



WHAT IS COMMUNITY WORK?

Information for
Volunteer
Organisations

The Active Participation Model (APM) was introduced from 1 July 2003 to ensure that job seekers and their communities receive quality assistance. The APM seeks to engage job seekers through Job Network and other complementary employment and training programmes to maximise their chances of finding work as quickly as possible. Job Network services are closely linked with mutual obligation activities through the APM.



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What is Community Work?

Community Work is an Australians Working Together initiative of the Commonwealth Government. It allows people to work in an approved volunteer organisation and earn a Training Credit.

Community Work is voluntary work undertaken by jobseekers and income support recipients who are registered with and monitored by a Community Work Coordinator.

Community Work must:

- be of benefit to the community and the Community Work participant
- not result in any financial payment to participants over and above their income support and
- only occur in designated volunteer positions.

Why do people volunteer for Community Work?

Community Work provides work experience to people on income support. If a jobseeker approaches you seeking to do a Community Work placement in your organisation, it would usually be because they have a genuine interest in the services and/or goods your organisation provides to the community. They may also be interested in the work experience you provide and how it might improve their chances of gaining ongoing paid employment.

Apart from providing a worthwhile service to their community and your organisation, gaining valuable work experience and developing new networks, a person may choose to do Community Work for a number of reasons, including:

- to meet a mutual obligation and/or
- to receive a Training Credit.

Training Credits assist income support recipients to access education or training to improve their employment prospects. Training Credits can be earned in values of \$500, \$650 and \$800, depending on the number of hours a participant works.

What is mutual obligation?

Mutual obligation is based on the principle that participants supported financially by the community should actively improve their work skills and give something back to the community that supports them. There are more than 10 options a jobseeker can choose from to meet their mutual obligation and Community Work is one of them.

Can my volunteer organisation place Community Work participants?

Requirements

If your volunteer organisation would like to place a Community Work participant, you must:

- be a not-for-profit organisation, such as a charity, church or religious group, local community association or service organisation and
- have public liability insurance cover of at least \$5 million.

The Commonwealth covers participants for personal and medical expenses not covered by Medicare, and participants' public and/or private liability.

How to make it easier

It is recommended that you register on the VolunteerSearch website at **www.volunteersearch.gov.au**, and/or the GoVolunteer website at **www.govolunteer.com.au**.

Placements registered on these websites or with a Volunteer Resource Centre are automatically approved for Community Work.

What are the obligations of my organisation?

Your organisation is not under any obligation to take part in Community Work. If you do not wish to take on a particular Community Work participant, including confirming hours of attendance with a Community Work Coordinator, you should let the volunteer know before their participation begins so that they can find another placement.

If you do agree to take on a Community Work participant you should be willing to talk to the participant's Community Work Coordinator once a month to confirm the participant's attendance. This is to ensure that the hours worked by a participant are recorded for the purpose of meeting their mutual obligation and for accessing Training Credits.

You can terminate a Community Work placement at any time.



What is a Community Work Coordinator and how does it affect my organisation?

Community Work Coordinators administer Community Work placements and will monitor the participant's time with your organisation.

The Community Work Coordinator will contact you once a month to make sure that the Community Work participant has started work and to confirm their hours of attendance. This is to ensure the Community Work Coordinator can provide a Training Credit to the participant where appropriate and that a job seeker's participation is recognised as meeting their mutual obligation.

The Community Work Coordinator will give the participant a timesheet that you and the participant can use to record hours to make reporting easier.

Community Work participants are responsible for finding their own placements.

What activities can my organisation offer Community Work participants?

Your organisation can offer a Community Work placement provided that:

- the volunteer placement is of benefit to the community and the Community Work participant
- your organisation meets the requirements stated in this booklet and
- the Community Work placement does not involve danger to, or inappropriate activities (for example political or religious lobbying) by, the participant.

Some Community Work participants have already found satisfaction in volunteering their time to work in organisations that provide services in areas such as:

- conservation
- athlete administration
- animal welfare
- migrant support
- medical research
- collection and sale of goods
- libraries
- arts and performance
- schools
- museums
- community radio
- aged care
- publishing.



Does the Commonwealth offer other volunteer programmes?

Since the introduction of Australians Working Together in July 2002, the Commonwealth Government has expanded volunteering because it recognises that volunteering benefits everyone, including local communities and jobseekers. In particular, the Commonwealth recognises the valuable skills, work and life experiences that people receiving income support can offer their communities, and acknowledges what the community can offer each jobseeker.

While there are a number of other initiatives through which a jobseeker can do volunteer work, the major benefit that Community Work offers that these other initiatives do not is access to a Training Credit. Another difference that will impact on your organisation is that Community Work Coordinators monitor participation.



Where do I get more information on Community Work?

More information on Community Work can be obtained from the www.workplace.gov.au website or by telephoning 13 62 68.

