

## Guide for Australian organisations January 2025 Edition



[australianvolunteers.com](https://australianvolunteers.com)

The Australian Volunteers Program  
is an Australian Government Initiative



**The Australian Volunteers Program acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.**

**We recognise the continuing connection that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have to their lands and waters, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.**

**We would also like to specifically pay our respects to the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our head office is located.**

**Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.**

# Key contacts for Australian partner organisations

## Australian Volunteers Program – Australian office

For any questions about this guide or other program-related enquiries, please contact the Partnerships team in the Australian office at [partners@australianvolunteers.com](mailto:partners@australianvolunteers.com)

The Australian Volunteers Program is managed by Australian Volunteers International in a consortium with DT Global and Alinea International.

AVI is an Australian-based not for profit organisation that has been supporting international volunteering since 1951. AVI has been at the forefront of international volunteering for over 70 years and has provided over 7500 Australians with the opportunity to work with over 700 partner organisations in 70 countries.

AVI delivers a range of international volunteering programs, the largest of which is the Australian Volunteers Program

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## Purpose of Guide

This *Guide for Australian Organisations* has been designed to assist your organisation to partner and contribute to the Australian Volunteers Program by supporting our overseas partner organisations and Australian volunteers.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Provide an overview of the Australian Volunteers Program
- Outline how the program works
- Outline how Australian organisations can contribute to the program
- Outline how your organisation can become a partner to the program.

## Overview of the program

The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government funded initiative that matches a broad range of skilled Australians with partner organisations currently within over 20 countries across in the Pacific, Asia, and Africa.

Pacific	Asia	Africa
Fiji	Bhutan	Eswatini
Federated States of Micronesia	Cambodia	Lesotho
Kiribati	Indonesia	South Africa
Niue	Laos	Tanzania
Palau	Mongolia	
Papua New Guinea	Nepal	
Republic of Marshall Islands	Philippines	
Samoa	Sri Lanka	
Solomon Islands	Timor Leste	
Tonga	Vietnam	
Tuvalu		
Vanuatu		

We are committed to developing strong, collaborative and enduring alliances with organisations in order to assist them in realising their distinct development goals. This approach builds on decades of experience that shows that the most effective sustainable development is *locally led* and *locally driven*.

Delivery of the program is guided by country strategies which are developed in agreement between overseas governments and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Volunteer assignments are designed to align with the specific requirements of the local needs and enhancing the capabilities of our overseas partner organisations, while ensuring that opportunities for local workers are not displaced.

We support **partner organisations** in the Pacific, Asia and Africa to achieve their development goals by matching them with Australian volunteers who are committed to sharing their skills and knowledge.

**Australian volunteers** contribute unique experiences, networks and ideas to their partner organisations and the communities in which they live and work. In return, volunteers learn from their partner colleagues, gain unique professional experiences, develop professional networks and gain deep cultural understanding of new contexts.

The program also engages with a diverse range of **Australian organisations** who contribute to partner organisation development objectives in a range of ways. These include promoting the program and assignments, assisting with recruitment and referring candidates for specialised assignments, knowledge sharing, and joint research opportunities.



The program aims to:

- Support our in-country partners to achieve their own development goals
- Promote professional and personal growth in our volunteers
- Increase the appreciation of the value of volunteering in Australia and overseas.

Our [Global Program Strategy](#) outlines our strategic direction, policy context, guiding principles and priorities for the program. The strategy informs program plans, partnerships and volunteer assignments.

## Key principles of the program

The Australian Volunteers Program is guided by a set of high-level principles. These principles underpin how the program works. They guide our collective efforts, inspire action, and frame the results that the Australian Government seeks to achieve through the program.

### Grow strong relationships and partnerships

Establishing long-term, respectful, and equitable partnerships between individuals, communities and organisations is central to our approach. We value the role responsible volunteering plays in fostering people-to-people connections and building diverse and inclusive partnerships. The program is committed to strengthening relationships across our region and globally.

### Support locally led change

The program supports our partners to progress their own locally determined objectives. We start from a position of respecting their deep contextual and cultural expertise. We work together to jointly identify how best the program can support them to further strengthen their organisation. We recognise that capacity strengthening is a long-term, complex process that must be locally owned.

### Value volunteering

Volunteering offers a valuable approach to international development cooperation. We value volunteers who are open to mutual learning and skills exchange, and who are committed to contributing to partners' priorities in support of locally led change. We recognise that volunteering plays an important role in action towards the SDGs and reflects a unique aspect of Australian society.

### Evolve good practice and embrace innovation

The program is committed to being recognised as a leader in global volunteering through professional, innovative, reflective, and adaptive management. We embrace new ideas that are contextually relevant and bring successes to scale through the program.

### Enhance diversity and inclusion

The program takes a strengths and rights-based approach to ensure it is inclusive and accessible to a broad range of volunteers and partners. We work to be fully supportive and inclusive of people from a range of backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, identities, and abilities. We prioritise gender equality and women's rights, and disability inclusion, recognising that by doing so is essential to achieve sustainable and equitable development outcomes. We are committed to expanding and strengthening participation of Australia's First Nations people in international volunteering, offering new opportunities for wisdom sharing and cooperation.

### Ensure accountability and value learning

We are committed to operational and programmatic excellence, through continuous improvement in our ability to document, analyse and measure results. The program, its partners and participants are mutually accountable. We promote learning, reflection and knowledge exchange across and between all partners to ensure that we deliver on our outcomes and support improves practices.



## Organisations who work with the Australian Volunteers Program

### Partner organisations

Our overseas partner organisations include non-government organisations and other civil society organisations, government agencies, educational institutions, private sector and social enterprises and humanitarian organisations.

The selection of partner organisations is based on our guiding principles and includes a range of factors, including how the organisation's objectives align with its country's development priorities, the Australian Government's aid program, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and our [Global Program Strategy](#). All partner organisations undergo a due diligence process as they are onboarded into the program.

Partner organisations prioritise and initiate volunteer assignments according to local needs and priorities.

### Australian organisations

We work actively with around 100 Australian organisations to support development initiatives in partner countries: sharing skills and connecting organisations and communities.

Australian organisations include civil society organisations, education and training institutions, the private sector, professional associations and peak bodies and government agencies across the full range of sectors including agriculture, allied health, business services, climate change, community and social development, disability, economic development, education, environment, gender, humanitarian, infrastructure, justice and governance, language revival, arts and culture, medicine, public health, research, skilled trades, urban development, and youth.





## The value Australian organisation partners provide to the program

Principally, Australian organisations support the requirements of our overseas partner organisations, in partnership with the program. This could be accomplished through:

- Collaborating with partner organisations to develop volunteer assignments
- Supporting recruitment through finding and preparing volunteers
- Promoting the program and volunteer assignments through the Australian organisation networks
- Establishing mentoring relationships between staff, volunteers, and partner organisations
- Sharing business intelligence and ideas with partner organisations.

Australian organisations can further work with the program in the following ways:

- Complementing their existing overseas program by supporting an Australian volunteer
- Facilitating ongoing sustainable links by supporting overseas partners in the development of a pipeline of future program volunteer assignments
- Offering professional development opportunities to staff and networks
- Share knowledge and expertise with Australian volunteers, through a pre-departure briefing or ongoing mentoring.
- Financial contributions to help support the cost of some assignments.

There are various ways for Australian organisations to be involved, across a spectrum of partnership.



# How the Australian Volunteers Program works

## Overseas program management

In most countries we have a dedicated Program Manager who oversees the delivery of the program in that country. The Program Manager is an international development specialist experienced in managing volunteer programs and is assisted by Program Officers who build partnerships with our overseas partner organisations and provide local expertise and insight.

Our In-Country Management Teams provide vital and localised capacity to ensure that all program participants are provided appropriate support. Each office ensures that volunteers and in-country partner organisations are offered the same high level of duty of care and a shared commitment to working in a collaborative partnership.

The program supports the overseas partner and the volunteer, as needed, to achieve assignment objectives. Australian organisations can provide mentoring and other assistance to the volunteer and/or partner organisation during the assignment. **The primary relationship is between the volunteer and their in-country partner organisation who manages the volunteer as part of their organisation.**

## Assignment development

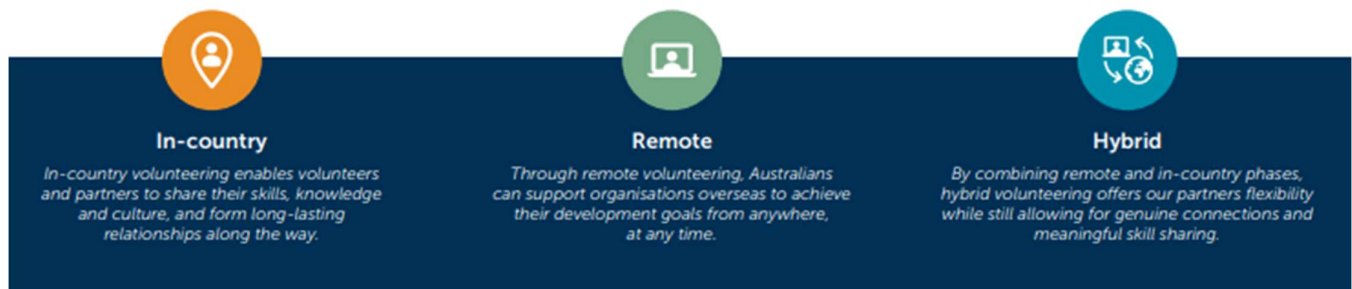
Practicing locally led development, all our volunteer assignments are prepared in partnership and consultation with partner organisations.

For those partner organisations that have a relationship with an Australian organisation, assignments may be co-designed. However, the assignments are always led by the partner organisation in-country.

There are three types of modalities for assignments – in-country, remote and hybrid.

Typically, in-country volunteer assignments run between six months to 18 months, whilst remote assignments are for three months with options to extend. Hybrid assignments are a combination of remote and in-country phases.

The assignment modality will depend on the needs of the partner organisation, the nature of the assignment and program capacity.



## Recruitment and volunteer preparation

The recruitment process is facilitated by our in-country office and Melbourne-based recruitment staff, who work collaboratively throughout the recruitment stages.

### Advertising

Under the standard process, once the volunteer assignment has been developed and approved, we will commence advertising. New assignments are posted on the program website and are open for applications. Assignments are publicly advertised for a minimum of two weeks, and assignments can occasionally require several rounds of advertising before a suitable match is identified.

### Australian organisation assisted advertising through networks

Australian organisations are encouraged to share assignment opportunities among their networks, inviting potential candidates to make a direct application to our website.

### Australian organisation referred candidates

Australian organisations who have a pipeline of prospective volunteers, or who are involved in preparing the volunteer assignments with a partner organisation, may be invited to put forward a candidate/s who they consider would be suitable for the assignment. In this scenario, the assignment will not be publicly advertised. However, the referred candidate is subject to the same checks and recruitment process as candidates who apply through the public advertising process. It is vital that referring organisations and referred candidates understand they are recruited to be part of the Australian Volunteers Program.

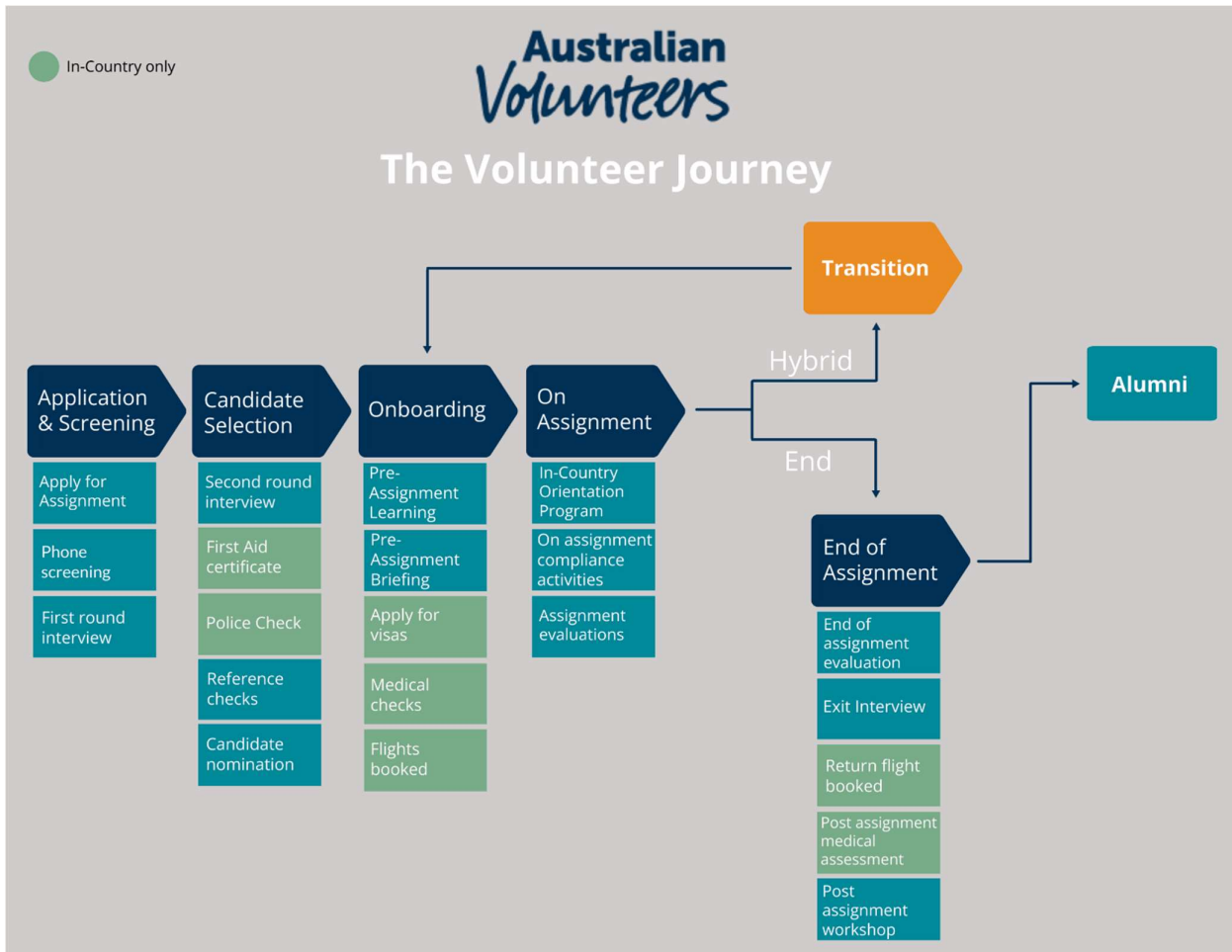
### Application and screening

During this stage, a volunteer starts to actively participate in the journey by applying for an assignment. The initial vetting of candidates commences. Volunteers are recruited on a merit basis, and overseas partners make the final decision on the volunteer's suitability for an assignment.

Before commencing assignments, all candidates must successfully, and promptly, complete several activities including but not limited to police checks and medical clearance processes as well as a three-day 'Pre-Departure Briefing' for in-country and hybrid assignments, and 'Preparing to Volunteer' briefing for remote assignments as guided by the Recruitment and Onboarding teams.

Once selected as the preferred candidate, pre-deployment generally takes between two to four months for an in-country assignment (some countries have long visa processes). The onboarding process for remote assignments is expedited.

## The volunteer journey



## Support for volunteers on assignment

As part of the training, we provide volunteers who are undertaking some of their assignment in-country participate in a pre-departure briefing in Australia, and an in-country orientation program upon arrival. For remote assignments, volunteers participate in a Preparing to Volunteer briefing and remote country orientation with our in-country teams.

Volunteers may have access to conferences and workshops throughout their assignments which link them with other volunteers and organisations working in their sectors. During the assignment volunteers will also engage in monitoring and evaluation activities.

For in-country and hybrid assignments, volunteers are provided with travel to and from assignment, emergency medical and travel insurance, living and accommodation allowances during the in-country phase. Remote assignments are supported with a small stipend to contribute towards costs incurred in volunteering from home (for example internet and videoconferencing tool licenses).

All volunteers have access to 24-hour support services including Response Psychological to support wellbeing. Volunteers in country have 24-hour access to International SOS for medical and security enquiries and updates.

## Inclusion

We are committed to ensuring that international volunteering is inclusive and accessible to Australians from a range of backgrounds, with diverse perspectives, identities and abilities.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers

The program values the significant and unique skills, knowledge and experience that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can contribute to the communities we work with internationally. We are committed to actively increasing Indigenous participation in international volunteering ensuring that the program is a culturally safe and supportive environment for Indigenous volunteers.

[Indigenous Pathways](#) is an Indigenous-led component of the Australian Volunteers Program, offering a variety of pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to engage with the program. There are short-term group assignments, medium-term paired assignments or long term-assignments.

The program has also established the Indigenous Volunteer Support and Advisory Panel. Indigenous volunteers can seek support or guidance from the panel throughout their volunteer journey.

### LGBTIQ+ inclusion

The participation and contribution of LGBTIQ+ volunteers throughout our history has been an important component of our success. LGBTIQ+ volunteers and staff are supported and encouraged to bring their full selves to the Australian Volunteers Program.

We strive to provide a safe, supportive and equitable environment for diverse LGBTIQ+ volunteers, partners, families, and staff at all levels and in all locations.

The program can support diverse LGBTIQ+ volunteers and does so through medical support, including psychosocial, personal security, and obtaining the right visa.

### People with disability

The Australian Volunteers Program values and supports people with disabilities to participate in the program, as volunteers, staff and partners. The program encourages an environment where disability inclusion is both a process and an outcome, promoting the full participation of people with disability. To support this, Access and Inclusion plans are available for volunteers with disabilities to ensure their assignments and living/working arrangements are more accessible.

The program also has a long history of working closely with organisations of persons with disabilities and having disability-focused assignments. This helps ensure that the broader program and our partners have a strong emphasis on disability-inclusion in all our work.

### Families

We support volunteers to have family accompany them on assignment and are embraced as part of the program as 'Approved Accompanying Dependants' (AADs). The assignment must involve 12 months or more in-country and there are several eligibility requirements including successful completion of compliance checks. While we are committed to supporting the deployment of child dependants, we also acknowledge that there are some locations that from a risk-based assessment are not suitable for child dependants to deploy.

## Australian community engagement

On return to Australia, volunteers can participate in individual debriefing sessions and group workshops to enable them to make a smooth transition back into Australian life.



Volunteers are encouraged to build on their experiences. A considerable proportion of volunteers report that they use skills developed during their assignments to continue to support international development.

The program offers numerous opportunities for alumni volunteers to speak about their experience, through our Alumni program and presentations to information sessions, conferences, and public events. We celebrate International Volunteer Day each year in early December.

There are various ways Australian partner organisations might wish to engage with the Alumni program including:

- Delivering presentations at Alumni events to provide organisation staff the opportunity to share expertise and network with past volunteers
- Inviting past volunteers to speak to your organisation about their experience
- Sharing your organisation's advertised roles (paid and volunteer) with the Alumni LinkedIn group (1,500+ members) and in the Alumni's monthly newsletter (7,000+ contacts)
- Attracting attendance of past volunteers to Australian organisation's events, conferences or courses
- Networking opportunities by attending Alumni events.



## Risk management

We operate in countries with complex and diverse risks to include political and civil unrest, natural disasters, health risks, and high rates of serious and violent crime. We prioritise the safety, security and wellbeing of the program’s participants, and ensure that risk management forms part of all program activities. This includes partnership development, assignment development, recruitment and mobilisation, in-country support and return support.

Our approach to risk management is underpinned by the program’s global risk management framework and is designed to manage risks at all levels, including physical and non-physical risks to the program, staff, program participants and beneficiaries of partner organisation services. The program manages health, safety, and security by conducting detailed and comprehensive risk assessments of all program locations and ensuring that appropriate risk controls are implemented to manage in-country risks. We also engage expert service providers to provide a range of medical and security support services and insurance coverage.

## Safeguarding

Safeguarding is about protecting people, and it informs everything we do when delivering the program. It is the responsibility of the program to protect people by preventing harm and by responding appropriately if an incident occurs. At the heart of all our safeguarding work is a commitment to survivors of all forms of abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect. Survivors can include anyone we encounter through our work, whether beneficiaries, employees, partners, volunteers or community members. Child protection and safeguarding and the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (PSEAH) are included under the umbrella term of ‘safeguarding’. Child protection, and managing risk, are key considerations when engaging with program partners. All partners must comply with DFAT’s Child Protection and PSEAH policies.

## Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH)

AVI has a zero-tolerance approach to breaches of the [AVI PSEAH Policy](#). AVI adopts a survivor-based approach to responding to incidents or threats of sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment. Fundamental to the operations of the program is respect for the dignity and basic human rights of all people.

Every person who represents the Australian Volunteers Program is expected to uphold the basic human rights of all people in their professional behaviour, regardless of the people they interact with or their work location. Sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH) are clear violations of basic human rights. The Australian Volunteers Program aims to provide a safe and trusted environment that safeguards everyone from SEAH including beneficiary communities, employees, program participants and partner organisation employees.

In support of the program's commitment to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, all program employees and volunteers are required to abide by the principles and obligations under AVI's PSEAH Policy. Program staff and Australian volunteers are expected to conform with a strict set of obligations, responsibilities and expectations which are set out in AVI's Code of Conduct for employees and the Australian Volunteers Code of Conduct, which includes adherence to AVI's PSEAH Policy. Any breach of the Code of Conduct is taken extremely seriously; we want to assure colleagues and beneficiaries of our partner organisations that we will not tolerate any volunteer or employee taking advantage of their position to abuse, exploit or harass others. Reports can be made to the local program office, Compliance and Assurance Manager via [pseah@australianvolunteers.com](mailto:pseah@australianvolunteers.com) or utilise AVI's confidential reporting tool **Stoptline**.

Any report of an incident of SEAH, will respect the choices, rights, dignity, wishes and confidentiality of the survivor and notifier.

## Child safeguarding

We have a strong commitment to the safety and protection of children from all forms of harm, abuse, and exploitation. Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children. The program is committed to upholding the rights of the child and Australia's obligations under this convention.

In all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child is a primary consideration. The program also has a zero-tolerance approach to child exploitation or abuse; we will not knowingly engage – directly or indirectly – with anyone who poses a risk to children.

In support of the program's commitment to children, all program staff and volunteers undergo appropriate background checks and must abide by the principles and obligations under AVI's Child Protection Policy.



# Becoming an Australian partner organisation

Partnerships between the Australian Volunteers Program and Australian organisations maximise Australia's contributions to overseas development and help to raise awareness of the Australian Aid program and the role of volunteering at home and overseas.

By connecting with us, Australian organisations receive the benefits that come with international volunteering, such as people-to-people links, reciprocal learning, and opportunities for staff development. These are complemented by benefits to overseas partners, who can use the program to strengthen relationships with Australian organisations. By partnering with us, your organisation can:

- Support the work of like-minded organisations across the globe
- Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Broaden your global connections and enhance your organisation's effectiveness when collaborating across cultures.
- Develop the skills of your employees and provide exciting international professional development opportunities
- Contribute to corporate social responsibility objectives.

We understand that new relationships start slowly. As a starting point, we are keen to understand your interest in the program and in future assignments, your networks overseas, and any work you would like to collaborate on and sectors you would like to collaborate with. We'd like to meet with you initially, and then, once we understand your interests better, we'll typically arrange a discussion with our country office and other key stakeholders.

We can only proceed with work if it fits the needs and requirements of our overseas partner organisations. Critically, our overseas partners ultimately lead on any collaboration with Australian partners.

*"Our partnership with the Australian Volunteers Program is a true enabler for the impact Engineers Without Borders Australia (EWB) is aiming to achieve. EWB engineers are able to work alongside community partner and host governments over many months and even years, building the relationships and understanding the context that lead to tangible, equitable solutions. Australian Volunteers Program has the experience and resources to manage risk effectively and to ensure that the experience for our volunteers is seamless and simple."*

*Eleanor Loudon, CEO – Engineers Without Borders Australia*

## Record of Understanding (RoU)

We will work with your organisation to develop a Record of Understanding (RoU), which is a partnership agreement that provides the framework for a long-term partnership that can include a variety of activities to support and promote sustainable and local development efforts.

The RoU and Annexes outline:

- Specific objectives your organisation aims to achieve as a partner with Australian Volunteers Program
- The relationship between your organisation and in-country partners where volunteers may be assigned
- How your organisation can collaborate with the program on events and in other ways to increase awareness about the Australian Aid program in Australia and overseas.

The RoU and Operational Annex documents record the mutual obligations, roles and responsibilities of both the Australian Volunteers Program and Australian partner organisations in detail.

Over time, and as the partnership continues to develop, the ROU or Annexes can be built on.

## Things to consider in partnering with the program

The following points are a good start for further discussion with our partnerships team:

**Partnership with overseas organisations** – the nature of your partnership/s with overseas partners in the context of supporting 'locally-led' development.

**Overseas resources** – the resources your organisation can provide to the overseas partner which will be available to Australian Volunteers Program volunteers, such as internet connection, mobile phones, and vehicles.

**Technical resources** – the technical and subject-related resources your organisation can share with volunteers and overseas organisations.

**Technical advice** – if your organisation can identify an individual or group who may be available to provide technical advice and mentoring to individuals or groups of program volunteers.

**Volunteer assignment allowances** – the contribution your organisation can make to program volunteer allowances or other financial support.

**Volunteer recruitment** – if your organisation is prepared to promote volunteer assignments in key sectors of interest and/or if your organisation is interested in sourcing and referring candidates for consideration.

**Connecting with volunteers** – specific information you would like to know about candidates for program assignments you are supporting.

**Pre-departure preparation** – if your organisation would like to provide a briefing to volunteers prior to their departure.

**Communication with volunteers during assignment** – the type of communication you seek to have program volunteers.

**Reporting, monitoring and evaluation** – the type of information or reports you expect to receive from the program and/or volunteers, and how often.

**Activities** – how you expect volunteers may contribute to:

- Planned visits to your overseas partner organisation
- Development or implementation of projects funded by your organisation
- Distribution of goods donated by your organisation
- Monitoring the use of funds, including educational scholarships, given by your organisation to local partners.

**Return debriefing** – if your organisation would like to debrief with program volunteers after they have completed their assignments.

**Access to professional networks** – if your organisation can offer program alumni access to professional networks for ongoing mentoring or career development.



## Get in touch

To become an Australian organisation partner with the Australian Volunteers Program, please contact our Australian Partnerships Team at [partners@australianvolunteers.com](mailto:partners@australianvolunteers.com)

Cover photo:

In July 2023, six Australian volunteers from the RAID network travelled to Vietnam to work with their counterparts at the Vietnam National University of Agriculture (VNUA) linking early to mid-career researchers from the two countries to share knowledge and experiences across different cultural contexts.

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