

# 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