

How to turn down a potential volunteer

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It can be hard to say no to a potential volunteer. Sometimes a volunteer may not be suited to your program. Or you just might not have the capacity to take any more volunteers. This Tip Sheet gives you some ideas to navigate this tricky situation.

Put yourself in the volunteer's shoes

We know that for some people, receiving a knock-back for a volunteer role can be a blow to their self-esteem. When you are saying no, remember to think about how your potential volunteer might be feeling, and be respectful of that.

Check your legal requirements

When saying no to a volunteer, make sure you make sure you are meeting your legal obligations. This might mean checking:

- The backgrounds checks of the volunteer are relevant to the position
- That you aren't discriminating because of age, gender, ethnicity, or any characteristics covered under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)*
- That you have sought any relevant exemptions to the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)*

If you are unsure about any legal issues around this we recommend speaking to [Equal Opportunity Tasmania](#) or on 1300 305 062.

If you want to check any legal issues, we recommend the resources available at Justice Connect/Not for Profit Law at <https://www.justiceconnect.org.au/our-programs/not-for-profit-law>

Talk to your Manager or supervisor

If you work in a team environment you might want to talk about your decision with a Supervisor or Manager. Having a difficult conversation can be challenging - you may need to speak up if you need a support person to help you out.

Be honest, professional and objective

When saying no to a volunteer, you need to strike a balance between being honest and being sensitive to their feelings. Keep it focused on the skills and time you are after– not about their personality, characteristics or willingness. Use examples to support your points like:

- We had lots of people applying for a small number of roles, and couldn't accept everyone
- We have enough volunteers to meet our program needs at the moment
- We can only accept volunteers who can give time during these periods
- We needed volunteers to pass a criminal history check
- We were looking for some specific skills or work experiences

Be prompt

No one likes to turn down potential volunteers. Make sure you do not put off getting in touch with them. You can also think about your method of communication. Try to make sure you follow up with the volunteer in person or on the phone so that you can answer any of their questions or concerns.

Offer to keep their details

While the volunteer might not be suitable for that particular role, you might offer to keep their details on hand if a new opportunity emerges in your organisation.

Thank them for their interest

Remember to remind the potential volunteer that their willingness is appreciated – even if they aren't right for your role. Take a moment to thank them for this.

Refer the volunteer to Volunteering Tasmania

If a potential volunteer isn't suited to your program, send them to Volunteering Tasmania! There are hundreds of roles available on Volunteer Connect at www.volunteeringtas.org.au Or contact our Freecall number 1800 677 895 for them to make an appointment with our friendly Referral Officers - all available to help them find a perfect volunteer role.