



Volunteering for career development

People volunteer for many reasons, the most common of which is a desire to use their time to give back to their communities. There may be no financial gain in volunteering, but there are plenty of benefits in other ways. Volunteers can be found in thousands of organisations, and voluntary work is possible in hundreds of different roles. All fit together to bring benefits or support to others in the community.

WHY VOLUNTEER?

Putting some thought into why you would take on voluntary work will help you to choose the type of work and organisation that is a good match for you. Typical motivations include:

- To make a positive difference to people's lives and to enrich your community
- To enhance your experience. Employers value all forms of work experience, including voluntary work. Volunteering also allows you a chance to test out career ideas that interest you
- To build your readiness for work. Volunteering shows potential employers that you have taken the initiative to develop relevant skills and can show commitment
- To learn new skills and develop existing ones. It's true that you'll get out as much as you put in. By challenging yourself to do something new, you will gain more knowledge and skills
- To access useful training. Many voluntary organisations provide training which is often invaluable for your current or future career
- To expand networks. Volunteering is a great way of meeting people you wouldn't normally meet
- For personal fulfillment and fun
- To improve your CV, and contribute towards experiences you could discuss in an interview as well as get to know someone who may act as a referee for future job applications.

VOLUNTEER EXPOS AT MASSEY

If you are keen to build your career related skills, gain experience and meet people who share your desire to make a difference these expos are for you. We run an annual volunteer expo on each Massey campus, featuring organisations with a range of volunteer opportunities. Details can be found on the volunteering section of the Career and Employment Service's website – <http://careers.massey.ac.nz>

VOLUNTEERING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Voluntary work is a great way to develop skills and traits that are impressive to potential employers. Please refer to our information on skills for a list of possible skills you may want to develop.

Voluntary work is also an avenue for your commitment to social responsibility. In behavioural job interviews employers often ask for examples of times when you have shown particular skills. Your voluntary work can provide you with great examples to use.



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The experience of volunteering is most likely to develop your skills and knowledge if you:

- Seek out and take all opportunities to become fully involved and learn
- Talk to colleagues about their roles, backgrounds, goals and experience. Refer to information on informational interviewing on the Career and Employment Service's website.
- Maintain a written log of your experiences in which you record what you're doing and learning.

VOLUNTEERING AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership skills and potential are highly valued by employers. Such skills centre upon persuasion and upon getting people to grasp and follow your lead. Leadership qualities are also developed when you: provide care through establishing quality relationships, earn the trust and respect of other people, show moral responsibility, make ethical decisions, and encourage others to grow and succeed.

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

There are many ways to find voluntary work:

- Massey CareerHub – see its section on voluntary work/work experience at <http://careerhub.massey.ac.nz>
- Volunteering NZ – offers a searchable database of volunteering opportunities and contact details for volunteer centres around NZ. Access this at <http://www.volunteernow.org.nz/contact>
- VolunteerNet – a site that connects people looking for volunteering opportunities with event organisers looking for volunteers.
See: <http://www.med.govt.nz/majorevents/volunteering>

If there is a particular organisation you'd like to volunteer with, you can contact them directly. Many non-profit organisations provide assistance for their volunteers in various ways e.g. by paying volunteers' expenses, providing training, acting as referees and so on. Volunteers are also protected under ACC and Health and Safety legislation.

CHOOSING A VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

With a wide range of volunteer opportunities to choose from, you'll want to ensure you select one that's a good 'fit' for you. A few considerations:

- Your skills: You can either choose a role that matches skills you currently have or perhaps a role requiring skills you'd like to develop for your future career
- Your available time: Organisations will want to know how much time you can offer them, and whether this could be on a regular and fixed basis..

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- Your level of interest and inspiration: No matter what tasks you undertake as a volunteer, aim to advance the cause of the organisation with your contribution..
- Your location and travel availability: How much time and cost is involved in travelling to the location of the voluntary work? Some organisations contribute to travel expenses.

VOLUNTEERING OVERSEAS

Given the vast range of opportunities to volunteer overseas, it is crucial to research organisations first. Not-for-profit organisations offer these opportunities but you'll also find a wealth of profit-making organisations that arrange work overseas for volunteers – at a cost.

Consider the following:

- What are you likely to gain from the experience and is it worth the financial cost?
- If you are planning to pay, how much of your money would be going towards the organization's administration and marketing? How much is contributed to the project and the community?
- To what extent will you be able to choose the type of work that you'll be doing; where you will be living; your travel arrangements and how you spend your free time?
- How will your work benefit all parties – the organisation, the clients/communities and you?
- Are you clear about what you'd be doing and the skills required?
- What training will be provided to you?
- What support does the organisation provide to its volunteers – before they leave NZ; in the country concerned and on their return?
- To what extent is the work an 'holiday' rather than meeting a genuine need for volunteers?
- How would you prefer to work – e.g. on your own, with other volunteers, or with locals?
- Ask if you can speak to returned volunteers who have worked through the same organisation
- What arrangements are in place should something go wrong: e.g. if you have to return home at short notice or fall ill? Who is responsible for payment / arrangements / medical treatment etc?

For a list of some of the organisations offering overseas opportunities to volunteer, refer to the volunteering section of the Career and Employment Service's website – <http://careers.massey.ac.nz>