



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM CONSUMER CONSULTATION: SERVICE LEVEL RESPONSE

SEPTEMBER, 2000

Prepared by: **Maureen Donnelly**
For: **BSL Volunteer Service**
Rosa D'Aprano 9483 1390
Email rd'aprano@bsl.org.au
Barbara Coleman 9782 0487
Email bcoleman@bsl.org.au



**BROTHERHOOD
of St LAURENCE**

**Helping people
build better lives**

Contents

BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE
67 BRUNSWICK ST FITZROY, 3065
ARCHIVES (LIBRARY)

1 Introduction	1
2 Survey Findings	1
2.1 Needs and expectations regarding Volunteer Service	1
2.2 Unmet needs and gaps	3
2.3 Suggestions for improvement	4
2.4 Satisfaction with the Volunteer Service	4
2.5 Strategies used at service level for checking volunteer satisfaction	5
2.6 Summary of findings	5
3 Analysis of Findings	6
4 Conclusion and Recommendations	8
5 Appendix: Standards Checklist	9

Volunteer Program Consumer Consultation: Service Level Response (BSL Services, Retail Shops and Programs)

1 INTRODUCTION

During June 2000, the Brotherhood of St Laurence Volunteer Service (VS) undertook a consultation process to find out whether those involved in the volunteer program are satisfied, and whether improvements can be made so that the program continually develops. The consultation had two broad parts – a survey of all volunteers, and another of BSL services, retail shops and programs. This report has been prepared to provide a summary for these service level respondents. It is intended for distribution with the summary of the volunteers' responses.

Forty-nine (75%) out of the 65 BSL services, shops and programs which involve volunteers responded to the survey. This report represents the views of these 49 service level respondents, comprising 28 eastern region respondents- shops (11), services (13), programs (2) and activities (2) and 21 western region respondents- shops (12) and services (9).

2 SURVEY FINDINGS

2.1 Needs and expectations regarding the Volunteer Service (VS)

This question aimed to find out the key areas in which services, shops and programs seek the involvement of the Volunteer Service (VS). It also aimed to quantify and clarify the type and level of demand for the VS.

Table One – Services, shops, programs' expectations/needs by key performance area

Key Performance Areas	No. services / shops / programs selecting 'some' or 'significant' involvement				TOTAL
	EAST		WEST		
	Some	Significant	Some	Significant	
Recruit volunteers	12	10	11	5	38
Screen/ match	6	13	8	5	32
Registration	7	16	8	6	37
Orientation to BSL	4	13	5	12	34
Information & training	11	13	8	8	40
Follow up new Volunteers	6	12	5	5	28
Follow up problems / grievances	11	13	11	4	35
Review placements	10	10	6	5	31
Recognition (organisational level)	9	15	4	15	43

Table one shows that:

- The expectations of the volunteer program include all key areas but in particular recruitment, registration, broader level orientation, information and training, follow up of grievances and problems, and volunteer recognition at the organizational level.
- Depending on the specific key area, between 28 and 43 shops, programs and services look to the Managers of Volunteer Services to provide some level of support across these nine key areas.
- Depending on the specific key area, between 15 and 30 shops, programs and services look to the Volunteer Service to play a significant role in helping them to incorporate volunteers into their services and activities. In particular, organizational level recognition and information/orientation are seen as key roles for the Volunteer Service.

A second way to interpret needs and demands in relation to the role of the Volunteer Service is the number of key performance areas required by services programs and shops:

From a total of 46 shops, services and programs statewide who responded to this question:-

- 15 look to the VS for support in *all* nine key roles (recruitment, screening/matching, registration, orientation, information and training (general), follow up of new volunteers and problems/grievances, review of placements, and recognition at organizational level.
- 13 look to the VS for support in eight of these nine key areas.
- Another 10 look for support in five to seven of these areas.
- Only 8 require support in less than five areas.

A third way to look at expectations is to compare perceptions about who is responsible for which roles. The Managers of the VS completed the same tool as services, shops and programs at the beginning of the consultation. In respect to services other than shops, managers saw themselves as responsible for recruitment, screening, matching and registration of volunteers, in a significant role. For shops, the role was seen as shared. The Volunteer Service Managers considered that program level recognition was their only other area of significant involvement.

Like the Managers, most shops considered recruitment a shared role, and a majority of respondents considered recognition at an organizational level to be the responsibility mainly of the VS. Across all other key areas, however, there was considerable variation both amongst respondents themselves and between respondents and the Managers' perceptions. In addition, the data also revealed volunteer programs for which *no* party considered they had the major responsibility.

2.2 Unmet needs and gaps

Twenty-eight respondents answered this part of the survey.

Table two: Needs/gaps reported by shops/services/programs in relation to the Volunteer Service

Need/ gap unmet *	No. services / shops Reporting		Issues identified in relation to need /gap
	East (n=16)	West (n=12)	
Recruitment of volunteers	9	7	More recruitment, more volunteers, more targetted recruitment, better screening and matching, more specialist volunteers, limitations on availability of specialist volunteers, lack of resources for recruitment.
Recognition	5	3	Importance of valuing volunteers, importance of recognition at organizational level, frequency of recognition, importance of individualized recognition, lack of resources for recognition.
Monitoring and follow up	8	3	More contact with /visits to services/shops, more contact with volunteers, lack of capacity to follow up volunteers individually (sick, retiring, bereaved, birthdays, hospitalized etc.) more frequent contact (especially high turnover areas).

*Respondents could indicate more than one need.

As well as the three most commonly identified needs above, recruitment, recognition and monitoring and follow up – some respondents also indicated a number of other needs:

- More frequent orientation for volunteers
- Better work conditions for volunteers
- Inadequacy of resources in relation to the size and significance of the volunteer program.

2.3 Suggestions for improvement

Respondents provided a number of recommendations for enhancing the volunteer program.

- Targetted advertising and specialist need recruitment
- Greater contact with and follow up of volunteers especially by work-place visits
- More frequent contact and liaison with services and shops e.g. by phone/fax/visits
- More frequent recognition activities and more resources for recognition activities and functions. Suggestions included a pool of funds earmarked for volunteer recognition and employment of a full time worker responsible for volunteer recognition.
- More frequent and regular orientation, information and training for volunteers. Suggestions included more training to help volunteer staff answer customer queries, more frequent orientation sessions, greater awareness of volunteer rights and responsibilities documentation, and of volunteers as staff, and Occupational Health and Safety training.
- Differential registration forms: more detailed for some services, simpler and less formal for others e.g. shops.
- Improvements to ensure adequate workplace conditions: heating, lighting, staff lunchroom facilities.

2.4 Satisfaction with the performance of the Volunteer Service

The majority of responses range from basic satisfaction to extremely satisfied for both east and west regions. Respondents commented on both Managers' efforts to be supportive when back-up is needed, their willingness to help, and dedication in the face of a huge task. A minority of respondents did not complete this question and it is difficult to draw any conclusions from this group.

2.5 Strategies used by services, shops and programs for checking ongoing volunteer satisfaction

Part B of the survey asked services, shops and programs which incorporate volunteers how they obtain feedback from volunteers and monitor volunteer satisfaction. Responses were ranked in order with the most frequently selected method first. A total of 32 responded to this question. Respondents could choose more than one method.

Table three: Strategies used by service level respondents' to get feedback from their volunteers

1.	Informal chat, individually (29)
2.	Observation by supervisor or other paid staff (24)
3.	Social events (20) Follow up of new volunteers (20)
4.	Personal interview by supervisor or other paid staff (13)
5.	Informal chats, in a group (8)
6.	Meetings, including committee meetings (7)
7.	Newsletters (4)
8.	Suggestion box (2) Surveys (2)
9.	Staff surveys (1)

Several respondents also referred to having designated paid staff responsible for volunteers, within their programs, as an important support and monitoring strategy.

2.6 Summary of findings

The survey has revealed that:

- Almost all the 49 BSL services, shops and programs who responded (75% of the total surveyed) expect assistance with volunteer programs from the Volunteer Service (VS).
- There is an expectation of assistance across a wide range of key areas. Twenty-eight of 46 BSL services, shops and programs seek VS involvement in all or most of the nine key areas.
- Depending upon the specific key area up to 30 BSL services, shops and programs expect significant assistance.
- There is quite a degree of difference in perception of respective roles between the Volunteer Service Managers and the services, programs and shops they service. The exceptions to this are recruitment, especially shops, and organization level recognition: in these two areas there is a clearer match of perceptions regarding responsibilities. Follow up monitoring and review seems to be an area of differing expectations. In

some areas of the volunteer program, no party considers they have the major responsibility.

- The greatest areas of perceived unmet need are: (1) recruitment of volunteers, (2) monitoring and follow-up volunteers, and (3) recognition at the organizational level. Respondents want *more* of these three things.
- Recommendations from those surveyed centered on possible improvements in these three areas, as well as two others: frequency of liaison with shops, services and programs which involve volunteers, and frequency of orientation, training and information strategies.
- Volunteers' perceptions of the way the volunteer program is delivered by Volunteer Service Managers were generally very positive.
- A majority of services, shops and programs which incorporate volunteers, have strategies in place for ongoing follow up and feedback in relation to their volunteers. However, the most common strategy is that of informal communication with volunteers individually. Fewer used the more formal structured strategies.

3 ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The survey covered a majority of BSL services, programs and shops, whose volunteer activities collectively represent over 1,000 volunteers. Almost all these Brotherhood services seek some involvement of the Volunteer Service. It is reasonable to assume that most of the remainder also seek this involvement as they do, for the most part, involve volunteers.

To coordinate this extensive statewide program, the Brotherhood employed, at the time of writing, two part-time workers. These Managers' roles include recruitment, screening and matching, registration, orientation and training, monitoring and review of placements, problem and grievance management and program level recognition. As well as these 'direct' service roles, the Managers are responsible for program promotion, administration and development, ongoing liaison with all BSL areas which incorporate volunteers and BSL organizational level responsibilities.

The question can be asked whether this level of resourcing is adequate to ensure minimum program standards and consumer satisfaction both for volunteers and for the paid staff in the services, shops and programs which incorporate them.

Respondents were generally satisfied with the Volunteer Service Managers but not with the capacity of the Volunteer Service to meet their needs. There is dissatisfaction with the capacity of the Volunteer Service to deliver enough of the things they want: more volunteers, more volunteers targetted to their specific needs, more recognition by the Brotherhood of their current volunteers, and more contact and communication with the Volunteer Service Managers.

The survey of volunteers themselves (see 'Volunteer Program Consumer Consultation: Volunteers' Views') found, similarly, that not all volunteers are happy with things. For some, this related to workplace problems, and thus raised the issue of program level monitoring and follow up. Overall, however, the survey found that the same areas identified by BSL services above are also important to volunteers: valuing volunteers and recognizing their role/work, and communication between volunteers and paid staff including communication and contact with the Volunteer Service Managers. It seems that the Volunteer Service Managers are the 'face' of the Brotherhood and thus represent for volunteers the link between their input and the Brotherhood as a whole.

A recent survey by the Brotherhood of all staff, paid and voluntary (Boston Consulting Group, 1999) also found that despite relatively high levels of positive response to working for the Brotherhood, there was a level of perceived need for improvement in some areas. This finding was true for volunteer staff as well as paid staff.

The question this present consumer consultation raised was whether in practice, the level of resourcing of the Volunteer Service is adequate to meet program standards and consumer satisfaction. The results indicate that the level is not adequate given:

- The number of services/programs/shops involved in the volunteer program, and the number of volunteers and ratio to the 2 part-time Volunteer Service Managers;
- The amount, range and level of involvement sought by Brotherhood shops, services and programs is extensive;
- The program and role responsibilities are complex and varied;
- There is evidence of unmet need in some key functions

Other factors which should be taken into account in reviewing the capacity of the VS to deliver the volunteer program include:

- The geographical spread of services/programs/shops;
- The absence of paid staff, in some of these settings, to take responsibility for volunteers (creating a need for the Volunteer Service Managers to take on a de-facto service level management role);
- The complex and heterogeneous nature of program needs and the variance in perceptions of respective roles and responsibilities between services themselves and between services and the Managers of Volunteers.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Brotherhood of St Laurence thus needs to address a number of concerns regarding the Volunteer Service, particularly in relation to the level of resources committed to the program. The Brotherhood's commitment to consumer consultation reflects its *in principle* concern to have processes in place which ensure quality standards and consumer satisfaction for all participants in the volunteer program. This should be matched *in practice* with adequate resources. Arguably, in choosing to involve volunteer staff in its activities, the Brotherhood also accepts responsibility for adequate resourcing of the volunteer program. As one respondent put it 'there is an inequitable distribution of BSL resources given the size and significance of the volunteer program'.

Firstly, it is recommended that the BSL review present levels of resourcing to ensure the Volunteer Service has the capacity to meet program needs and standards (see appendix). The Brotherhood should, at a minimum, ensure the Volunteer Service has sufficient resources to allow for: regular visits to all workplaces, contact at least annually with volunteers, regular recognition activities, and volunteer grievance / advocacy processes. The review of resourcing levels will also need to address the gaps in the program where no formal management structures are in place to support volunteers.

If resources are limited, the Brotherhood would need to consider how to correspondingly limit the volunteer program and expectations of it.

Secondly, as well as reviewing resource levels, there is a need for clarification of roles and responsibilities within the program, especially in relation to monitoring and follow up. The data generated from the consultation survey should be useful in assisting the Volunteer Service Managers to clarify roles and responsibilities with their respective services, shops and programs in relation to the management of the volunteer program.

Thirdly, services, programs and shops should review the strategies they presently use to monitor volunteer satisfaction. Many useful, but ad hoc, strategies are currently in place so it is important to consider whether they are regular enough and sufficiently structured.

APPENDIX - STANDARDS CHECKLIST

- Is there a clear management point for all volunteer staff in all workplaces and/or volunteer activities? Are there are gaps which need to be addressed?
- Is there a clear structure which regularly links all managers/supervisors of volunteers in the volunteer program with the Managers of the Volunteer Service? Are there clear responsibilities for parties in this structure in respect to volunteer management ?
- Are goals clearly consistent with the principles of volunteering, viz. voluntary, non profit and mutual benefit?
- Does the Volunteer Service have accessible and available information about volunteer opportunities within the Brotherhood?
- Is there regular monitoring and follow up of volunteers at workplace level, and through the Volunteer Service, and clear processes for this in place? Is there a clear point of responsibility for this in *all* workplaces?
- Are there processes for grievance/problem handling which are documented and provided to all parties? (The volunteer manual is a useful tool in this regard). Does the process include clear responsibility for volunteer advocacy/prime accountability to volunteers?
- Are there regular opportunities for orientation, information and training?
- Do BSL policies and practices at all levels of the organisation reflect the value of volunteers and recognition of their work and needs?
- Are there adequate volunteer workplace conditions?
- Are there regular program reviews of standards and consumer satisfaction?

Service Level Respondents:

Western region shops, services, & programs

Managed Shops		Services	
Brunswick	✓	Accounts	
Brunswick Furniture	✓	Administration	✓
City	✓	Chaplaincy	
Croydon	✓	Communications & Promotions	
Epping		CS Strengthening Project	
Footscray	✓	Coolibah	✓
Niddrie	✓	Coolibah (Xmas Day)	
Northcote	✓	The Cottage	✓
Auxiliary Shops:		Development	✓
Box Hill	✓	EMC	✓
Eltham	✓	Fitzroy furniture Service	
Greensborough	✓	Hippy	
Ivanhoe	✓	Homework	
Watsonia	✓	Human Resources	
Auxiliary Committees:		Information Technology	
Box Hill	✓	Internal Audit	
Camberwell	✓	Library	✓
Heatherton		Maintenance	
CED-/Epping		Sambell Lodge	✓
CED-Geelong		Sambell Lodge (Xmas Day)	
		SAR	✓
		Sumner House	✓
		Toy Library	
		Xmas Toys	

Service Level Respondents:

Eastern region shops, services, & programs

Brotherhood shops		Services	
Bentleigh	✓	Administration	
Croydon	✓	Banksia Day Centre	✓
Frankston	✓	Brotherhood Community Access	✓
Glenhuntly	✓	Broughton Aged Care Facility	✓
Malvern	✓	Employment Services	✓
Mt Waverley	✓	Cox/Collins Court	✓
Ormond	✓	Drivers	
Pakenham	✓	Drivers (St Anne's)	
Rosebud	✓	Furniture Works	✓
Dandenong	✓	Just Essentials (inc Xmas Toys)	✓
Seaford	✓	Maintenance	✓
		RHSP	✓
		Settlement (shop, meals etc)	✓
		Sharehouse	
		Transition project	
		Pre-school Support Program	✓
		Brotherhood Community Care	
		Community Support Program	✓
		Xmas Toys Program	

Volunteer Centre
1 Tuxen Avenue Carrum Downs 3201 Victoria Australia
Telephone (03) 9782 0487 Facsimile (03) 9782 0519
e-mail: bcoleman@bsl.org.au

Memorandum

From: Barbara Coleman and Rosa D'Aprano, Managers, Volunteer Services

To: BSL services, programs, shops, auxiliaries

Date: 6th November 2000

Re: Information for all areas which incorporate volunteers

Introduction

As the Managers of Volunteer Services, we are pleased to provide you with two final reports from the volunteer program consumer consultation: '*Volunteer Program Consumer Consultation: Service Level Response*' and '*Volunteer Program Consumer Consultation: The Volunteers' Views*'. There are two reports because of the two groups of consumers- volunteers and those who incorporate volunteers into their activities. Your attention is drawn especially to the former. (The latter was prepared specifically for distribution to volunteers - a copy is included for your information. For a quick synthesis of the two reports, see the first paragraph, page 7, of the services level report).

Background

Why was a consumer consultation undertaken?

The purpose of the consultation was to find out how consumers of the volunteer program perceive the program and the service provided by the Managers of Volunteer Services. The concern was to find out if consumers are satisfied and also, what needs to be done to ensure the service continually improves.

How were consumers' views researched?

You may remember providing suggestions on a draft survey earlier this year. This survey was ultimately sent to all 1055 volunteers. Shortly after, staff who manage volunteers were consulted, with similar questions in an expanded 3-page survey format. Since then, the results have been collated, analysed, written up and now, distributed.

How were respondents' views incorporated?

Both reports summarize all main responses, though in varying degrees of detail. The volunteers' report represents the views of 370 volunteers, over a third of all volunteers. The service level report represents the views of 49 BSL shops, including auxiliaries, programs and services, 75% of the sixty-five surveyed (see enclosed breakdown of respondents). The reports are intended as a summary overview: a third, more detailed analysis was provided to the Managers of Volunteer Services and includes data by individual services.

What have we found out?

The consultation with services, shops and programs has provided a clearer picture of your needs as participants in the volunteer program (see 2.1), the areas you see as needing improvement (see 2.2), and some valuable suggestions for changes (see 2.3). Encouragingly, the report also indicates overall satisfaction with the management of Volunteer Services (see 2.4).

The findings of the consultation with volunteers are outlined in the enclosed volunteers' views report (see summary on page one of the report).

The consultation also made explicit the expectations of the volunteer program, revealing the significant level of demand on us as Managers of Volunteer Services. Notably, the consultation has highlighted the difficulty of making sure in a program of such scale, that volunteers and the paid staff in programs, services and shops which involve volunteers, all get the support they need.

What happens next?

The Managers of Volunteer Services are preparing to meet with the Brotherhood executive to present your views and those of the volunteers. Secondly, we are preparing a timeline for meeting individually with all service level respondents during 2001, to follow up the issues arising from the consultation.

Further Action

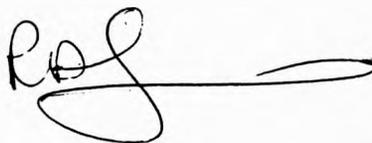
How can services, shops and programs follow up the consultation outcomes?

This will partly depend on the individual issues for discussion with the Managers of Volunteer Services.

However, two important areas for immediate follow up are:

- Making sure that you have a process for regularly and systematically communicating with your volunteers
- Organising workplace opportunities for volunteers to get together, and involving the Managers of Volunteer Services on these occasions. This is already happening in many workplaces.

We look forward to continuing to visit you, your workplace and the volunteers. Thank you again for your time and participation in the consultation.



Barbara Coleman, Rosa D'Aprano