

## Frequently asked questions on engaging culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people by community groups

Are you a community group interested in engaging people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (e.g. migrants, refugees, and international students) but have some concerns about how to go about it? This fact sheet provides the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions on engaging CALD people by community groups, as well as some useful links for finding out more information.

### **Q. What do community groups need to consider before engaging people from CALD communities to participate in their volunteer programs?**

**A.** To help ensure your organisation is ready to engage people from CALD backgrounds, an important 'first step' is discussing the benefits within your organisation, and then gaining your organisations support from the 'top-down' (e.g. from the CEO to individual staff and volunteers). Some of the benefits for organisations engaging CALD people can include:

- New perspectives
- New skills
- Knowledge of and networks in new and emerging culturally diverse communities
- A wider pool of potential volunteers and future staff
- Improved community awareness of your organisation's values, goals and services

In some instances, an internal cultural change may be needed in an organisation, in order to shift the mindsets or members and overcome any existing organisational barriers. Cultural awareness training can be a good starting point for initiating internal cultural change. A new online *Cross-Cultural Training for Volunteer Involving Organisations* training module is now available for free download at [www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteering\\_Gateway.htm](http://www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteering_Gateway.htm).

It can also be useful to review and adapt internal policies, procedures, volunteer programs and orientation/training information, for inclusiveness, plain English and simplicity. Community groups, with successful programs in recruiting CALD volunteers, have also recommended finding individual 'champions' whose role it is to lead the organisation in engaging new CALD volunteers and help make recruitment happen.

### **Q. How can our community group help people from CALD communities feel welcome in our volunteer programs and the wider South Australian community?**

**A.** There can be a number of challenges that can work to prevent CALD people from being able to volunteer. These can include people:

- Not knowing where to find out about volunteering opportunities
- Not understanding the processes involved in becoming a volunteer
- Having language and cultural barriers
- Feeling a lack of confidence in going it alone

The term 'volunteering' itself can also sometimes seem like a foreign concept to individuals from CALD backgrounds. This is because helping a neighbour or the community (or 'informal' volunteering) is 'something that is just done' in their culture. People from CALD communities have also reported a sense of not belonging in the wider South Australian community, even after migrating to and living in the country for several years.

Offering cultural awareness training can be a good way to help people from CALD backgrounds to feel comfortable enough to volunteer outside of their communities and in mainstream organisations. In an Australia first, a new online '*Volunteering in Australia*' training resource has been developed for individuals and communities who are recent arrivals to Australia and it is available for free download by visiting [www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteering\\_Gateway.htm](http://www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteering_Gateway.htm).

Other suggested strategies for helping CALD volunteers feel like they belong are organising social activities (e.g. community BBQs), or even setting up a 'mentor program' or 'buddy system', to help them feel welcome in your organisation and the wider community.

**Q. How can our community group learn about local CALD communities and start building relationships with them?**

**A.** There are a range of recommended strategies community groups have identified, for learning about local CALD communities and starting to build relationships with them, including:

- *'Getting out there'* – Find out where people from CALD communities are in your local community by contacting community centres; local councils; community councils, reference groups, and committees; churches; and schools
- *Raising awareness* – Engage community leaders to help you inform their members of your organisation, services and volunteering opportunities. Explain 'how we are relevant to you'
- *Communicating face-to-face* – If communication is a potential challenge, keep it simple. Use basic language; repeat information often; use visual prompts, signs, and symbols; and organise interpreters where necessary. It's also important to always double check for understanding
- *Clearly express your organisation's values* – For example, community safety, water safety, family health, healthy sport, helping vulnerable people, saving lives
- *Seek to match your organisation's values, with those of the community and members* – For example, safety for family members; skills, work experience, a local reference for jobseekers; fun and new friends for young/isolated people
- *Be flexible in program delivery* – Be prepared to be flexible in your delivery of existing volunteer programs or even creating a 'new' volunteer role, depending on the individual CALD person or community group and their identified requirements

**Q. How can we advertise our programs and opportunities to reach CALD communities?**

**A.** Using ethnic media – radio and newspapers – can be a great way to advertise your programs and volunteering opportunities

Making use of volunteer matching services like 'GoVolunteer' ([www.govolunteer.com.au](http://www.govolunteer.com.au)) and volunteer resource centres ([www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteer\\_resource\\_centres.htm](http://www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteer_resource_centres.htm)), as well as networking with councils and multicultural staff in other organisations, can also be worthwhile to get ideas, promote opportunities and support volunteers and communities.

## Further information

For further information and a list of free tools and resources, created specially for community organisations that are interested in engaging CALD volunteers, visit the new Office for Volunteers 'Volunteering – A Gateway to Communities' website at [www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteering\\_Gateway.htm](http://www.ofv.sa.gov.au/Volunteering_Gateway.htm).