



Competencies

FOR MANAGERS OF VOLUNTEERS

Aotearoa New Zealand is full of diverse and skilled managers of volunteers. Whether paid or volunteer, full-time, part-time or some-time, these women and men are the cogs around which volunteering turns. What they do is vitally important to the success of so much work in this volunteer-rich and volunteer-dependant nation. There really is no effective volunteering without skilled and competent managers of volunteers.

Across their diversity, a point of agreement for most managers of volunteers is that they are 100% committed to ensuring the volunteers they work with have the best experience possible in their volunteering. This is an amazing goal. Yet, for volunteers in the team to be their best and experience the best, the manager of volunteers they are working with also needs to be constantly seeking to be their best. Managers of volunteers investing in their own professional development, and being supported by their organisations to do so, sparks greater volunteer programmes, innovation within organisations and support for the growth and voice of the sector as a whole.

A LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

Since late 2009, Volunteering New Zealand has been undertaking a major piece of work dedicated to the support and development of managers of volunteers. We have been unmasking the often-invisible role of the manager of volunteers, and promoting the importance of what they do to make volunteering happen.

New Zealand managers of volunteers have emphasised their desire for a learning and development pathway, consisting of:

- Clear entry points
- Opportunities for on-going learning
- Recognition of prior learning
- Leadership extension.

For a pathway to be able to really work, we need to be able to see our progress along it. To do this, we need some kind of marker. Competencies can function as these markers.

“A competency includes all the skills, knowledge, attributes and values needed to do something. Competence does not exist as something that can be learnt in isolation; it is demonstrated in the performance of a task.”¹

BASE KNOWLEDGE

Anyone who is managing volunteers must be able to demonstrate these competencies.

BASE KNOWLEDGE APPLIED

Managers of volunteers are able to translate their base knowledge into their work with confidence.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

Managers of volunteers are able to demonstrate continuous development in their work to reflect the needs of people, and of the organisations they are working within.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

Managers of volunteers are able to demonstrate strategic leadership in their work, both within the organisation and across the community.

¹ Ministry of Education. 2005. Key Competencies in Tertiary Education: Developing A New Zealand Framework. A Discussion Document. Ministry of Education, Wellington.

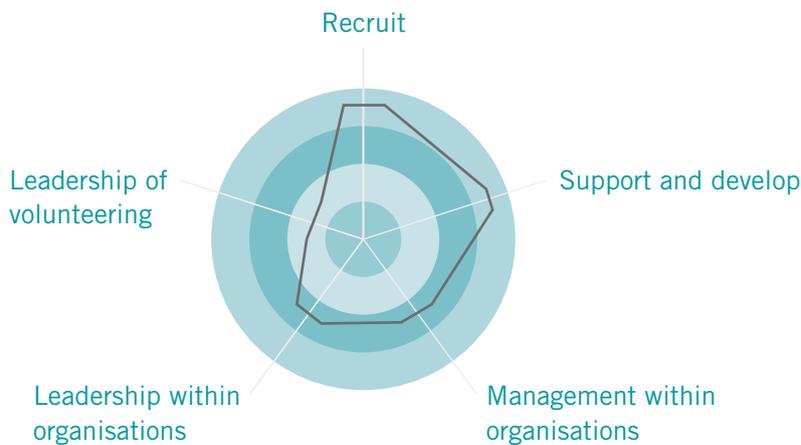
Competencies are not tasks. We show our grasp of a competency by demonstrating it when we complete a task. It is impossible to describe all the tasks managers of volunteers do, simply because they are so diverse and there are so many of them. Competencies, on the other hand, are broad, high-level and encompassing of diversity. They describe the essence of the work managers of volunteers do, regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer, and regardless of the industry/sector they work in.

Most importantly, the competency grid as a whole is fluid and flexible, not rigid. A manager of volunteers might be working at different levels across all four competency areas, and this simply shows that they are really strong at some competencies and less so at others. This is exactly how competencies act as markers on the pathway; they help managers of volunteers identify their strengths and passions, and also their areas for further growth.

FOR EXAMPLE...

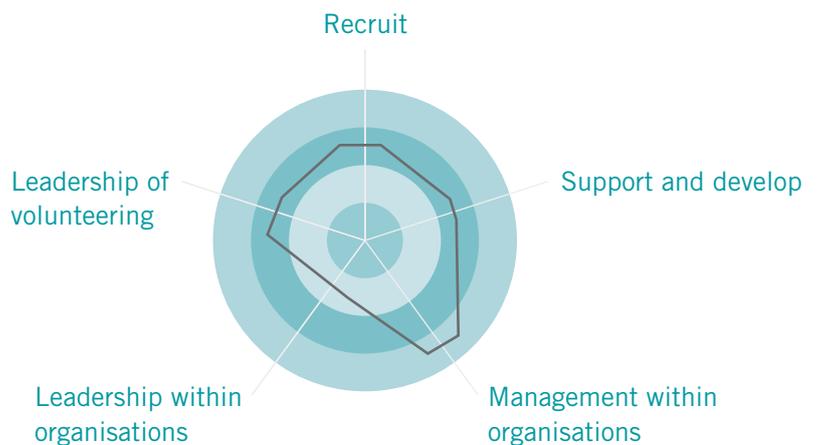
One manager of volunteer's personalised competency matrix might look like this...

Manager of Volunteers A



...while another manager of volunteer's personalised competency matrix might look like this:

Manager of Volunteers B

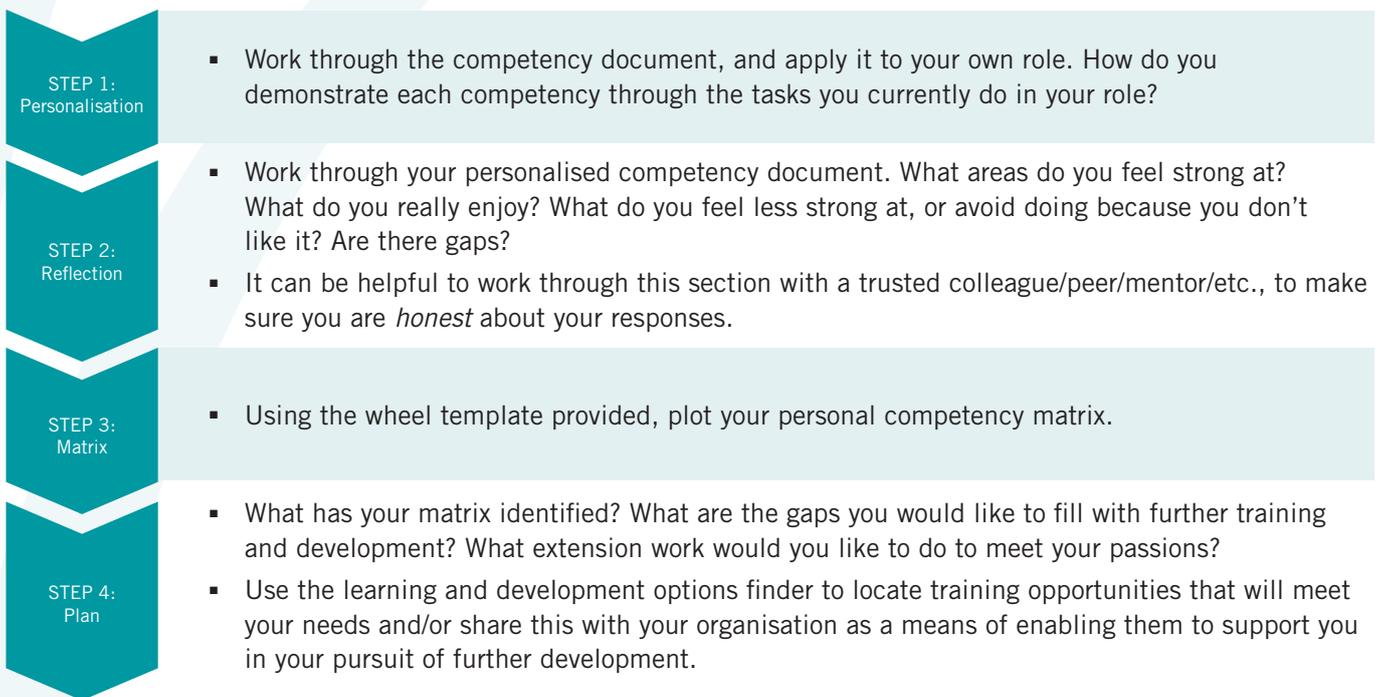


Every manager of volunteers is differently skilled and has different interests and passions, so everyone's personalised competency document will probably wind up looking different. The competencies are not designed to be a comparison piece for who is better than whom at what. What they are designed to be is a personal tool for managers of volunteers to use to as a guide for their own learning and development.

HOW DO I USE THEM?

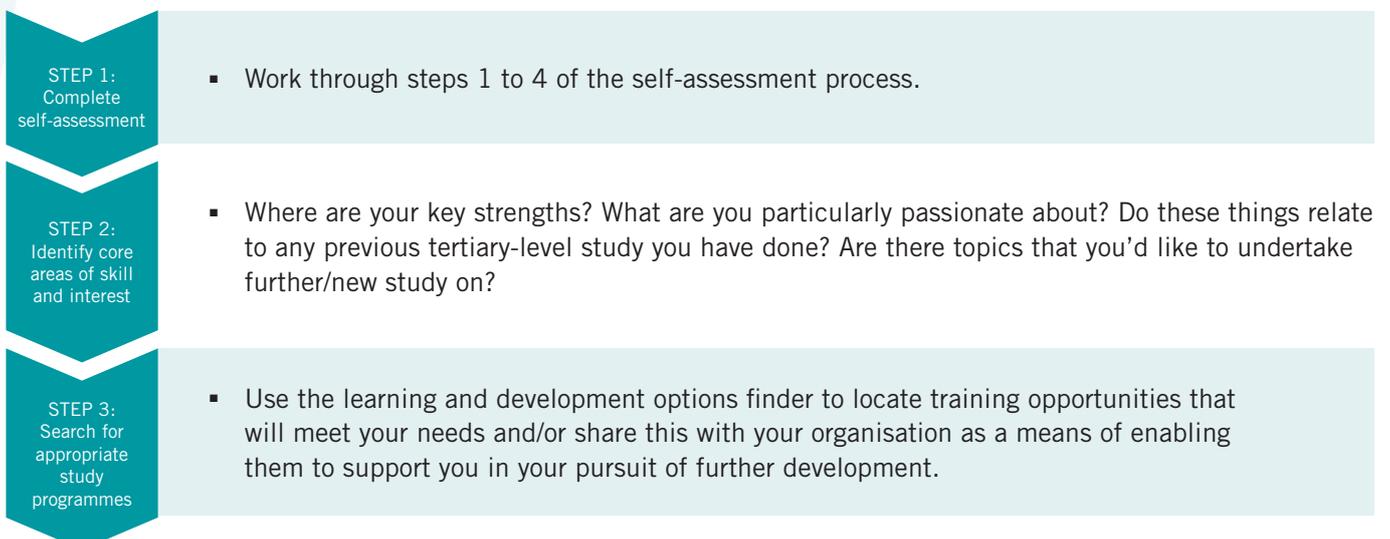
As a self-assessment tool:

Managers of volunteers can use the competencies as a tool for assessing their current skill-set, and to provide them with guidance towards the skills they would like to further develop. This assessment can be done on an individual basis, or with others (peer support group, colleagues, manager, board, mentor, coach, etc). Self-assessing basically means managers of volunteers aligning each competency to their current role.



As an Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) planning tool:

Working through the competencies as a self-assessment tool will provide opportunities for some managers of volunteers to plan for making an application for APL. This is because the self-assessment provides a self and peer review of skills, which can form the basis of a portfolio application to various APL providers.



As an educational tool:

Whatever level on the competencies framework you sit at as a manager of volunteers, you will be using a much wider range of skills than most people would realise. Conducting a self-assessment of your role against the competencies provides an evidence-base for you to call on when explaining to your organisation exactly what it is you do, and the importance of it.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why would I want to use the competencies?

Managers of volunteers from around New Zealand have said they want a learning and development pathway to make training and career progression more straightforward. The competencies have been designed to provide a foundation for this pathway; baselines for what all managers of volunteers need to know, and how this might evolve over time in the role.

We feel the main way you will use the competencies is as a self-assessment tool that you can work through either on your own, or with a colleague / employer / supervisor / etc. Using them will give you a guide about your current areas of skill, and show you where you might like to undertake further learning. They might also help you to identify areas of real strength, and give you the motivation you might need to take on a new challenge, like submitting an abstract for a conference or enrolling in a course of tertiary study.

Why do the competencies refer to management of both paid and volunteer staff, instead of just volunteers?

This reflects the fact that many managers of volunteers do actually manage paid staff as well as volunteers. In addition, some managers of volunteers manage budgets and run whole organisations, while others work within large organisations.

There is so much diversity across New Zealand's managers of volunteers, and we've attempted to create a document that traverses this. As a result, you might need to 'tweak' some aspects of the document to make it suit your individual circumstances.

Don't you think that the word 'competencies' will put some people off?

'Competencies' is actually a great word to describe what we want to achieve with this document. Competencies are the skills, knowledge, attributes and values needed to do something, and are demonstrated when we complete certain tasks. As mentioned above, there is so much diversity across New Zealand's managers of volunteers and they have such a variety of roles. Instead of attempting to list the myriad tasks they do, using the concept of competencies enables us to look at broad areas of skill, knowledge, attributes and values, and leave it up to managers of volunteers to think about the tasks they each do under each competency area.

Doesn't this just place a judgement on some managers of volunteers that they're 'low skilled'?

These competencies are not a yardstick – they are a spectrum. They are a response to requests from managers of volunteers all around the country for a learning and development pathway that will assist them to plot their career course. Different manager of volunteers' roles require different levels of skill and engagement. It would be unrealistic to expect someone who manages volunteers at events once or twice a year to operate at Strategic Leadership level; they may well do so, but it would probably not be a necessary requirement of the role. This does not mean, however, that someone in this type of role is not interested in further learning and development, and working out where they can access this.

For some managers of volunteers, their role, interest and passion for all things to do with the role will be met and satisfied at Base Knowledge, and that is fine! For others, they want a plan to get them into Strategic Leadership and beyond, and that's fine too. We are different, we do different roles, we need this diversity, and this is a tool for individuals to move around within that diversity if they want to.



Competency 1:
Management of People
*Managers of volunteers
recruit, support and develop
team members (both paid
and volunteer)*

Recruit

BASE KNOWLEDGE

- You know the core roles needing to be filled, and the skills required to ensure key tasks are completed.
- You recruit using one or two main methods.
- You have written position descriptions for all roles.
- You give new team members a basic induction to the team and to their role, and ensure they complete introductory training.

BASE KNOWLEDGE APPLIED

- You identify and use a variety of recruitment methods (e.g. social media, print, Volunteer Centre, community fairs / special events).
- You link applicants' existing skills to both core roles and to some other potential roles within the organisation.
- You are responsible for team members' employment or volunteer agreements with the organisation.
- You have an induction plan to ensure new team members are introduced to all people, systems and processes they need to know about to fulfil their role. This may include written guidelines or a handbook for reference.
- You ensure new volunteers undertake training, where appropriate.

Support & develop

- You have a system in place to regularly communicate with team members, and to enable them to freely seek support from you.
- You have a system in place to keep track of team members' work, training and development.
- You are aware of the need for your own skill development, and to link in with support networks.

- You develop a frequent 2-way communication flow, and team members are aware of and confident about using this.
- You ensure different kinds of support, training and development options are available for people to access, and you encourage them to do so.
- You ensure that functions for volunteer appreciation / recognition are part of the annual plan.
- You take responsibility for your own support and development via supervision / mentoring / attending training / etc, and you advocate for organisational support for professional development.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

- You have a plan outlining your recruitment strategy, which encourages diversity and accessibility – numbers of team members required, roles, skills needed, target audiences, promotional channels / methods.
- You adjust and develop your plans to match changing organisational needs (e.g. a new project requiring extra personnel, increasing / decreasing demand on services), and changing trends in volunteering.
- You have a comprehensive training and induction plan that involves introducing new team members to the whole organisation.

- Frequent, 2-way communication flows are in place within the team, via several channels.
- You ensure wider organisational issues and events are communicated to the team.
- You work with team members to evaluate their roles and activities, and support them to pursue development opportunities.
- You have developed an innovative plan for recognition and celebration of volunteer achievements.
- You have your own robust professional development plan in place.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Your recruitment plan is long-term, strategic and proactive, and based on your awareness of the organisation's overall goals and direction.
- You can identify both your own and the team's strengths and weaknesses, and you recruit to reflect this.
- You create new roles for existing team members, based on their developing skills, interests and motivations and your ability to delegate.

- You develop innovative communication and support techniques to ensure all team members are covered, regardless of team size and geography.
- You undertake regular role evaluation, with people's interests and skills engaged in a variety of ways.
- Your wider community knowledge means you know about creative development opportunities and you both encourage the team to participate, and lead by example.
- You are a member of various networks and/ or peer support groups, and you also seek to support other managers of volunteers in their work.



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Competency 2:

Management within organisations

Managers of volunteers develop, support and manage systems, resources and policies within organisations

BASE KNOWLEDGE

- You know the systems and policies that the organisation has.
- You know what resources are available and required in order to achieve core tasks.
- You create plans based on managing and maintaining your current level of available resources.

BASE KNOWLEDGE APPLIED

- You build on existing systems and policies to create new ones; you ensure that this includes a current volunteering policy.
- You critique current systems and policies and suggest changes that better reflect the role and purpose of the volunteer programme.
- You evaluate current resource allocation, and, if possible, re-allocate to better meet goals and objectives (e.g. changing printed newsletters to an online format to reduce cost, and then reallocating that money to an alternative activity).

Competency 3:

Leadership Within Organisations

Managers of volunteers demonstrate organisational vision and goals, and influence people to achieve them (both paid and volunteer staff)

- You know the organisation's vision and goals.
- You share the organisation's vision and goals with team members, and can explain how their contribution helps the organisation to achieve them.
- You know that each volunteer has their own motivation for volunteering, and that 'volunteering' means different things from different cultural perspectives.

- You work collaboratively across the organisation, sharing both planning and resources.
- You create tasks and activities for yourself and others that align with the organisation's vision and goals.
- You understand the dynamics present in the team, and you develop and plan relevant and appropriate ways to motivate team members towards activities and goals.
- You celebrate and encourage diversity in the team.
- You are an enthusiastic advocate for the volunteer programme with paid staff and senior management.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

- You work collaboratively with the team to evaluate systems, policies and resources, and plan for their development.
- You respond to team input by altering existing and/or designing new systems and policies that align to future goals and direction.
- You consult with paid staff on new opportunities for volunteer positions, and new volunteer projects.
- You measure and explain the costs and resource requirements associated with the volunteer programme, and you report this information widely.

- You work collaboratively with the team to evaluate and develop current and future activities, aligning these to the organisation's vision and goals.
- You write regular reports on volunteer programmes and volunteer contributions, whether they are asked for or not.
- You are active in motivating team members using a variety of methods, and in communicating the value of their contributions.
- The composition of the team reflects the composition of the community / client base.
- You seek to understand the wider community context the organisation is working within.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- You report to your organisation / stakeholders about the efficacy of current systems, policies and resources.
- You seek to diversify funding streams, or advocate for their diversification, in an attempt to ensure adequate resourcing.
- You work constructively to resolve internal organisation conflicts involving volunteers.
- You actively seek new information relating to new ways of doing things, to enhance the performance of your organisation.

- Your strategic planning involves paid and volunteer staff from across the organisation. You align plans to the organisation's vision and goals and innovate for new opportunities.
- You actively seek input and feedback from the community and/or partner organisations into plans and potential collaborations.
- Through advocating for volunteers, you engage paid staff in direct responsibility for volunteer work.
- You work collaboratively within the context of the wider community, sharing both planning and resources.
- You seek to understand the wider societal context the organisation is working within.



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Competency 4:

Leadership of Volunteering

Managers of volunteers advocate for and educate about the importance of volunteering

BASE KNOWLEDGE

- You understand why volunteers are involved with the organisation, and can explain the importance of the work they do.
- You can identify the key stakeholders and community relationships your organisation has.
- You understand the importance of recognising and valuing the efforts of all staff, and you practice this.

BASE KNOWLEDGE APPLIED

- You seek to attend meetings and/or network events in your community and/or amongst similar organisations.
- You build relationships with key stakeholders, both inside and outside the organisation.
- You understand the importance of recognising and valuing the efforts of all staff, and you practice this.

ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

- You create innovative opportunities to educate within the organisation about the important role volunteering plays in goal achievement.
- You develop your own knowledge of volunteering today in Aotearoa New Zealand (e.g. statistics, government policy, research, etc.).
- You cultivate external relationships that enable you to share positive stories about volunteering.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- You actively seek opportunities to advocate for the importance of volunteering in the community (e.g. speaking at forums and conferences, writing for newsletters, contributing to blogs, etc.).
- Your strategic focus sees you engaging with community and/or national initiatives aimed at promoting volunteerism.
- You are well-read and well-connected, and you have a good knowledge of volunteering today in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Our thanks go to the wonderful managers of volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations and academic staff within tertiary education providers that provided invaluable feedback on the competencies. We are grateful for the contributions made by the fantastic volunteer working group, who developed the competencies from concept to reality. Our thanks also go to Michel Norrish from Qualifications Services at the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, who very generously gave his time and expertise to help us give this project momentum.

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