



Multicultural Youth Volunteering Handbook



Supported by



Government
of South Australia

Office for Youth

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About this handbook

This handbook is brought to you by Multicultural Youth South Australia Inc (MYSA), the state representative advisory, advocacy and service delivery body for young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) aged between 12 and 30 years. MYSA's work includes:

- Participating in and initiating research projects designed to improve understanding of the issues affecting CALD young people.
- Representing the needs of CALD young people on state and national policy forums.
- Providing policy and program advice to State and Federal Government departments and the community services sector on CALD youth issues.
- Assisting and supporting service providers to work more effectively with CALD young people through information provision, resource development and training.
- Providing direct services and support to CALD young people to enable them to participate more fully in community life.
- Strengthening linkages and partnerships between schools, community organisations and government departments to facilitate a whole-of-community approach to meeting the needs of CALD young people.

This handbook is based on the learnings of the "Multicultural Youth Volunteering Project" funded by the South Australian Government's Office for Youth, and other projects developed by MYSA. There are many reasons for engaging CALD young people in volunteering:

- To advance their basic right to participate in the community and have access to the same opportunities as youth in the general population.
- To contribute to their growth and development and enable them to pursue their personal and career goals.
- To reduce the social isolation and marginalisation that often accompanies the migrant and refugee experience, particularly for those in the early and middle stages of resettlement.
- To increase the access of community groups to the energy, passion, knowledge, skills, experience and expertise of CALD young people.

The purpose of the handbook is to provide service providers with information and practical strategies for engaging CALD young people in volunteering to help them improve self-esteem and confidence, develop new skills and achieve personal and career goals. Young people from CALD backgrounds comprise approximately 25% of the youth population of South Australia. Of these, an increasing number are from new and emerging refugee communities. Although South Australia is characterised by considerable cultural and linguistic diversity, the majority of volunteering opportunities are geared towards the mainstream population. Many CALD young people, particularly those from refugee backgrounds, are effectively excluded because they do not have the knowledge, skills or confidence to participate.

Part 1: Barriers to Youth Volunteering

Before seeking to engage CALD young people in volunteering, it is first important to identify and address possible barriers to their participation. Key barriers include limited English language skills, lack of familiarity with Western culture and systems, little or no formal education, family responsibilities, low income, poor self-esteem and confidence, lack of knowledge and skills deficits, and lack of access to youth-specific, culturally inclusive volunteering opportunities.

Language and Cultural Barriers

For many CALD young people, English is their second or third language. Language barriers can prevent young people from dealing with mainstream organisations and groups and restrict their access to volunteering opportunities. Even young people who speak English very well and are reasonably familiar with Western systems may not understand what volunteering is or means.

Refugees are an important sub-group within the broader CALD youth population who may have had very little or no formal education, or have experienced disruption to their education prior to arriving in Australia. Many have limited literacy skills and cannot easily access information about volunteering or how it could benefit them:

(We speak) broken English, you know? We can speak it but you (Australians) can't understand it but we are speaking English. (Female)

I'm still trying to learn English. Still looking at dictionaries. (Male)

(We) don't actually know much about how (an) Australian acts, how they do their things. (Male)

When you listen to people, you don't know what (they are) saying. Most of the actions (cultural norms) are different, different. (Female)

Cultural factors may also have an impact on young people's knowledge of volunteering. Many, for example, come from a cultural context where there is no equivalent or comparable focus on volunteering and therefore may have no concept or a different concept of "volunteering".

For some young people, parental restriction can be another cultural barrier to volunteering. Newly arrived parents can be protective of their children until they become more familiar and comfortable with their new country. Some parents place special restrictions on young women, for example they may not permit them to participate in activities outside the home or they may insist they be chaperoned by male family members.

Part 1: Barriers to Youth Volunteering

Personal Issues

Some young people may be struggling with their own life issues even though they are willing to help others. New arrivals in particular have to contend with many difficult issues including learning a new language, adjusting to a new culture and its systems, making new friends and, for many, helping parents cope with the resettlement process. For refugees, this is on top of multiple losses including home, country, culture, family and friends.

Economic Hardship

Economic hardship and poverty is common in CALD families, particularly refugee families, due to welfare dependency, under-employment and employment in low-skilled, poorly paid jobs. Economic hardship restricts young people's access to basic necessities, as well as impacting on their capacity to participate in broader community life, including volunteering:

If you want to get a bus ticket to go to school, sometimes (it's) hard. If you don't get it, you have to miss classes for that (day). And, you know, the distance from the house to school, you can't walk you know for that distance. So you (have) got to miss class, or walk, or try to look for money. So that's why we have to work hard and find some part-time job. (Male)

Even clothes (we cannot afford). When we finish paying the bill and foods stuff we cannot buy anything for ourself. (Female)

Most people here (in Australia) are on Centrelink. (Male)

Last year I wanted to play cricket and then it was like \$180. I asked my dad and he didn't have the money ... I felt so low ... I was thinking of leaving school even... I felt so low ... felt like leaving home ... Cricket is my favourite sport and I (did not get to) play this for one year ... I still don't play cricket. (Male)

Family Responsibility

Young people from CALD backgrounds often have family responsibilities which are beyond those of young people in the general population and which can prevent or limit their ability to participate in volunteering opportunities. These responsibilities may include undertaking significant household duties, caring for siblings and other family members and helping parents negotiate Australian systems (escorting them to medical and other appointments and providing translating and interpreting assistance). This support may be provided for a number of years:

I try to help my mum (with her English) like every single night. Like she tries, she asks me (to help). I try to help her and stuff but she just doesn't pick it up because it's so hard (Female).

Part 1: Barriers to Youth Volunteering

Like sometime I get home around 4.30pm and I have to work in my house. And (then I have to) go over to my brother's house. Four boys in the house, they are not married and yeah. I have to go and cook. I am the youngest. I have to go and prepare some things, clean the house and go back. Yeah and then (I have to go and do the same with) my cousin (...) and (then) (...) I come home and cook. Yeah that's the way it is. (Female)

Self-Esteem and Confidence Issues

Some young people may not see themselves as “volunteering material” and may find the prospect daunting due to low self-esteem and lack of confidence in their abilities and potential:

Most of us have very low self-esteem which means we have problem or we feel uncomfortable communicating with our peers in school and outside. And that's when we start thinking that we are just the most useless thing on the planet. (Male)

There's some people when they come Australia, they just want to change themselves cos they're not proud of who they are ... they're not proud of their background and that. Maybe if you say you're Muslim maybe they're just not proud of who they are. (Female)

Some (young people) don't (have confidence) cos some of them like they're scared (...) If they see like a group of Australians, they look at the floor and like walk. They don't even look. (Male)

The Australian kids wouldn't accept me because I wasn't cool like them and I couldn't speak much English. Even now (12 years later), I'm still trying to fit in. You never fit in. You're always different. (Female)

Yeah (I'm unhappy). A lot of people are racist to me. I don't know why and I'm nice to people. I'm nice to people but some people they're racist to me. I don't know why. (Male)

You always be thinking of going back home cos nobody wants you here. You always think this yeah. When it happens, too much racism, you think that nobody wants you around so you just always be thinking of going back to your country. You think about it too much and then when you're thinking on the road, walking on the road, and then you get another experience of racism, you just feel bad about it. (Female)

Just getting these young people to participate can be challenging. It is therefore important to explain that learning is part of volunteering and that many young people learn best by just having a go. Encourage them to turn any difficulties or challenges they encounter into opportunities for learning. This gives them permission to grow and develop at their own pace without having to worry about getting it right all the time.

Part 1: Barriers to Youth Volunteering

Lack of Access to Culturally Inclusive Volunteering Opportunities

Despite the fact that South Australia is characterised by considerable cultural and linguistic diversity, our institutions are in the main monocultural, monolingualistic and ethnocentric. There continues to be major differences in life opportunities that hinder the full and equitable participation of CALD populations in the life of the community, including volunteering:

When you try many places, they're like, they won't say it to your face but you know, that it's because of that (the scarf) they won't accept you. (Female)

They always say, "You're wearing the scarf. We don't want you." That's the whole thing. (Female)

They told him, "Oh you can't come here cos your hair's dirty." Cos they think the hair, you know, they (Africans) have dreadlocks, they think that's dirty. (Female)

They think black people are stupid too. Yeah. They don't think black people are well educated. (Female)

They don't accept you. (Female)



Part 2: Improving the Access of CALD Young People to

MYSA has found the following principles and strategies effective for involving CALD young people in volunteering.

Motivate Young People

To attract CALD young people to volunteering, it is important to identify what motivates them and find ways to accommodate this. Common reasons why young people take up volunteering opportunities include:

- To make a difference in their community
- To develop new skills and improve their employment prospects
- To support a cause they believe in
- To develop or increase their social networks

Provide Incentives

In MYSA's experience, various conditions and incentives are needed before CALD young people will make use of volunteering opportunities. Many young people associate volunteering with hard work and no reward. Research undertaken on volunteering in the UK can be applied here. This study found that young people aged between 16 and 24 years have a "wish list" for volunteering. The acronym "**FLEXIVOL**" encapsulates their key needs:

Flexibility. Young people want their voluntary contributions to fit in with them, not vice versa. They want flexibility in terms of work days and times, work assignments and expected duration of stay at an organisation. Many young people lead busy and full lives and have to juggle competing interests and demands. They are more likely to take on and remain in volunteer placements if they have a say in what this commitment looks like.

Legitimacy. Young people want to be involved in pursuits that are considered socially acceptable. For a young person, volunteering can be un-cool, even weird, especially for boys. Therefore to attract young people to volunteering opportunities, it may first be necessary to improve the public image of volunteering among the youth population.

Ease of access. Young people often do not know what opportunities are available or the process involved in becoming a volunteer. They need more information and encouragement to get involved.

Xperience. Young people want their contribution to add value to some area of their lives, whether this be on a personal or career level. Many young people volunteer their time to get work experience so as to improve their employment prospects. Volunteer placements should therefore provide skills and challenges that lead to personal and/or career growth and development for young people.

Part 2: Improving the Access of CALD Young People to Volunteering

Incentives. Young people need to be rewarded for their contribution. Incentives could take the form of references, qualifications obtained through training provided or payment for out of pocket expenses.

Variety. Young people need variety in terms of work assignments, level of commitment required and degree of responsibility taken on.

Organisation. Young people need opportunities to be organised in ways that are efficient, informal and relaxed. They want to be supported in their work but not over-supervised or over-directed.

Laughs. Young people want their volunteering experiences to be enjoyable, satisfying and fun. Volunteer placements should have a social element to them, especially if an organisation or group wants to compete with their busy social lives.

Have a Good Promotion Strategy

A promotion strategy will need to be developed to let CALD young people know about the volunteering opportunities available:

- Ensure your promotional material is youth friendly and culturally appropriate. Key questions to consider are:
 - What messages are likely to reach CALD young people?
 - How should information be presented to CALD young people?
 - Where do CALD young people get their information from?
 - What means of communication do CALD young people prefer? MYSA has found that letters and emails are not effective and although mobile phone calls are effective, they can be very costly as many young people need to be followed up several times to confirm their participation.
- Develop promotions strategies and approaches that make volunteering appealing to young people:
 - Emphasise what young people have to gain.
 - Highlight the fun or exciting side.
 - Challenge any fears or doubts that may be associated with volunteering.
 - Be creative with the use of language. Remember that the word “volunteering” may not appeal to some young people.
- Enlist the help of multicultural and other organisations with access to CALD young people. Ask them to promote volunteering to their young people and their other networks.
- Schools with a high CALD population will generally disseminate information to students. You might also want to consider asking the school to allow you to speak to students directly.

Part 2: Improving the Access of CALD Young People to

Even when projects are promoted well, there is no guarantee young people will participate. Here are some suggestions for attracting young people to volunteering:

- Find out what the barriers to participation are for your target group and try to address these.
- Take some time to get to know the young person first to develop trust and rapport.
- Offer to arrange transport to and from the placement as many young people do not participate in volunteering because of transport problems.
- Personally invite young people to participate - do not assume they will come forward on their own as they usually do not.

Ensure a Good Fit Between the Young Person and the Volunteer Placement

There needs to be the right fit between the interests, preferences, skills and abilities of the young person and the volunteer placement. Currently there is a strong push to increase young people's involvement in organisational decision-making processes and management structures such as boards, committees and advisory groups. Many young people, however, are either not equipped or not interested in this form of participation. Link young people to opportunities in a range of areas, for example, music, sport, business and community work. Another important consideration is to ensure that the opportunity you are seeking to provide is in keeping with the young person's age, gender and current level of development, including where they are situated in the resettlement process. Link young people to placements they can manage and then more advanced placements in keeping with their development.

Provide Support

Link CALD young people to opportunities where they can build on or expand current interests, capacities and strengths and ensure they receive the support required to effectively participate. This may include information, education, resources or practical support, for example, assistance with transport. When seeking to involve young people in placements that require a higher level of responsibility, ensure they are equipped with the necessary skills, for example, if they will be involved in organisational decision-making processes and management structures, they will need appropriate support.

Increase the Participation of Young People Facing Significant Barriers

For CALD young people facing significant barriers to volunteering, consider assigning them a guide or mentor. The mentor needs to be someone the young person can relate to but they must also be able to explain in age- and culture-appropriate language what is expected and what he/she has to gain from the placement. The mentor should also be able to provide personal encouragement and support to the young person. Do not try to recruit young people for opportunities that require more of them than they are currently capable of because they may become discouraged and give up. Keep in mind that young women may need additional encouragement and support to get involved because many are subject to culturally prescribed gender roles which restrict their community participation.

Part 2: Improving the Access of CALD Young People to Volunteering

It is important to remember that newly arrived young people are likely to be preoccupied with issues associated with cultural transition and resettlement and may not be in a position to take advantage of available opportunities. Some of these young people are also struggling with pre and post migration experiences of loss, trauma and disruption. Unless they receive support for these needs, they are unlikely to establish stability and consistency in their lives much less participate in volunteering opportunities.

Consider Culture but Don't Generalise

It is important to be familiar with the cultural backgrounds of young people, but at the same time, it is important not to over-emphasise the importance of culture as young people negotiate a number of identities including age, gender, social status and so on.

Communicate Effectively

When seeking to engage young people in volunteering, consider your communication. If English is an issue, speak a little more slowly and clearly but do not raise your voice or patronise young people. With new arrivals, avoid big words, difficult terms, jargon, slang and colloquialism and be sensitive with the use of humour. Clearly explain unfamiliar or complex terms. Keep in mind that nodding and smiling do not always convey understanding. Many young people nod and smile even (and especially) when they do not understand. Watch out for non-verbal cues that could suggest people do not understand, for example, loss of concentration, blank stares, fidgeting, talking in their own languages to friends and keeping quiet.

Be Flexible

Some young people may reject a volunteering opportunity if there are no or few people from their own cultural background. MYSA has found that linking young people to opportunities in pairs often makes them feel more comfortable.

Secure Parental Support

Parents and caregivers may have reservations about allowing their children to participate in voluntary work due to lack of familiarity with their new country. As noted earlier, many young women in particular are subject to culturally prescribed gender roles which restrict their participation in activities outside the home. Consider whether the volunteer placement is culturally appropriate for them and whether it is customary for them to mix with young men. Most parental restriction issues can be managed by:

- Making connections with parents and families as well as young people to build trust and dispel any uncertainty they may have.
- Ensuring that parents receive the necessary information. If possible, provide information in their first languages, especially consent forms.
- Providing reassurance to parents about the purpose of the volunteer placement and the potential benefits for their children.
- If necessary, arranging transport for young people.

Part 3: MYSA's Approach

This section details a volunteering model developed by MYSA to assist young people with limited experience, qualifications and training to improve their work skills for future employment. The model involves client assessment, pre-placement training and support for both young people and host organisations, and ongoing monitoring and support for both young people and host organisations.

During the assessment phase, MYSA works with the young person to set goals, identify personal strengths and challenges, and determine the type of volunteering opportunity that he or she would prefer. The assessment phase also involves identifying potential barriers to participation, for example, limited English language skills, location disadvantage, lack of understanding of what would be involved, family responsibilities, lack of confidence, skills deficits, discrimination, and so on.

As most of the young people MYSA works with do not possess the extensive knowledge or skills necessary for immediate placement in a host organisation, or face significant barriers to participation, he or she will be provided intensive individualised support through a training and development plan. While training and development plans are individualised and vary according to the young person's goals, needs, skills, abilities and level of development, they generally involve volunteering readiness training workshops to orient young people to the Australian workplace and employer expectations; casework and advocacy to overcome personal and structural barriers; and life-skills development programs to improve self-esteem, confidence, communication skills, and so on.

Once the young person is "placement ready", he or she will then be linked to a volunteer placement. MYSA identifies volunteering opportunities within the community and then matches these opportunities to the young person. Volunteering experiences have included placements across a diverse range of sectors, for example, arts and music, retail, hospitality, community services, conservation and the environment, sport and recreation and building and construction. Volunteer placements are always focussed on future pathways and enable the young person to see firsthand what is involved in their chosen career and dispel any myths or unrealistic expectations they may have.

As most mainstream host organisations and groups lack cross-cultural skills and experience, they are trained and supported by MYSA to ensure greater success and value from the experience. For example, host organisations receive background and cultural information about the CALD young person as well as ongoing cross-cultural training, advice and support.

MYSA works with the host organisation to develop a structured learning plan for the young person to ensure that the placement is meaningful and genuinely focussed on knowledge and skills development. The host organisation is required to hold regular meetings with the young person to provide appropriate supervision, monitor the learning plan and address emerging learning needs.

Each placement is subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation by MYSA to ensure a continued good fit between the young person and the opportunity and to identify and overcome issues that may result in premature termination of the placement. Both the young person and the host organisation are fully supported throughout the placement.

Part 3: MYSA's Approach

Each young person also participates in an individual evaluation to assess personal progress and goals and identify the education or training steps needed to pursue their career path. This often results in the young person enrolling in TAFE or university courses to further develop his or her knowledge and skills.

In some cases, young people are asked to stay on at the host organisation in a paid capacity but in most cases, the most tangible benefits are orientation to their chosen career, a resume that can be used in their job search, and the development of new knowledge and skills. At the conclusion of the placement, a final evaluation involving process, formative and summative assessments is undertaken. Accordingly, a number of issues are addressed:

- Process evaluation:
 - How the placement was established.
 - Key needs and issues addressed.
- Formative evaluation:
 - Issues that emerged during the course of the placement for both the young person and the host organisation.
 - How these issues were addressed.
 - Any changes that occurred during the placement.
- Summative evaluation:
 - Major learnings and achievements for both the young person and the host organisation (What did young people learn about their employment pathway that they did not know beforehand? What did the host organisation learn about working cross-culturally?)
 - Extent to which the placement made a difference to the young person and the host organisation.
 - Issues still needing to be addressed.
 - Key lessons learned and methods for incorporating these into MYSA's model to ensure continuous improvement.



Part 3: MYSA's Approach - Case Studies

Mohammed's Story:

A New Chapter

Mohammed's experience in the project is a good example of tangible employment outcomes being achieved through the Multicultural Youth Volunteering Project. Prior to his participation in the project, Mohammed was facing many obstacles and challenges in securing employment. At 20 years of age and a new arrival to Australia from Sudan, Mohammed had no work experience and began to find the process of finding employment so frustrating that he almost lost hope of ever obtaining work.



As Mohammed is an active community member, he was aware of volunteering but not aware of the diverse opportunities that volunteering presented or how it could benefit his employment prospects. Through the sessions delivered through the project, Mohammed was able to increase his understanding of the volunteering placements available and gain valuable skills to assist in his search for work.

"I did not realise that you could volunteer for Government." – **Mohammed**

Mohammed was placed at the Office for Youth and was mentored by a Policy Officer. Mohammed found the placement to be very rewarding and was keen to put his new experience into practice. After the completion of his placement and his increased knowledge, skills and overall confidence, MYSA provided a link to the Port Adelaide Enfield Council, which at the time had an employment vacancy for a cultural consultant contract position in a local library. Mohammed was interested in this position and was supported by MYSA staff in the application process. After submitting his resume and gaining an interview, Mohammed was successful in winning the position.

"Thank you so much for supporting me in the past year! Without you guys and the volunteer placement, I wouldn't have had the confidence to go for a job like this." – **Mohammed**

Part 3: MYSA's Approach - Case Studies



“Jon’s” Story:

Building a Bright Future

Duncan Constructions (Glen Duncan pictured above) welcomed a volunteer placement from the Multicultural Youth Volunteering Project in late 2009. The supervisor Glen Duncan was open to engaging and supporting a young volunteer to gain some practical work experience with his company, but admitted he was unsure what to expect. As a newly arrived refugee from Sudan, Jon did not have relevant work experience in Australia and was keen to break into the workforce.

MYSA facilitated open discussion between with Glen and Jon regarding their expectations and any concerns with the volunteer placement arrangement. After Jon and Glen's initial meeting, it was agreed that Jon would complete a week's work experience with Duncan Constructions. Glen was sympathetic to the barriers to employment that Jon was facing as a newly arrived refugee but also had a business to manage so was hesitant of the perceived potential impact and distraction. This is where MYSA was able to play a critical role in reassuring and supporting both Glen and Jon throughout the placement.

“I was a bit worried but I could tell that MYSA had made sure that Jon knew what I expected from him. There was no doubting that Jon was ready for his placement. I needed someone that would get to the site on time and would take the work seriously. I've taken on guys before and they didn't rock up, at the end of the day this line of work isn't for everyone but if you do right by me I will make sure to do right by you. I really don't have time to sit around worrying about whether someone is going to turn up, I felt reassured that if there was an issue with the placement MYSA was there to work it out.” –

Glen Duncan – Duncan Constructions

As a result of Jon's placement with Duncan Constructions and his ability to demonstrate his commitment and enthusiasm with his work, Glen decided to offer him paid employment. Glen has further encouraged Jon to continue on with his studies and has advocated for him to secure an apprenticeship with the Housing Industry Association.

“Jon” has been used to conceal the identity of the participant at their request.

Part 4: Useful Contacts for More Information

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Shop 9 Millers Arcade,
28 Hindley St
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Volunteering SA

1st Floor Torrens Building
220 Victoria Square
Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: (08) 8221 7177
Country callers phone: 1300 135 545
Fax: (08) 8221 7188
www.volunteeringsa.org.au

Office for Volunteers

Level 9, 50 Pirie St
Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: (08) 8463 4490
Fax: (08) 8463 4400
<http://www.ofv.sa.gov.au/index.html>

Office For Youth

Level 4, City Central Tower 1
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Part 5: Acknowledgements

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Australian Refugee Association (ARA)
Families SA Refugee Services
Iraq Young Women's Group
Foundation for Young Australians
Workskil
Mission Australia

South Australian Police
Carclew Youth Arts
The Magdalene Centre
Rendezvous Allegra
Adelaide City Council
St. Vincent De Pauls
Multicultural Communities Council SA
Christian Brother's College
St Paul's College
Thebarton Senior College
Port Adelaide Enfield Council
Duncan Constructions
Young Workers Legal Rights



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