Personal Competencies

The Australian Volunteers Program responds to the needs of partner organisations by recruiting volunteers with the right mix of skills, both personal and technical, for assignments in developing countries. Each volunteer placement is a direct response to a locally identified need articulated through a request for specific personnel.

Volunteers are recruited on the basis that they can assist their partner organisations to achieve specific development objectives. With their colleagues, volunteers design and monitor the achievement of work objectives. A volunteer placement is more than 'just a job'. Volunteers are expected to become members of their communities and to engage and interact with local people and colleagues.

The Australian Volunteers Program recruitment process utilises a structured, behavioural interview to select suitable and qualified candidates. Your interview will focus on the technical skills required to be successful as well as the 'soft skills', or personal competencies. The competency framework provides the foundation for assessing these soft skills.

Throughout the recruitment process, you will be provided with information and feedback and we expect that you will conduct personal research into your assignments and reflect upon your decision to volunteer. We recognise that applying to be an international volunteer is a big step and may not be right for everyone at particular points in their lives.

The personal competencies that we seek in volunteers are:

- Integrity
- Managing Stress
- Self-reliance and Self-confidence
- Self-awareness
- Resilience
- Cross-cultural Sensitivity
- Working with and Developing Others
- Flexibility
- Problem Solving
- Achievement Oriented

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Integrity

Maintains and promotes social, ethical and organisational norms. Adheres to protocols and code of conduct and abides by socially accepted norms within a given context (including, but not limited to, relationships, and sexual conduct).

Key behaviours:

- Fairly represents organisation's capabilities
- Identifies and responds to unethical behaviour in an appropriate manner
- Maintains confidentiality, where appropriate
- Acts in accordance with accepted ethical standards and codes of conduct, avoiding inappropriate relationships within a given context
- Adheres to policies and regulations
- Meets commitments and promises

Managing Stress

Maintaining stable performance under pressure and/or opposition (e.g., time pressure, job ambiguity); able to relieve stress in a manner acceptable to other people and the organisation or situation.

Key behaviours:

- Identifies personal signs of emotional and physical stress
- Uses adaptive coping strategies to manage stress
- Able to recognise stressful situations
- Maintains composure when dealing with difficult situations or people
- Identifies ways to reduce stress
- Seeks support from others when stressed
- Uses appropriate coping techniques

Self-reliance and Self-confidence

Able to confidently manage own affairs and look after own needs. Possesses belief in self.

Key behaviours:

- Able to identify and meet personal needs
- Shows ability to function independently in isolated situations
- Displays an optimistic attitude in the face of challenges
- Has faith in own ability to be successful or overcome difficulties
- Confident in own judgement of ability
- When appropriate, expresses own position clearly and confidently, even when it is evident that others don't agree
- Maintains self-esteem without personal support networks

Self-awareness

Demonstrates an awareness of own strengths, limitations and personal values. Understands how own beliefs, thoughts and emotions influence behaviour and actions.

Key behaviours:

- Able to describe own strengths and limitations
- Able to articulate beliefs, motivations and values
- Able to describe thoughts and emotions and how they influence behaviour in a given situation
- Understands how own actions impact on others

Resilience

Aware of personal signs of stress. Able to respond positively to challenges and to recover quickly from disappointment, setbacks or rejection.

Key behaviours:

- Maintains enthusiasm after disappointment or rejection
- Accepts criticism or negative feedback without loss of self-esteem
- Recovers from setbacks

Cross-cultural Sensitivity

Remains open to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or culture. Seeks opportunities to learn and understand other cultures. Able to communicate and interact effectively with people from different geographies and organisations.

Key behaviours:

- Shows interest and curiosity about other cultures through questioning, reading and travelling
- Checks to ensure mutual understanding when working across cultures; helps others to understand own culture
- Checks own understanding before acting in new situations, recognising that own interpretation may not be correct
- Incorporates an understanding of how other people and organisations do things into own approach
- Adjusts behaviour to others' cultural and work environments
- Able to suspend personal judgement to understand different perspectives

Working with and Developing Others

The ability to impress upon others a sense of humility, humour, friendliness and sensitivity. Establish cooperative relationships.

Key behaviours:

- Establishes and maintains a connection with others
- Propensity to observe and listen before speaking/ responding to a situation
- Demonstrates patience, tolerance and respect for others

- Assumes that most people are honest and well-intentioned
- Understands and interprets the needs, concerns and feelings of others
- Readily establishes rapport and trust with others
- Seeks opportunities and makes time to coach/mentor people
- Provides tactful feedback and guidance to help others achieve their goals

Flexibility

Modifies style and approach in order to achieve a specific objective(s). Adapts behaviours to meet the situational needs.

Key behaviours:

- Identifies and adapts to other people's style of working
- Able to change working habits
- Able to change strategies or approaches when necessary
- Willing to change mind in light of new evidence
- Adjusts behaviour to others
- Adjusts behaviour to the work and/or cultural environment

Problem Solving

Demonstrates an ability to analyse a situation, to develop solutions to problems and implement the solutions.

Key behaviours:

- Recognises and identifies the existence of problems
- Breaks down a complex task into manageable parts in a systematic way
- Anticipates obstacles and thinks about next steps
- Demonstrates the ability to gather and prioritise information effectively when making decisions
- Finds the most appropriate general concepts or rules which fit the situation

Achievement Oriented

Staying with a position or plan of action until the desired objective is achieved or is no longer reasonably attainable.

Key behaviours:

- Demonstrates willingness to pursue and achieve personal and career goals
- Overcomes obstacles to accomplish goals
- Makes repeated attempts to meet objectives when required
- Adjusts plans or actions to respond to constraints
- Knows when to adjust to new goals