

Questions and Answers

Umbrella Multicultural Community Care Services - Bridge to Belonging

Primary Priority Group focus: New migrants (within 5 yrs of migration), Vulnerable Women, Unemployed

Project summary:

Bridge to Belonging is a Peer-Led Multicultural Volunteering Hub supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and LGBTIQ+ volunteers, with a focus on newly arrived migrants, vulnerable women, and unemployed individuals. Building on insights from the Empowered Connections project (Dec 2024 – May 2025), where 40% of participants engaged in volunteering, this new hub addressed barriers such as isolation, language challenges, and lack of recognition. It featured peer-led sessions, tailored training, and the dedicated support of a Volunteer Wellness Officer to build confidence, wellbeing, and belonging.

By creating a safe, inclusive space, Bridge to Belonging empowered diverse volunteers, strengthened peer networks, and enriched the broader community through supported and meaningful engagement.

Questions asked after presentation and responses:

1) How many participants were already connected with the organisations, versus newly engaged individuals?

Over the 10-month period, 97 volunteers from priority groups were supported through a combination of phone calls, regular check-ins, one-on-one support, group sessions, and access to shared resources. In total, over 50 participants attended regular Hub sessions. Of these, 21 were newly engaged participants, while 30 were already connected to the organisation as Volunteer Visitors and continued to regularly attend and participate in the sessions.

2) Do you have a rough idea of the percentage of participants who tend to move into peer support/mentor roles? 20%

3) Importance of building trust and confidence for participants. How did you help build trust for the participants to get involved and stay involved?

Trust and confidence were built by creating a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment where participants felt valued and respected. Everyone was encouraged to participate, share their experiences, and engage in activities at a pace that felt comfortable for them.

Regular communication and ongoing support helped participants feel connected and informed throughout the project. Opportunities were also provided for participants to interact with one another, build meaningful relationships, and develop a sense of belonging within the group. These connections contributed to increased confidence and encouraged ongoing participation.

4) How will this project be sustained in the future now that this funding has ended?

The project has built strong connections among participants, volunteer mentors, and support volunteers, many of whom have expressed a keen interest in continuing to connect with new participants and with each other. There is a strong desire to continue sharing experiences, building friendships, and gaining new knowledge through ongoing engagement.

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To support the sustainability of these outcomes, Umbrella will continue to provide opportunities for participants to connect through the Volunteer Hub in Morley. This space will be available for volunteers to meet regularly, share ideas, support one another, and participate in social and learning activities. Volunteers will have the opportunity to catch up monthly, or more frequently if desired.

We are currently in the process of recruiting an office-based volunteer who will help coordinate and facilitate the Volunteer Hub, ensuring that participants remain connected and engaged beyond the life of the funded project. This approach will allow the relationships, knowledge sharing, and sense of community developed through the project to continue into the future.

5) How do you promote the program? What is your selling point/drawcard?

The program has been promoted through a range of channels, including regular social media campaigns, Umbrella's website, email communications to volunteers, and word-of-mouth referrals. Information flyers were also distributed to stakeholders and community organisations, including employment, settlement, and migrant support services.

The Volunteer Hub is promoted to all new volunteer applicants as part of the Expression of Interest process, ensuring that new volunteers are aware of the opportunities available to connect, learn, and engage with others.

A key drawcard of the program is Umbrella's strong focus on multicultural communities, which resonates with individuals seeking a welcoming and diverse volunteering environment. The opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the life of an older person experiencing social isolation is also a powerful motivator for many participants. Volunteers are attracted by the chance to build genuine connections, contribute to their community, and gain valuable experiences while supporting older people to remain socially connected.

6) How did you manage the compliance and regulations in your organic approach?

The project's activities were developed and delivered in accordance with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement, which provided a strong foundation for all aspects of volunteer engagement. Compliance considerations were embedded into the planning and delivery of activities from the outset, rather than being treated as a separate process.

Umbrella already has well-established policies, procedures, and governance frameworks in place, which supported the project's implementation. All activities were conducted in alignment with the Aged Care Act, relevant volunteer program guidelines, funding requirements, and Umbrella's organisational policies and procedures.

As a result, compliance was integrated seamlessly into the project, allowing us to maintain a flexible and participant-led approach while ensuring that all activities remained safe, inclusive, and accountable. Due to these established systems and processes, we encountered very few challenges in meeting compliance and regulatory requirements.

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