

Volunteering

Get involved | Get inspired | Get skills



A volunteer role can help you to gain new skills and experience, connect with people and supercharge your existing talents, all while giving back to the community. Volunteer experience is highly regarded by employers and will help make your next job application stand out!

Find the right opportunity

There are lots of volunteer opportunities available. The following questions can help to narrow your options and find the right position for you:

- What causes are important to you? What interests you?
- What skills can you bring? What are they looking for?
- Do you prefer to work independently or in a team?
- Are there opportunities related to your future career?
- How much time are you willing to commit?

Searching for volunteer work

Start with searching the following websites:

- [Volunteering North Queensland](#) (Townsville)
- [FNQ Volunteers](#) (Cairns)
- [Seek Volunteer](#)
- [Go Volunteer](#)
- [Volunteering Queensland](#)
- [JCU CareerHub](#)

Check out our discipline specific [Career Snapshots](#) for volunteering opportunities related to your study area.

Don't limit your volunteer search to just the positions or organisations you find through these sites. Most organisations enthusiastically accept volunteers. Take the initiative – express your interest and offer your time.



Consider volunteering in areas such as:

- Early years support e.g. coordinating playgroup activities, mentoring children in foster care
- Youth engagement e.g. after school activities, mentoring programs or learning to drive programs
- Sports clubs e.g. coaching or managing teams, canteen
- Companionship, support or activity coordination for the elderly and people living with a disability
- Hospitals and support services such as Ronald McDonald House and Couch
- Crisis intervention helplines and phone counselling
- Meal preparation and delivery services for the elderly or people experiencing homelessness
- Court network and victims of crime support
- Refugee and migrant support
- Tutoring, training and employment programs
- Museums and galleries
- Landcare, marine conservation and wildlife conservation
- Fundraisers and community events
- Trades, maintenance and gardening
- Op shop retail sales or donations sorters
- Grant writing for volunteer organisations
- Business administration, social media or marketing support for volunteer organisations
- Becoming a [Student Mentor](#) at JCU

Preparing to volunteer

Make sure you know what's expected

Before starting, make sure you are comfortable with the organisation, know what is expected of you, including your time commitment. Find out about what training will be provided and the induction process. Learn about their policies and procedures, including how risks are managed and the code of conduct for volunteers.

Ensure you are ready to commit and be reliable

Remember that the organisation will be relying on you to follow through with what you commit to. Consider starting small so that you don't over commit yourself at first. Like any job, ensure you communicate any changes to your availability due to study, work, family or illness.

Know your rights and responsibilities

Find out about your rights and responsibilities as a volunteer by visiting [Volunteering Queensland](#). The [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) provides information to ensure volunteering is lawful and volunteers are not taken advantage of.

Optimising your experience

Gain industry insights

If the role is related to your area of study, gain insights such as key issues currently facing the profession or its clients, and how the field is changing. Learn what the typical day is like for professionals employed in the sector. Ask about the steps they took to reach their current role, and what tips they have for you to gain employment.

Take initiative

Once you have effectively mastered your tasks, demonstrated competence and shown your dependability, see if there are opportunities to take on additional or more complex responsibilities.

Be professional

Volunteer work must be taken seriously. You will be counted on to fill a specific need. Be visible by doing your job well – actions speak louder than words. Develop and demonstrate professionalism, ethics, etiquette and consideration of others through your interactions with co-workers and clients, your dress standards, punctuality and general attitude. These qualities make a positive impression with the staff and may serve you well in the future when seeking referees for employment.

Don't be afraid to make a change

Communicate any concerns you have and speak up if your experience isn't what you expected. Talk to the organisation about changing your focus or consider looking for another match.

Record your experience

There are several methods for adding this experience to your resume. The most common is to create a heading in your resume titled "Volunteer Experience" or "Community Involvement" and include specific information about the role, skills you have developed and quantifiable results where possible. For example:

- Organised and promoted a fundraising event, which provided 100 storybooks for children in foster care.
- Planned, ordered ingredients and prepared 250 meals weekly for the elderly.
- Led weekly training sessions to develop skills and athletic abilities, while promoting teamwork and collaboration.
- Provided confidential crisis support, including risk assessments, interventions and escalating cases.

Consider transferable skills you have gained through your volunteering experiences, for example:

- *Communication skills* such as engaging with diverse people, writing reports or correspondence, public speaking.
- *Interpersonal skills* such as empathy, active listening, building rapport, understanding diverse perspectives.
- *Cultural competence and community awareness* by developing an understanding of challenges experienced by people from different backgrounds, social issues and community needs, and providing support or advocacy.
- *Teamwork and collaboration* by working towards a common goal, supporting peers and resolving conflicts.
- *Leadership and initiative* for example motivating others, leading projects or teams.
- *Time management and organisation* for example meeting deadlines, scheduling and prioritising tasks.
- *Problem solving and adaptability* for example handling unexpected challenges or adapting to new environments.
- *Professionalism and work ethic* including being reliable, punctual and accountable, and demonstrating integrity.