

Questions and Answers

Esperance Volunteer Resource Centre - The Regional Collective: Next Generation

Primary Priority Group focus: Young People 12-17yo

Project summary:

This project explored how regional organisations can better engage young people aged 12-17 in volunteering. Through workshops, school engagement, surveys and direct collaboration with local organisations, the project focused on identifying barriers to youth participation and co-designing opportunities that better reflect young people's interests, skills and ideas.

Questions asked after presentation and responses:

1) How did you manage the critiques after collecting them? Did you apply them all or not?

We altered language and imagery – mainly for roles we saw as applicable to teens that we could forward on to the high schools. Adults may not find the teen ads as appealing, so we keep those versions at our main office.

We passed the timing / task content issues back to organisations with the offer to help support them in finding ways to make these roles more accessible to young people. Some took us up on this, some independently changed things, and some have no capacity at current to look at it.

2) How many people in the theatre required Working with Children Checks and was it difficult to insure them?

All committee members hold a Working with Children Check, and the two adults supporting Lucy in with the Auslan group also hold one.

The theatre has a policy that any adult with the potential to be alone with under-18s, or any adult that is able to be viewed as a 'trusted person' to someone who is under-18, requires a Working with Children Check.

For productions, every director, producer and stage manager must hold a Working with Children Check. These are people with authority over cast and crew, which is why they are flagged as needing one. Head of costumes must also have a Working with Children Check, as they have potential to be up close and personal for measurements and fittings.

We do our best to ensure there is minimal 1-on-1 time at all, but occasionally there will be someone left waiting with the last teen to be collected. This person must be one of the ones who holds a Working with Children Check.

The Salvation Army have a really great policy surrounding the guidelines for interacting with children and young people. It's concise while still being quite comprehensive. You can find it on pages 17 & 18 here:

[TSA_VR_Mission_Volunteer_Handbook_V4.0_June_2022_ENGLISH.pdf](#)

The theatre guild looked at this during a recent overhaul of policies and procedures. In the Theatre Guild's constitution providing opportunities for teenagers is one of the organisation's purposes, so under-18s are factored into our insurance.

Questions and Answers

Esperance Volunteer Resource Centre - The Regional Collective: Next Generation

3) What are the top 2 things key to building relationships/trust with youth?

1 – Let them feel some ownership over what is happening. Manning the sign in station, giving feedback on a procedure for a task they've been doing for a while, asking if they have any special requests for morning tea snacks. School is such a thing that happens at-them as a teenager, let volunteering be something that happens with-them.

2 – Give context to what they are doing. Your processes exist for a reason, and some of these kids are just moving out of the age where they've been given tasks just to 'keep them busy' while the grown ups work. When they can see how their actions play a role in the overall purpose of your organisation, they get excited about even the mundane tasks.

Eg: taking note of the door count at end of shift > is part of the statistics that are reported back to funders > validated existence and assists with access to further funding.

Vacuuming the theatre auditorium > keeps the theatre clean and prevents pests and / or mould > theatre funds can be used to run workshops with professionals, as opposed to spent on pest control / carpet deep cleaning.

4) How else would you engage youth and how to retain them?

I'd love to see more large-scale one-off opportunities happen – sort of rent-a-crowd style where a group of teens could come do gardening / beach clean-up / clothes sorting / present wrapping etc roles as organisations need.

I think these would be a large amount of work to get started, but I can see how it would naturally grow to involve more teens as work of mouth got around and the consistent timing (eg first Saturday of the month) became built into people's routines.

I think retention should not be your focus when it comes to young people. If they enjoy the experience, and they find the time, they will stick around. If not, they can hopefully fondly look back on the experience and their positive word of mouth stories will flow on to see their younger siblings / classmates etc engage with your program and maybe they will stick it out more long term.

5) What would you change if you could start again?

If we could have had schools involved in the planning process prior to this project starting, and made this project align somewhere within the curriculum, that would have been interesting to watch play out.