

Questions and Answers

Peel Volunteer Resource Centre - Socialability

Primary Priority Group focus: People with disability and people experiencing barriers to volunteering.

Project summary:

The Sociability Program supports individuals experiencing barriers, particularly people with disability to build confidence, social connections and pathways into volunteering. The program has transitioned from group-based activities to a personalised one-on-one mentoring model, delivering tailored support to both participants and volunteer-involving organisations. This approach improves engagement, reduces barriers and enables meaningful participation in community life.

Questions asked after presentation and responses:

1) How did you explore the participants interests/passions?

Participant's interests and passions were explored through initial one-on-one conversations and ongoing individual sessions, where we focused on understanding each person's goals, strengths, interests and barriers.

This was formalised through:

- Individual support plans identifying skills, needs, goals and aspirations
- Conversations about what they want from volunteering (e.g. social connection, skill development, employment pathways)
- Ongoing check-ins to refine interests as confidence and readiness developed

2) What would you do differently if you could start again?

Key learnings suggest that if starting again you would:

- Allocate more time and resources to onboarding, particularly for participants with complex barriers
- Provide earlier and more structured training for VIOs to strengthen their ability to implement inclusive practices
- Further strengthen onboarding processes and capacity-building from the outset

3) How did you train your VIOs, one on one or inclusive?

A combination approach was used:

One-on-one support:

- Direct engagement with VIOs to assess needs and provide tailored guidance
- Ongoing follow-ups (emails, phone calls, meetings) to implement inclusive practices

Inclusive / group training:

- Workshops such as Out of the Box Management Workshop
- Resource sharing (toolkits, templates, policies) to build organisational capability

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4) How many hours per individual with your one on one model?

The number of hours varies depending on the individual's needs and how much support they would like. It is not a fixed model and is designed to be flexible and person-centred.

Support can range from approximately 1 hour up to 4 hours per individual, depending on the level of assistance required. This may include:

- Support with contacting volunteer organisations
- Attending interviews alongside the participant
- Assistance with paperwork, onboarding or clearances
- Support during training sessions or induction processes

Some participants require minimal guidance, while others benefit from more intensive, hands-on support across multiple stages. This flexible approach ensures each person receives the right level of support to build confidence and successfully engage in volunteering.

5) How are you ensuring the safety of people with disabilities in their volunteer roles?

Safety is ensured through several layered strategies:

- Psychological safety: participants move at their own pace with flexible engagement
- Careful role matching: aligning tasks, environments and support levels to individual needs
- Pre-placement preparation: including onboarding, training, and confidence building
- Workplace adjustments: role adaptation, buddy systems, support workers attending, flexible scheduling
- Ongoing monitoring: regular check-ins and ability to pause or adjust roles. These measures ensure both physical and psychological safety.

6) 'Inclusion in practice' is mentioned. What does this look like in practice?

"Inclusion in practice" is demonstrated through real, tangible changes for both participants and organisations, including:

For participants:

- Individualised, one-on-one support tailored to goals and readiness
- Flexible pathways (pause, change roles, adapt pace)
- Accessible resources (plain language, videos, social stories)

For organisations (VIOs):

- Role carving and task adaptation
- Adjustments to environments and processes
- Use of inclusive tools and simplified information
- Embedding inclusive policies and practices into everyday operations

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7) How did you shift peoples mind set? What does it look like?

Mindset shift was achieved through:

- Challenging stereotypes about disability and barriers, focusing on strengths and capabilities
- Demonstrating success through real participant outcomes and stories
- Supporting VIOs to see the value of inclusive volunteering through practical experience and guidance
- Providing training and conversations that highlight different perspectives and shared challenges
- What it looks like in practice:
- Organisations actively adapting roles rather than excluding people
- Increased confidence and independence in participants
- Volunteers being viewed for their skills and contributions, not limitations
- Greater engagement from priority groups and more inclusive volunteering environments