

RIVERINA REGIONAL LIBRARY VOLUNTEER ATTRACTION AND TRAINING STRATEGY

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This document is to be reviewed annually.			
RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR		Robert Knight, Executive Director RRL	

1. INTRODUCTION

The Riverina Regional Library (RRL) provides centralised library services to 10 local government areas through a network of 19 branch libraries and a mobile library. The RRL Administration Centre is situated at 2 Galing Place, Wagga Wagga, from where centralised services are distributed to its member libraries.

As well as its service delivery function, RRL is committed to capacity building across the network of branch libraries through skills development for library staff and optimisation of locally available resources to maximise branch library-based service provision.

1.1 Strategy Objectives

The utilisation of volunteers, within the confines of relevant industrial provisions, can build significant capacity for library service delivery, especially in libraries with relatively small staff numbers. The RRL Volunteer Attraction and Training Strategy aims to provide a framework from which branch libraries and member Councils can identify ways of attracting volunteers to local library environments. In addition, the strategy aims to identify best practice in terms of volunteer training that can be applied across the region where appropriate.

1.2 Scope of Strategy

This strategy is intended as a guide for branch libraries and their respective member Councils. This strategy does not cover industrial or human resource issues associated with volunteer management, as it is anticipated that these matters will be covered by policy documentation specific to each member Council.

1.3 Definitions

1.3.1 *Volunteers are people who undertake activities:*

- For the benefit of the community.
- Of their own free will.
- Without monetary reward.
- Complement but do not replace the work undertaken by paid employees.

1.3.2 *The following are NOT considered to be volunteers:*

- Those seeking formal work experience.

1.3.3 *Volunteering by people who are unemployed:*

- Volunteering can be a valuable undertaking for people seeking employment as it provides opportunities to learn new skills, increase self-esteem and obtain current referees and work experience whilst looking for paid employment.
- Volunteers may also be sourced from programs for older long-term unemployed persons through government schemes.
- Schemes such as the Department of Corrective Services Community Service Order Scheme may also be considered as a source of volunteer labour.

1.3.4 *Volunteering by retirees and students:*

- There are increasing numbers of well-educated retirees who are seeking ways to make an ongoing contribution to the community through volunteering.
- High School, TAFE and University students often seek volunteer work as part of course and/or extracurricular requirements, or simply to develop their skills. Work experience students or those undertaking short-term projects are not considered to be volunteers.

1.3.5 *Volunteering by people with special needs:*

- Applications should be assessed by senior staff from RRL branch libraries in consultation with their member Council policies.
- Consideration should also take into account the needs, skills, and abilities of the applicants on a case-by-case basis.
- Depending on the level of special needs, a trained carer may be required to accompany and assist in supervising the volunteer.

1.4 Legislative Context

[Library Act 1939](#)

[NSW Library Regulation 2010](#)

[Local Government Act 1993](#)

1.5 Related Legislation

[NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

1.6 Responsibilities

Each participating member Council is responsible for the recruitment, management, and training of volunteers within their own library environments.

1.7 Reporting Requirements

This strategy will be reviewed annually in line with item R2.2.3.3 – Innovation and Accountability of the RRL Integrated Planning Strategy 2014-2018 with a full policy review undertaken every four years in line with Local Government procedures. Quarterly updates on progress of policies will be reported under R2.2.3.3 – Innovation and Accountability.

1.8 Approval Arrangements

Approval arrangements for policies will be undertaken through the RRL Advisory Committee approval process and the Executive Council process.

1.9 Review procedures

This strategy will be reviewed annually in line with item R2.2.3.3 – Innovation and Accountability of the RRL Integrated Planning Strategy 2014-2018.

2. STRATEGY CONTENT

2.1 General Principles of the Riverina Regional Library Volunteer Attraction and Training Strategy

2.1.1 *Deciding to use the services of volunteers is reliant on:*

- Careful assessment of the tasks that can be performed by volunteers.
- Prior evaluation of the skills and /or knowledge that volunteers can provide.
- Relative costs and benefits of using volunteers.
- Assessment of the impact on paid employment opportunities within RRL branch libraries.
- Appropriate consultation with staff and volunteers.
- An assessment of the capacity of the service point to manage and coordinate the work to be done by volunteers.

2.1.2 *Branch library staff should endeavour to ensure that volunteer-based services are:*

- Of consistent quality and availability.

- Adequately supervised and managed. There will be a staff member responsible for coordinating the volunteers where they exist at each branch library.
- Adequately resourced where possible.

2.1.3 Tasks and skills

Staff should endeavour to ensure that:

- Clearly defined descriptions of tasks are provided.
- The duties must be meaningful, should not exploit volunteers and must provide opportunities for the volunteer to feel they are contributing.

3. Recruitment

Other than pre-arranged volunteering such as is facilitated by government agencies in return for social security payments or to meet Community Service Order Scheme obligations, recruitment of volunteers may include the following areas:

- Schools – where students wish to gain experience (other than work experience).
- Places of work – volunteers can be paid employees who offer services in their own time.
- Family – volunteers can be family members of people associated with a particular organisation.
- Friends – volunteers can be friends of people who work or have a connection with a particular organisation.
- Managed organisations – volunteers can be people who are a member of a group or organisation that provides community service eg, Duke of Edinburgh, Rotary, Probus etc.
- Community organisations and associations, including those that have included retirees amongst their membership.

Current literature suggests that volunteers need to be available for a minimum of 3-4 hours per shift and that shifts should be at least monthly to ensure skills are kept up to date.

3.1 Attraction

Volunteer attraction may cost time or money or both. It is recommended, where possible, that branch libraries:

- Consult with the library's member Council Human Resources staff regarding the initiation of a volunteer recruitment program to ensure that all council policies and guidelines are being followed.
- Form partnerships within the community with organisations that have a history of community service.
- Pursue partnerships with local schools to ensure that students are aware of volunteering opportunities with their local branch library.
- Pursue partnerships with educational award facilitators such as the Duke of Edinburgh to attract younger people into volunteering.
- Regularly and widely publicise volunteer opportunities within the library via member Council websites and the RRL website.
- Regularly and widely publicise volunteer opportunities in local newspapers.

4. Management, Training and Responsibilities

4.1 Management and Training

Management is vital in ensuring that volunteers and paid staff understand the role and activities undertaken by the volunteer. In some cases, the management of volunteers may be undertaken by a staff member or by a volunteer – in either situation, good planning and management of the volunteers is required.

Key responsibilities should be determined, including appointing a volunteer manager or coordinator. This role is responsible for identifying in conjunction with the library manager:

- The type of work that is suited to volunteer placements.
- How often the work needs to be undertaken.
- The best way of attracting volunteers to the organisation.
- Liaising with Human Resources staff from the library's member Council.
- Assisting in the application process.
- Assisting staff in the process of training the volunteer – this may include scheduling staff time to ensure that they are available to train the volunteer employee.

4.2 Responsibilities

Both the member Council and the volunteer have rights and responsibilities to each other.

4.2.1 Council Responsibilities

- Carefully plan the volunteer program before recruiting volunteers.
- Recruit, interview and select the right volunteer for the job.
- Provide written job descriptions and procedures for volunteer jobs.
- Orientate volunteers by providing information about the organisation's purpose, structure, programs, policies and procedures through a staff induction process.
- Provide initial training and ongoing training where necessary.
- Include volunteers in decision making where decisions affect volunteer work.
- Keep records of volunteer goals, attendance, training and feedback.
- Communicate clear expectations and provide the appropriate support and supervision for volunteers.
- Formally and informally recognise volunteers in the organisation.
- Continually evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of volunteers in the organisation.
- Provide a safe working environment and ensure that volunteers are aware of WHS policies and protocols as they apply to the Library and the specific tasks allocated to them.

4.2.2 Council's Rights

- Receive as much effort and service from an unpaid worker as a paid one, even on a short term basis.
- Expect conscientious acceptance of responsibilities as to promptness, reliability and good performance.
- Expect enthusiasm and belief in the work the organisation is doing.

- Make the decision as to where the volunteer would best be suited within the organisation.
- Expect clear and open communication at all times.
- Release an unsuitable volunteer.

4.2.3 Volunteer Responsibilities

- Examine motives and be sure that they match the volunteer job.
- Understand the purpose and philosophy of the organisation before committing to it.
- Understand the rules and guidelines of the organisation.
- Understand the level of commitment that they are agreeing to.
- Be loyal to the organisation.
- Be willing to train for the job and take part in ongoing training when offered.
- Accept support and supervision.
- Participate in planning and feedback about the job.
- Be reliable.
- Work as a team member.
- Keep information confidential.
- Comply with the Office of Local Government Staff Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW.
- Acknowledge and abide by the member Council's WHS policies and protocols.

4.2.4 Volunteer Rights

- A job description clearly stating the aim of the job and tasks to be undertaken by the volunteer.
- A suitable assignment with consideration for personal preference, temperament, abilities, education and employment background.
- To be treated as a co-worker not just free help.
- Know as much about the organisation as possible, including relevant policies and programs.
- Training for the job.
- Continuing education on the job as follow-up to initial training, providing information on new on the job developments.
- Sound guidance and direction by someone who is experienced and well informed who also has time to invest in giving support and supervision.
- A place to work which is an orderly designated place, conducive to work and worthy of the job to be done.
- Recognition of skills acquired and access to a variety of experience through advancement to greater responsibility or by transfer from one activity to another.
- Be heard, to have a part in planning, to feel free to make suggestions, to be shown respect for an honest opinion.

Amendments

Amendments to this strategy in relation to operational matters may be made with the approval of the Executive Director RRL.

5. References

New South Wales Government Legislation, [Library Act 1939](#)

New South Wales Government Legislation, [Library Regulation 2010](#)

New South Wales Government Legislation, [Local Government Act 1993](#)

New South Wales Government Legislation, [NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)

Safe Work Australia, [Model WHS Laws - Volunteers](#)

State Library of NSW, [Become a Volunteer at the Library](#)