

Volunteer management: a journey of continuous improvement using the Nationals Standards for Volunteer Involvement

Case study focus: share learning about how the adoption of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement is changing the practice of VIO's.

Organisation

The Muslim Women's Support Center (MWSC) is a small volunteer involving organisation in Perth, Western Australia. They have been supporting, empowering, informing, and connecting Muslim women in WA since 1987. They provide inclusive, holistic, and culturally sensitive services for Muslim women and their families thereby creating healthy, happy communities.

Participants

Abir Roz, Vice President and Volunteer Manager of MWSC.

Inspiration

After 30 years of operation, MWSC had demonstrated their resilience and sustainability, but they were keen to take their volunteer operations to the next level through engagement with the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement. They were looking to develop best practice volunteer management to improve the ways they attract and retain volunteers.

Experience implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

In 2022, MWSC signed up with Volunteering WA and made extensive use of resources and training while seeking advice and guidance from staff. They used the National Standards workbook/online toolkit to be well prepared for the next steps.

“When you're new to the role of a volunteer coordinator you need a lot of support and guidance and I feel that I've received exactly that from Volunteering Western Australia. Support has always been there. There has always been a prompt response, whether that has been via email or phone... I also think the free workshops have been extremely helpful” (VWA 2022).¹

MWSC used the National Standards toolkit as guide to check through their current policies and procedures to discover what areas needed attention and what areas needed development. While reflecting Abir Roz, stated,

“When we first looked at the standards, it was overwhelming. There was a lot of stuff to look at and read. We broke it down into small steps. There are eight standards, and we slowly went through each standard and sub-standards (VWA, 2022)¹”.



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“MWSC is an organisation that thrives on its volunteers...They are the pillar of the organisation...By engaging with the National Standards, we wanted improve on how we attract and retain volunteers” (VWA 2022)¹

¹ VWA Podcast with Abir Roz 14th September 2022. For full interview see [VWA website](#)

Challenges

The real challenges came when MWSC had to develop brand new policies in response to the National Standards. These new policies required more time, collaboration and thought. Where there were existing MWSC policies in place, sometimes there was a need to provide more detail within those policies. Abir also articulated that sometimes, the National Standards seemed to overlap, when applying to certain areas of their organization. Clearing up that confusion was a useful part of the process for their policies.



“We allowed 2 days a week to engage with the National Standards. It wasn’t just me, there were a team of volunteers, and it took 4-5 weeks in total... I would definitely encourage any organization that has a good number of volunteers to engage with the standards...I think it helps you gauge where your organisation is at with policies and procedures, and I think it’s a good benchmark and guide for volunteer managers” (VWA 2022).¹

Benefits for the organisation

MWSC already had significant and rigorous policies and procedures in place, so they were building from a strong base. Where there were gaps or areas for improvement, they were able to use the National Standards as a framework to guide new developments within their existing policies.

By working through the National Standards, MWSC have ensured their policies and procedures provide the best practice possible of volunteer management.

This includes recruitment, training, engagement, and safety. They now have an awareness of what constitutes best practice, and this ensures the safety and well-being of volunteers.

Benefits for the volunteers

They are now better equipped to plan and strategize. Continuous improvement has become a feature of their daily operations and that flows through to benefiting the volunteer program. Engagement with the National Standards has enabled MWSC to go to the “next level” (VWA 2022) developing their policies and procedures within the guidelines of the National Standards framework.



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References:

Volunteering Australia (2015). National Standards for Volunteer Involvement. Accessed 13/10/22

VWA (2022). Volunteering WA Capacity Building Podcast. “National Standards for Volunteer Involvement - Muslim Women's Support Centre”. S.Order. Perth, Volunteering Western Australia. Available [on VWA website](#)

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Volunteering WA can assist with a range of information and advice about volunteering in WA. Please refer to our website at www.volunteeringwa.org.au