seekvolunteer.com.au

www.vollie.com.au

Many local governments around Australia have volunteer matching services or arrangements for local volunteer groups looking to advertise their available roles. Get in contact with your local governments Community Development department (or equivalent) and Environment department (or equivalent) to see what support is available to you.

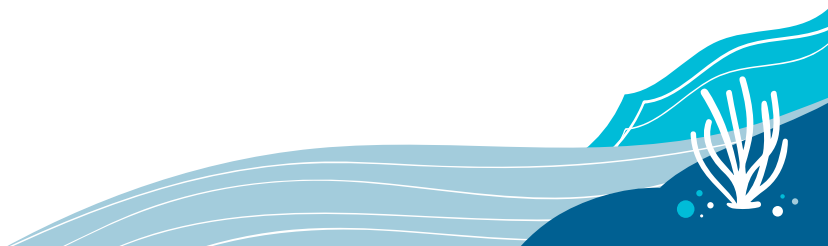
Volunteer Resource Centres are federally funded to provide services to support community groups and nonprofits to deliver their vital work in our community. Often, these locally based services have a database of people looking for volunteer roles and all it takes is to get your organisation registered in order to start receiving referrals of potential volunteers. Contact the Landcare peak body in your state or territory for information on how they can support volunteers.

Social media

Social media offers us the opportunity to both cast our net widely looking for new volunteers and also to find and reach out to individuals and have one-on-one conversations. One of the most powerful aspects of social media is its ability to allow us to tell stories. Deciding to give your time to a cause is an emotional decision and storytelling is a way to make emotional connections with people. Build your following on social media through consistent posts and engagement with followers.

3 Top Tips

1. Enlist your happy loyal volunteers to spread the word by sharing their stories, sharing your messages and leaving a recommendation on your page. Don't forget to utilise videos and photos to ensure your message has the ultimate share ability.
2. Use Facebook events to spread the word and get automated reminders in people's personal feeds.
3. Facebook advertising allows you to target a very specific audience at a very low cost. This can make it easy to find volunteers in your specific area or with very specific skillsets.



Why do people join groups?

Meet new people
Sense of belonging
Belief in the cause
To learn new skills
Employment pathway
Testimonials
To have fun
Social activities
Make a difference
Legacy
Give back
Sense of obligation
To be needed/
useful
Fitness/health

Active conversations

Active recruitment means getting out there and speaking with the types of people who might be interested in volunteering and having actual one on one conversations. This method of recruitment is why both Landcare and Coastcare have been so successful at building a movement of people taking action in their local environment. The very beginnings of Landcare was farmers talking to farmers over the fence and no matter how virtual our world becomes, there will never be anything more powerful and successful than looking someone in the eye, giving them a compelling reason to join and taking the time to answer their individual questions.

In the last Australian Census, data collected on volunteering looked at the barriers to volunteering and 45% of respondents said they were not volunteers because they had not been asked. Isn't it astonishing, that while we feel like we are always out there asking, on the other side there are so many that feel they have never been asked. The bridge between this divide is often that we simply have not asked people in a one on one conversation.

3 Top Tips

1. Think about what they will give and what they will gain. Understanding people's motivations for volunteering is important and weaving this into your conversations will be powerful for helping people to connect to the personal benefits.
2. Know what you want to say and say it clearly. A clear and concise ask will always gain more positive reactions. Let them know precisely what you need and why. Be confident. This is not a personal favour but an invitation to purpose and contribution.
3. Ask questions and listen to what they are saying to understand the barriers and benefits to them, that way you can tailor what you are asking to the individual.

Stalls and stands

A great way to have conversations with your local community and find people interested in volunteering is with a stall at the local market or shopping centre. Often organisers have a set number of spaces free or at heavily discounted rates for community groups.

3 Top Tips

1. Make your stall look great with pull up banners and posters.
2. Have before and after photos of worksites or areas that your group has transformed printed in A3 colour so that people can clearly see the impacts of the work you are doing.
3. Ask people to take action right away, to join your mailing list or register for an event.

Half of our volunteers come from our volunteers

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics taken in 2019 indicated that 51.1% of volunteers came to their volunteer role because someone they knew was already involved. We know that of all the ways to find volunteers, our existing volunteers are the simplest and most common pathway, so how can we make the most of this?



The key is to let your existing volunteers know that you need new volunteers and to keep it front of mind for them. One of the key ways to make this happen is to ensure you are asking them to help you. If you have a role you are looking to fill, be sure to tell your membership and ask if they know of anyone who might be suited.

3 Top Tips

1. Incentify volunteer referrals, offer a coffee for two at the local coffee shop or even cash rewards for sourcing potential volunteers. The incentive itself is not what makes the difference in increasing your numbers, but more the act of offering an incentive that elevates the importance of it in your allies' minds.
2. Give volunteers a one pager of key messages. Simple and clear statements that will make it easy for them to know what to say to ask people along.
3. Create a great culture with a fun, positive, solutions focused Coastcare group and your volunteers will naturally want to bring others. People like to be involved with positive, happy environments that are making a difference.

Networking

Networking is "the action or process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts". Many people go about life networking naturally, over time you meet people who will introduce you to other people who will then introduce you to others. Along the way, you may find folks who are a great match for volunteering with your group. The shift happens when you start to think about networking intentionally, and actually taking the opportunities to ask people to join as they arise, rather than letting them slip by.

3 Top Tips

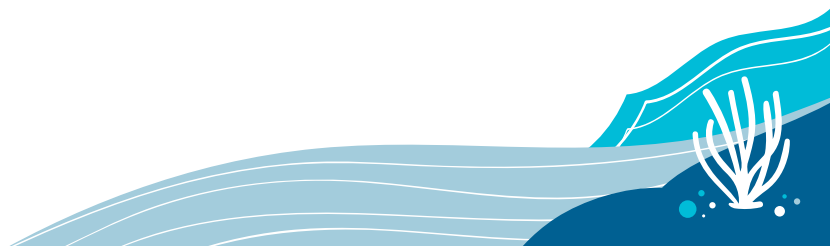
1. Networking, however, doesn't come naturally to everyone and people can get stuck when it comes to the ask. Give contact cards to your volunteers so that they have something tangible to give people they meet who might be interested in volunteering for your group.
2. Attend community events in your town to get to know folks who are widely connected.
3. Giving presentations at local events can help you to connect with a wide range of people.

Some other networks you could explore include:

- Township groups
- Birder groups
- Business groups
- State National Parks organisations
- Landcare groups or networks
- Walking groups
- Bushcare groups and other environmentally focused groups
- Kayaking, surfing and water sports groups
- Student networks or University clubs

Corporate volunteering

The latest statistics from Volunteering Australia indicate that 70% of business now have some kind of employee volunteering program. Employee volunteer programs are often versatile, offering opportunities to either engage large numbers of people for event days or specialists to deliver distinct projects.



3 Top Tips

1. Discover how you can host a Corporate Environmental Volunteering day with Landcare Australia.
2. Write a letter to your local business' to introduce your group and detail ways they might get involved
3. Many big businesses like banks, offer skilled volunteering assignments for the employees to support community groups. You can access highly skilled people in areas like project planning, IT, facilitation, event management and more. Research corporate volunteering programs in your state or territory to learn about the great offers available to you.

Next Steps

The first meeting/nation

New recruits should get involved and take meaningful action right away. What you will assign them to? Washing the dishes at an event may be an easy assignment for a new volunteer but it is not necessarily meaningful enough to make them feel like their contribution was valuable and inspire them to return.

It is important that the first action is memorable and leaves them with a feeling of achievement. First impressions count and they last. Think about how to involve and incorporate new folks into the group. Just saying welcome is rarely enough, help them to feel really involved and integrated and you will wind up with a lasting effect.

Create long term allies

When we think about the long term involvement of volunteers in our Coastcare group, it can be a powerful shift to move from thinking about volunteer retention strategies and instead focusing in a space of creating allies. The involvement of an ally may shift and change over time through activities such as:

- Volunteering
- Being involved in school programs
- Financial contributions
- Gifts in kind
- Advocate
- Promote
- Recommend

When we think about lifetime involvement we can see how the needs, interests and constraints of our lives change over time. As an example, a young family may not have much time to volunteer but they might be really happy to support financially. If we can offer different ways for folks to get involved in our group, we can expand our reach, amplify our reputation and have long term stability.

This Coastcare resource has been developed by [The Forever Agenda](https://www.theforeveragenda.com.au) for Landcare Australia. The Forever Agenda have a great suite of training, facilitation and support solutions for community groups. You can read more about their great work here www.theforeveragenda.com.au

