EPISODIC VOLUNTEERING

A rapid literature review

This Rapid Review was
prepared for:

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Contents

Contents (continued)

Key points

- Episodic volunteers prefer short-term, time-limited or irregular volunteering opportunities. Therefore, episodic volunteering may be viewed as an alternative to other, more traditional forms of volunteering.

- Episodic volunteers tend to be time poor, and typically do not have the resources available to commit to longer-term or more regular volunteer roles.

- Flexibility is extremely important for episodic volunteers, both in terms of the roles performed (which should match the individual's interests and skills) and the amount of time committed. From a volunteer management perspective, this involves tailoring roles according to individual preferences and providing a range of different options to choose from.

- Because of the importance of flexibility, volunteering opportunities that offer options such as job sharing or flexible hours are highly attractive to episodic volunteers.

- Volunteer roles should be perceived as making a meaningful (rather than menial) contribution to the broader mission of the organisation. The work should be challenging and engage the volunteer so they choose to 'bounce back' (return to volunteer again in future).

- Episodic volunteering roles should be well defined, designed specifically for short-term work and have discrete completion points.

- Effective management practices for episodic volunteering programs include:

  - Conducting an initial needs assessment for possible volunteer roles

  - Developing clear written job descriptions which include an end point for the role

  - Tailoring positions to account for individual abilities (particularly for skilled volunteers)

  - Effective recruitment and screening procedures

  - Offering suitable training and orientation

  - Training for paid staff (or others) working with volunteers

  - Providing appropriate supervision and support

  - Recognising and rewarding volunteers

  - Gaining feedback from volunteers and other key stakeholders.

- Being personally asked to take part in an episodic volunteering opportunity is an important determinant of individuals taking up that opportunity.

- Ideally, a range of communication channels is used to inform people about episodic volunteering opportunities, including the internet, mobile applications and social media.

- Reasons for engaging in episodic volunteering can be both altruistic (for example, a desire to 'make a difference') and egoistic (for example, socialising). Episodic volunteers who are involved for altruistic reasons are more likely to 'bounce back' than those involved for egoistic reasons.

Key points (continued)

- Motivations for volunteering vary according to the type of event or cause volunteered for, and recruitment messages should align with these motivations. For example, episodic volunteers at charity events are more likely to be involved for altruistic reasons, so recruitment campaigns should focus on the opportunity to help others. Episodic volunteers for sporting or other major events tend to have more egoistic motivations, such as the prestige associated with volunteering for the event; and therefore, recruitment campaigns that emphasise the unique opportunity to attend the event is likely to increase numbers of volunteers.

- Older people are often particularly suited to episodic volunteering; for example, they may travel for extended periods (if retired) or their health may be declining, making them unsuitable for more regular volunteering. Other challenges are specific to older, episodic volunteers, including mobility issues and transport. Older, episodic volunteers are often keen to use the skills and knowledge they gained while in paid employment, or to connect with the community they are visiting (in the case of 'grey nomad' volunteers).

Executive summary

Aims and research questions

The aim of this rapid literature review is to provide a review of relevant literature and evidence-based recommendations regarding best practice in the governance of flexible, time-limited episodic volunteer programs. In order to achieve this, the following research questions were posed:

1. What governance structures are most effective for episodic volunteering programs, particularly in terms of:

a. How programs are structured and managed

b. How volunteering opportunities are communicated to potential volunteers.

2. What are they key issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering programs?

3. What evidence-based recommendations can be derived for Australian organisations wanting to offer opportunities for episodic volunteering?

Results from this review integrate data from 33 reports, articles and systematic reviews about episodic volunteering.

Governance of episodic volunteering programs

Organisational analyses have highlighted both costs and benefits associated with utilising episodic volunteers for events and in emergency situations (for example, Handy & Brudney, 2007; Volunteer Canada, 2006). Costs include the notion that episodic volunteers generate fewer benefits than regular volunteers because of the training and support required, and volunteers' wavering commitment to the organisation. However, for many organisations, episodic volunteers are essential in terms of maintaining volunteer supply. Other identified benefits of utilising episodic volunteers include:

- Building social capital within the organisation

- Increasing perceived links between the organisation and the community

- Increasing organisational capacity

- Maintenance of regular (or core) services in times of emergency or during a special event

- Utilisation of volunteers' specialised skills and knowledge that would otherwise not be available within the organisation

- Freeing up time for essential or core staff to undertake higher-level tasks

- Building a long-term volunteer base for future endeavours (Handy & Brudney, 2007; Volunteer Canada, 2006).

Executive summary (continued)

Short-term episodic volunteers can be classified as being affiliation focused (usually with low skill levels, but attached to the cause or organisation) or skills focused (motivated by a desire to use one's existing skills and build on these) (Rehnborg, Bailey, Moore & Sinatra, 2009). Volunteers with little or no experience or qualifications in the field may be suited to lower-level jobs that require less training. Unaffiliated volunteers (those with no link to the organisation or prior experience with it) should not be placed alone, and should be supervised at all times. Access to confidential or sensitive information should not be allowed, and risk should be minimised for this type of volunteer (Volunteer Canada, 2006). However, it is still important that these jobs are considered by volunteers to be 'making a difference', rather than merely menial tasks perceived to be unrelated to the mission of the organisation (Burkham & Boleman, 2005). On the other hand, skilled or experienced volunteers should not be treated as subordinate to paid staff, and efforts should be made to adequately inform them about the mission of the organisation and allow them to work to their skill level (Rehnborg et al., 2009).

Productivity of episodic volunteers requires effective and well-coordinated management practices. This includes an initial needs assessment within the organisation to determine areas where volunteers may be useful, and consultation with stakeholders around this issue (Volunteering Queensland, 2017a). Clear and concise volunteer job descriptions outlining the scope and timeline of the work should be developed and, in the episodic volunteering context, should have a discrete finishing point and be appropriate for short-term volunteer involvement (Handy & Brudney, 2007). It is important that flexibility is built into job descriptions (for example, to facilitate shift work or job sharing), and that the skills and knowledge level of the volunteer is considered (Lockstone, Smith & Baum, 2010; Volunteering Queensland, 2017a). Following the initial development of position descriptions, volunteers should be recruited and screened. Various methods of recruitment were identified in the literature, including through organisation websites, Facebook pages, Twitter, word of mouth, corporate and collegiate outreach, and traditional media (Cnaan, Heist & Storti, 2017). Volunteers should be matched with jobs that suit their reasons for volunteering, availability and skills (Volunteer Canada, 2006).

Executive summary (continued)

Once recruited, training and orientation procedures should engage the volunteer, with more time allocated for training and orientation depending on the complexity and level of responsibility involved in the role being performed. In the case of large-scale events, training has also been conducted online (for example, mobile applications or webinars), rather than face to face (Cnaan et al., 2017). Generally, training should be as concise as possible, given the role the volunteer will perform (Handy & Brudney, 2007), with supervision and support available for volunteers while on the job. Time may also be allocated to training of paid staff who will be working with the volunteers, and regular volunteers can, in some cases, be used as trainers and mentors for the episodic volunteers (Burkham & Boleman, 2005). Databases should be set up to include volunteer contact information, accreditation and training undertaken (Volunteer Canada, 2006). This provides a means for contact, should a subsequent volunteering opportunity arise. Monitoring of progress and evaluation following the conclusion of the job are also thought to be components of best practice (Volunteering Queensland, 2017a). These principles are similar to those outlined by Randle and Reis (2017), but in an episodic volunteering context: greater flexibility in roles and timeframes should be allowed, distinct end points for tasks should be specified; and training should be as concise as possible, particularly for lower-level or 'drop-in' volunteer jobs (Handy & Brudney, 2007). Designing creative and engaging tasks encourages 'bounce back' of episodic volunteers because they feel a sense of accomplishment when undertaking tasks perceived to be meaningful and valuable to the organisation (Volunteering Queensland, 2017b). This was a key theme throughout the literature reviewed.

Small tokens of appreciation and recognition are important to episodic volunteers. Volunteers for large-scale events tend to remember tangible gifts (for example, t-shirts, backpacks, hats), rather than emails/letters of thanks and verbal expressions of appreciation by supervisors (Cnaan et al., 2017). Episodic volunteers for charitable or environmental causes tend to value expressions of thanks and chances to socialise with other volunteers (Bryen & Madden, 2006).

Motivations for episodic volunteering appear to differ somewhat from those of regular volunteers. Some evidence suggests that episodic volunteers are primarily motivated by altruistic (for example, Bryen & Madden, 2006; Handy et al., 2010) and social factors (Dunn, Chambers and Hyde, 2016; Hyde, Dunn, Bax & Chambers, 2016; Smith et al., 2010). Large-scale, cross-cultural research has found that altruistic motivations were a significant determinant of time spent volunteering (Handy et al., 2010). Attracting episodic volunteers may involve the use of messages that appeal to these types of motivations.

Motivations also differ according to the type of event being volunteered for. Motivations for episodic volunteering at charity events tended to be altruistic in nature (Dunn et al., 2016); therefore, recruitment messages emphasising the personal nature of the cause and the potential to help would be expected to increase numbers of episodic volunteers. For sporting or other major events that require one-off volunteers, an emphasis on the prestigious nature of the sporting event, the value of being personally involved in it, and also the benefits volunteering may have for physical fitness are likely to be effective (Dunn et al., 2016).

Executive summary (continued)

Key issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering

Management practices associated with greater retention of episodic volunteers include recognition of volunteers, offering training and professional development and screening procedures to assess suitability for the role (Hager & Brudney, 2004). Retention of episodic volunteers tends to be lower for charities without the resources to support volunteers adequately. Furthermore, volunteer satisfaction is related to both supervisor availability and the quality of service provided by management (Cnaan et al., 2017). These factors were linked to intention to volunteer again, indicating that quality of supervision and communication by management are important predictors of episodic volunteers returning (or 'bouncing back').

Australian research suggests that two main factors motivate episodic volunteers to keep bouncing back: the individual being personally asked to volunteer; and being able to see that their work makes a difference (Bryen & Madden, 2006). Episodic volunteers are more likely to be motivated by the desire to 'do something worthwhile', than regular volunteers, and often expressed motivations associated with a passion for the organisation or cause. Episodic volunteers also tended to think of regular volunteering – and the regular commitment this entailed – as restricting their lifestyle. They expressed a need for spontaneity and flexibility in opportunities, and tended to have greater affiliation with the cause, rather than the organisation, and its long-term operations (Holmes, 2014).

Older episodic volunteers differed from younger volunteers in that they had little interest in career enhancement, but were instead interested in the personal enhancement and social aspects of volunteering (Onyx, Maher & Leonard, 2007). Retired people also wanted to use the skills they developed and used when in a paid job (Brayley et al., 2014). Older volunteers experienced specific challenges to volunteering, particularly in relation to declining health, mobility and transport to and from volunteering opportunities (Martinez, Crooks, Kim & Tanner, 2011). Older people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were often reluctant to commit to formalised volunteering, or to get involved in structured activities involving a fixed schedule. This makes them ideal candidates for episodic volunteering. Episodic volunteering roles are likely to be most appealing to older people when they are flexible, take advantage of an individual's existing skills, appeal to their interests and take into account physical capabilities (Martinez et al., 2011).

Executive summary (continued)

An analysis of the differences between local and international episodic volunteering suggests specific challenges that should be considered. While motivations are likely to differ according to the type of international episodic volunteering opportunity (for example, a sporting mega-event versus a humanitarian aid initiative) an emphasis on adequate training and support, and education around cultural practices and systems should be built into volunteering opportunities (Asgary & Junck, 2013; Zavitz & Butz, 2011). In addition, repeat volunteers for events may be motivated by a sense of nostalgia (for a previous experience) and a sense of community among their group of fellow volunteers; therefore, emphasising these factors when promoting new volunteering opportunities may be beneficial, especially since experienced volunteers are highly valued (Fairley, Kellett & Green, 2007).

Recommendations

Based on the research and evaluations reviewed, evidence-based recommendations for episodic volunteer programs include:

1. Ensuring that the types of roles offered to episodic volunteers being:

a. Identified through consultation with key stakeholders

b. Engaging and meaningful

c. Flexible and offering a range options to potential volunteers

d. Clearly defined, with written position descriptions

2. Gaining a sound understanding of the motivations and preferences of episodic volunteers for the specific organisation and type of volunteering opportunity being offered

3. Ensuring the development of customised marketing communications according to motivations of volunteers and the particular volunteering opportunity available. This is likely to vary for specific types of volunteers, such as older, one-off events and international humanitarian episodic volunteers

4. Preparing governance structures for programs utilising episodic volunteers that include the following key elements:

a. Carefully matching the specific skills, knowledge and motivations of individual volunteers with suitable volunteering roles

b. Appropriate levels of training and orientation for the roles being performed, while keeping resource expenditure to a minimum

c. Appropriate levels of supervision and monitoring, including providing a contact person to whom volunteers can go for guidance, and ensuring supervisors are available and communicate effectively with volunteers

d. Recognising and rewarding volunteers appropriately according to the type of role they are performing

e. Evaluating episodic volunteering programs in terms of whether goals are met, but also in terms of the satisfaction of volunteers with their experience

5. Utilising a range of communication channels to inform people about opportunities for episodic volunteering, particularly using the internet and social media

6. Where possible, extending a personal invitation to past volunteers to increase bounce back for future volunteering opportunities.

1. Introduction

Most literature in the area of volunteering tends to focus on regular volunteers (also known as long-term or traditional volunteers). However, there is also a growing trend toward people wanting volunteering opportunities that require less commitment, and are short-term or 'one-off' activities. People who prefer these types of roles are known as 'episodic volunteers' (Dunn et al., 2016). Episodic volunteering tends to be more suitable for people who are time poor, including young people, full-time workers and individuals with higher incomes (Holmes, 2014). Episodic volunteering enables people to volunteer in time-limited or one-off contexts, and these types of opportunities are estimated to account for just under half of all volunteering roles (Brudney & Meijs, 2009). People who are interested in episodic volunteering tend to have motivations differing from those who volunteer on a more regular or long-term basis.

Bryen and Madden (2006) define episodic volunteers as 'volunteers who prefer to have short term volunteering assignments rather than traditional long term volunteering opportunities' (p. 8). This encompasses a diverse range of activities – from volunteering at an annual school fete to volunteering at a larger and less-frequent event such as the Olympic Games. It also encompasses the work of so-called 'grey nomads': older people who travel from place to place and take up local volunteering opportunities in the places they stay (Leonard & Onyx, 2009).

One of the key factors characterising episodic volunteering is the clear, and relatively short-term, time boundaries around their volunteering activities. Although episodic volunteering has always existed, researchers have only relatively recently begun to examine episodic volunteering more closely as a discrete form of volunteering. It is now recognised as a genuine alternative to traditional, ongoing or regular volunteering (Bryen & Madden, 2006). Despite this increased attention, much is still not known about how to best manage episodic volunteering programs, and how to engage and retain volunteers who, by definition, have only committed to a short-term involvement with the program.

This rapid review aims to add to the considerable literature on governance of regular volunteers, by examining the strategies that lead to optimal governance of episodic volunteers. It also aims to identify challenges to attracting and retaining episodic volunteers by examining the motivations that characterise this group. Finally, recommendations for the management of episodic volunteering programs are offered to inform best practice.

1. Introduction (continued)

1.1 Aims

The aim of this rapid literature review is to provide a review and evidence-based recommendations regarding best practice in the governance of flexible time-limited episodic volunteer programs. In order to achieve this, the following research questions were considered:

1. What governance structures are most effective for episodic volunteering programs, particularly in terms of:

a. How programs are structured and managed

b. How volunteering opportunities are communicated to potential volunteers.

2. What are they key issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering programs?

3. What evidence-based recommendations can be derived for Australian organisations wanting to offer opportunities for episodic volunteering?

1.2 Method

1.2.1 Rapid review

This review utilised a rapid literature review methodology. Rapid reviews streamline traditional systematic review methods in order to achieve a synthesis of evidence within a short timeframe. Streamlining can be achieved while still enabling the key evidence to be synthesised in a rapid review by introducing restrictions at the literature searching and data extraction stages of the process. Such strategies include limitations on date and language of publication, the number of electronic databases searched and searches of unpublished literature. Importantly, evidence comparing rapid reviews and full systematic reviews found that the overall conclusions did not vary significantly (Watt et al., 2008).

1.2.2 Search strategy

The search strategy utilised databases of academic literature (for example, ProQuest, PsycINFO, ABI/IFORM) and was supplemented with grey literature identified using internet search engines (for example, Google Scholar) and searches of relevant Australian and international websites (for example, Volunteering Australia). Reference lists of the included articles and reports were also scanned to retrieve any additional literature which was directly relevant to the research questions.

Keywords included combinations of the following: (volunteering, volunteers, philanthropy); (episodic, short term, project based, time limited, flexible); (governance, management, program, strategy, framework); (communication, marketing, message, advertising, promotion); (outcome, efficacy, effectiveness, evaluation); (recruitment, retention, motivation).

1. Introduction (continued)

1.2.3 Inclusion and exclusion

Research questions 1 and 2 primarily focused on literature published from 2007 to 2017. A ten-year time period was expected to capture relevant literature on episodic volunteering. While much literature (both academic and grey) has focused on volunteering more generally, episodic volunteering is a smaller subset of this research and is therefore expected to generate fewer results. A ten-year time period is therefore necessary to capture a sufficient amount of literature/data. Exceptions were made for research pre-2007 if:

1. It provided insight or context which is important for understanding subsequent studies included in this review

2. It is included as a seminal part of a recent systematic review identified as part of the search

3. Very little relevant or useful research is identified in the 2007–2017 period.

Articles with evaluation data were prioritised over those simply describing an approach or strategy.

The review includes academic and grey literature from Australia as a priority, but international literature was also included where it was directly relevant to the research questions. International research on episodic volunteering may provide useful insights that are transferrable to the Australian context.

Excluded articles were those deemed to be of little relevance to the research questions (for example, literature about governance unrelated to volunteering), editorials, opinion pieces, commentaries and literature published prior to 2000.

Research with robust methodology (for example, randomised controlled trials, systematic reviews, longitudinal design) was prioritised over research utilising less rigorous methodology (for example, cross-sectional designs, convenience samples); however, no randomised controlled trials of this topic exist. Systematic reviews have been included, and represent the best quality evidence available for this research topic.

A previous literature review by the same authors (Randle & Reis, 2017) provides an in-depth examination of models of volunteering governance more broadly. The scarcity of literature addressing governance of episodic volunteers specifically is a significant limitation to the current review, and restricts the amount of data that is presented. Thus, it is recommended that this review be considered alongside the previous review, in order to provide a full elucidation of the literature around governance of volunteers.

This method resulted in 33 articles for inclusion in the present review.

1.2.4 Report structure

This review is structured in accordance with the aims and research questions posed. Effective governance for episodic volunteering programs is considered first, including management structures and communication of volunteer opportunities. This is followed by a review of the key issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering programs. Finally, recommendations are offered for Australian organisations offering episodic volunteering programs.

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs

2.1 Conceptualisation of episodic volunteers

Brudney and Meijs (2014) conducted a review of literature to identify and evaluate models of volunteer management. Although this review did not specifically focus on episodic volunteering, some of the findings can still be applied to a short-term volunteering context. For example, Rehnborg et al. (2009) developed a two-dimensional model of volunteering, with time spent volunteering (short-term/episodic versus long-term/ongoing) as a means of deciding an appropriate governance approach. Additionally, volunteers' approach to their position should be considered – either affiliation focused (that is, the volunteer shows an interest in the cause and wants to be aligned with the organisation's mission) or skills focused (that is, the volunteer wants to utilise their existing skills or acquire new ones). Using these two dimensions, volunteers can be classified into four groups (see Randle & Reis, 2017), two of which are relevant to the study of episodic volunteering (Rehnborg et al., 2009).

The *short-term generalist* volunteer is an affiliation-focused episodic volunteer (for example, volunteers for a charity fun run or a community cultural event). Management of these volunteers may be enhanced by managers who can demonstrate passion for and knowledge of the particular cause. Furthermore, managers of short-term generalist volunteers should have planning or project management expertise, have strong communication skills, and have time allocated for communicating with volunteers. Essentially, these managers should have time available to provide support for the volunteer.

Processes for managing short-term generalist volunteers may include: collecting and creating a database of contact details (for follow-up and subsequent opportunities); and budget allocations for things like volunteer refreshments and small tokens of thanks to recognise their contribution.

On the other hand, *short-term specialist* volunteers are skills-focused episodic volunteers (for example, healthcare professionals providing emergency care after a natural disaster). The level of experience/skill of the specialist volunteers makes them highly valuable to the organisation, and this may be reflected in the types of tasks and level of responsibility they are given. Volunteer managers should be:

- Prepared to tell the story of the organisation and relate the particular mission to it

- Skilled at recruiting and screening suitable volunteers

- Prepared to job-sculpt positions (that is, modify tasks and responsibilities to suit the volunteer's skills and knowledge)

- Able to allow time to follow up and support these volunteers and monitor their progress.

Because the skills these volunteers bring to the organisation are highly valued, they should be viewed as equal to paid staff performing similar roles, and not be treated as subordinates. One way this could be achieved is by sharing information about the organisation with volunteers so they can properly prepare for their role and the complexities it may involve.

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

Some researchers have used organisational analysis to determine the value of volunteer labour resources in the non-profit sector. Handy and Brudney (2007) reviewed the value of episodic volunteers to organisations, and provide an analysis of how the costs and benefits of involving episodic volunteers may be best balanced to optimise benefits for the organisation. Their analysis suggests that while episodic volunteers are the most inexpensive type of volunteer for the organisation, they also generate the least benefits due to their wavering commitment. Handy and Brudney also note that because of the increasing popularity of episodic volunteering, the non-profit sector must embrace these types of volunteers in order to maintain volunteer supply. They suggest two ways of conceptualising episodic volunteers that may be beneficial for non-profit organisations, which are broadly similar to the classifications proposed by Rehnborg et al. (2009). The first involves episodic volunteers engaging in tasks that are low level and do not require any significant training, support, orientation or other infrastructure. The second involves more experienced episodic volunteers being utilised effectively as unpaid consultants who contribute to organisational productivity at a higher level.

Handy and Brudney (2007) also identify benefits associated with the involvement of episodic volunteers in the work of non-profit organisations, including that they effectively build social capital in the organisation and increase perceived links between the organisation and the community. For example, festivals that rely on large numbers of short-term staff would not be possible without episodic volunteers. They also have the added benefits of increasing tourism and bringing together the local community.

Volunteer Canada (2006) elucidate other benefits of utilising episodic volunteers in emergency response situations, including:

- Increasing organisational capacity to deal with major health emergencies when they occur

- Being able to maintain regular (or core) services in times of emergency

- Episodic volunteers bringing specialised skills or knowledge that is lacking in the organisation

- Using post-event evaluations including information from episodic volunteers to report to public health authorities

- Some tasks (which require little training) may be done by episodic volunteers, freeing up more essential disaster management staff to focus on the emergency at hand

- Using episodic volunteers may help to build the long-term volunteer base, because they may wish to stay involved or make a larger commitment to the organisation in the future.

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

2.2 Management of episodic volunteers

Much research has focused on volunteer management more broadly (for a review, see Randle & Reis, 2017); however, the findings may still be applicable to episodic volunteering. Hager and Brudney (2004) provide research on volunteer management practices in charity organisations and congregations. They report data from a large-scale qualitative survey of volunteer administrators or executive managers from nearly 3000 American charities who utilise volunteers. Eighty per cent of charities were found to utilise volunteers for their various activities. Results identify the types of management practices were commonly adopted and the extent to which they were adopted (to a large degree or to some degree) by the organisations:

• Regular supervision and communication with volunteers – 67 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 30 per cent to some degree.

• Liability coverage and insurance for volunteers – 46 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 26 per cent to some degree.

• Regular collection of data regarding number of volunteers and their hours worked – 45 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 32 per cent to some degree.

• Screening procedures for volunteer suitability – 45 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 42 per cent to some degree.

• Written job descriptions and policies – 44 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 37 per cent to some degree.

• Recognition activities (for example, award ceremonies) – 35 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 47 per cent to some degree.

• Measurement of volunteer impact – 30 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 32 per cent to some degree.

• Training/professional development for the volunteers – 25 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 49 per cent to some degree.

• Training for paid staff who work with the volunteers – 19 per cent adopted this to a large degree, with an additional 46 per cent to some degree.

Management practices significantly associated with retention of volunteers were recognition activities, offering training and professional development for volunteers, and screening procedures for suitability. Contrary to expectations, regular supervision and communication was negatively related to retention. The authors argue that this finding does not indicate a need to do away with this practice, but that organisations may supervise and communicate with volunteers in a way that makes the position seem similar to their daily jobs, rather than an enjoyable, rewarding activity. Increasing support and communication may also reflect an attempt to manage low retention rates. Retention was also lower for charities without the funds available to allocate to support their volunteers. The value that charities placed on their volunteers also affected retention: those that trusted their volunteers to act as 'spokespeople' for their organisation, for example, communicated one on one with volunteers, and reported a greater number of benefits associated with their volunteer program tended to retain volunteers more readily.

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

Hager and Brudney (2004) also found that adoption of management practices depended on the size of the organisation, with larger charities more likely to have adopted these practices than smaller ones. Additionally, organisations that used volunteers in direct service roles (for example, mentoring, tutoring roles) were more likely to have adopted management practices than those with no direct contact with clients (for example, volunteers who help with the running of the charity). This may reflect the level of care that is necessary when an organisation allows direct client contact. Demands that service quality can be maintained are a likely motivator for the implementation of management practices. Health-based charities were also found to have adopted management practices to a greater degree than other charities (for example, those involved in arts, culture or humanities, education and environmental charities).

Taken together, the results of Hager and Brudney (2004) have implications for the management of volunteers. While adoption of management practices is important to retain (or encourage bounce back) of volunteers, charities should go further and:

• Allocate funds for supporting volunteers

• Create a culture where they feel valued and welcome

• Enlist volunteers to recruit other volunteers.

Therefore, a focus on management practices should be complemented by an investment in infrastructure and culture. It is likely that these principles can be extended to the episodic volunteering context.

Focusing on episodic volunteering more specifically, Handy and Brudney (2007) suggest that the productivity of episodic volunteers can be increased by ensuring that volunteer management practices are efficient and well coordinated. This involves:

• Well-defined tasks, with a distinct completion point

• Tasks tailored for short-term involvement, which are manageable in short timeframes

• The development of a list of routine jobs or tasks to accommodate those volunteering on a 'drop-in' basis

• Tasks that can be done with little or no supervision (for example, mass mailouts)

• Keeping costs of preparation nil or minimal (for example, costs for orientation, training, supervision and so on), and instead funnel these resources into volunteer recognition

• In cases where expert services are utilised on a pro bono basis (for example, unpaid consultants), accommodate higher costs (for example, for support, orientation, training), because these types of jobs are crucial to productivity.

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

Guidelines for project-based volunteering may also be used to inform episodic volunteering governance. Project volunteers, like episodic volunteers, tend to be people who want a clear beginning, middle and end for their work, and do not have time available to be involved in longer-term activities. Volunteering Queensland (2017a) provides information for organisations on how to best develop, implement and evaluate project-based volunteering programs. They suggest offering a variety of projects with flexible timeframes, because this has the potential to appeal to a diverse range of volunteers. Six steps are recommended to effectively manage project-based volunteers:

1. Conducting a needs assessment prior to recruitment – to identify projects or tasks that require volunteers and also whether the tasks involved are suitable for volunteers

2. Consulting with stakeholders – to ascertain what types of activities other stakeholders perceive as appropriate for short-term volunteers

3. Defining the project scope – including what the project will involve, who volunteers will communicate with and get support from, and consideration of the barriers volunteers may face to doing their work and how these may be overcome

4. Engaging volunteers – by training and preparing them for work on the project

5. Monitoring project progress and outcomes – to ensure quality

6. Evaluating the project – with particular focus on whether aims were achieved, the benefits of the project (for both volunteers and the organisation) and whether volunteers intend to return for other projects in future.

Burkham and Boleman (2005) note that, while there are an increasing number of people interested in pursuing episodic volunteering opportunities, volunteer administrators often report difficulties managing these types of volunteers. They provide suggestions for overcoming the challenges of managing episodic volunteers, including:

• Developing creative ways of utilising episodic volunteers – by brainstorming with paid staff and other regular volunteers to create appropriate work opportunities for episodic volunteers

• Designing meaningful tasks for episodic volunteers – which take advantage of their skills, rather than only menial tasks

• Developing an effective episodic volunteering system – which may involve training paid staff on how to support episodic volunteers, planning who will train and supervise episodic volunteers, using existing longer-term volunteers as mentors or team leaders, and inviting staff members who have had success working with episodic volunteers in the past to help recruit new episodic volunteers

• Providing orientation and support for episodic volunteers – which may include developing a brief (for example, 15-minute) orientation program, providing clear, concise, standardised instructions for tasks, and clarifying who volunteers can direct questions or concerns to

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

- Allowing episodic volunteers to start tasks immediately – and intervene immediately if confusion or problems arise; because time is limited and commitment may be low, it is important to engage the episodic volunteer early on and continue the positive connection with the organisation

- Taking a creative and flexible approach to work – which may include flexible hours arranged around what is most convenient for the episodic volunteer.

The recommendations of Volunteering Queensland (2017a) and Burkham and Boleman (2005) therefore differ from those of Handy and Brudney (2007), in that these strategies necessarily include training and orientation, which involves a greater investment of time and resources than providing lower-level, menial tasks that require little if any instruction. Previous literature reviews (for example, Randle & Reis, 2017) have also reported that volunteers in general do not enjoy being limited to tasks which they view as menial, and prefer to perform tasks they believe to be meaningful (Volunteering Queensland, 2017b); therefore, providing creative and engaging tasks for episodic volunteers is recommended.

2.2.1 One-off event episodic volunteers

In their study of episodic volunteers at a large-scale religious event, Cnaan et al. (2017) generated findings which are particularly relevant for managing large groups of episodic volunteers at one-off event. They found interesting nuances in terms of effective recruitment, training, task assignments, supervision and appreciation of event volunteers. Key insights for each of these domains are summarised below:

- Recruitment: various methods for recruitment were used, including websites, Facebook pages, Twitter, word of mouth, corporate and collegiate outreach, and traditional media (television and radio). Overall, the most common way volunteers found out about the volunteering opportunity was the internet (26 per cent), followed by through the local parish or congregation (19 per cent), mass media (16 per cent), through family and friends (15 per cent) and through work (nine per cent).

- Training: options for training for the event included one-hour webinars, which were used to train 82 per cent of volunteers. There was also a mobile app and face-to-face training options. Webinars were also posted to YouTube following their completion. Older people were significantly more likely to use the webinar training than younger people; while younger people were more likely to make use of the mobile app.

- Task assignments: six types of roles were available to volunteers, and they were asked to submit preferences according to the role and shift time, with 81 per cent reporting receiving their preferences and 90 per cent reporting being comfortable with their role. While almost all volunteers (90 per cent) completed their assigned tasks, some reported low satisfaction in follow-up surveys, particularly that they did not feel well utilised (although statistics regarding the proportion of volunteers who felt this way was not reported by the authors).

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

- Supervision: a strong relationship was found between volunteer satisfaction and both supervisor availability and quality of service provided by volunteer management. Furthermore, these two factors were also related to the intention to volunteer again, indicating that quality of supervision and communication with management may be an important determinant of episodic volunteers returning (also commonly referred to as volunteer 'bounce back').

- Recognition: small tokens of appreciation were given to all volunteers. When asked to recall these gifts, participants were most likely to recall being given a t-shirt, backpack and hat (90 per cent of participants). However, less than half recalled receiving thank you emails/letters, being thanked by a supervisor or snacks. Thus, tangible gifts and keepsakes may have been the most memorable in this case.

2.2.2 Emergency response episodic volunteers

Volunteer Canada (2006) provides guidelines on the management of emergency response episodic volunteers. Based on a review of the literature, a number of recommendations for best practice in managing episodic volunteers were developed. Best practice management components included:

- Recruitment – identify human resource needs for both volunteers and regular staff members and conduct an evaluation of the capacity of the organisation to effectively manage new volunteers

- Screening – appropriate screening measures should be undertaken, even in times of health emergency (this may include things like police background checks, writing of position descriptions, application forms, checking references or interviewing potential volunteers)

- Intake and orientation procedures – concise orientation including details of the organisations role and responsibilities, clients they serve, and the disaster and response itself

- Training – this may involve pre-training existing volunteers to assist in managing the episodic volunteers, recruiting volunteers in advance, developing task lists and job descriptions, designing programs that fast-track the training process, and developing a process to monitor and track volunteer qualifications/certification

- Placement – careful selection and matching of volunteer to role. Unaffiliated volunteers (those with no link to the organisation or prior experience with it) should not be placed alone, and should be supervised at all times. Access to confidential or sensitive information should not be allowed, and risk should be minimised for this type of volunteer

- Retention – volunteer recognition, training and professional development for volunteers, and accurate matching of volunteer to task have the potential to increase retention. Retention rates were also thought to be related to a positive organisational climate, and organisational investment in volunteers because they are viewed as an important resource

- Volunteer referral – a referral process so that volunteers may be sent to assist at another organisation should all roles be filled

- Information management – databases of episodic volunteers to track involvement may provide useful information, but can also allow quick mobilisation of volunteers during a health emergency.

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

2.2.3 International humanitarian episodic volunteers

Asgary and Junck (2013) also examined both ethical and humanitarian considerations regarding short-term humanitarian medical volunteer tourism from an organisational perspective (these types of volunteers would be classified as 'short-term specialist' volunteers by Rehnborg et al., 2009). Their critical analysis highlights barriers to, and recommendations for, the ethical use of healthcare professionals (including undergraduate students) as volunteers in this context. These include:

- A lack of educational resources for international and low resource medicine, and a lack of widespread availability of these. For example, some of the (few) educational resources available can only be accessed if the organisation is affiliated with a larger organisation (for example, the International Federation of the Red Cross). These are usually directed towards training of already certified clinicians, and thus are targeted above the knowledge level of the types of trainees who are likely to volunteer.

- Additional training in procedures outside of regular daily Western medical practices (for example, microscopy, lumbar punctures, ultrasound) is required. Also, training in the cultural standards of care (such as the local healthcare system, epidemiology and cultural competencies) would be beneficial, with written materials used to supplement in-person teaching sessions.

- There is a need to develop standardised and centrally available educational resources for particular levels and types of medical volunteers, and more intensive courses should be made available for those who have already completed basic training.

- On application for these types of roles, the organisation should be responsible for ensuring volunteers have the necessary skills to undertake this kind of humanitarian volunteering. This may involve a thorough interview process covering aspects such as knowledge, past experience, ability to deal with ethical challenges, response to stress and interest in long-term work of this nature.

- Undergraduate trainees should only be accepted if they have the necessary skills to undertake the tasks required of volunteers, and should have resources allocated to allow supervision and support during their deployment.

- The organisation should undertake monitoring and evaluation of the care provided by volunteers to ensure standards are being met.

- Volunteers should be briefed, debriefed and supported on the job, via teaching and open discussion about stress management, burnout and care-based ethical preparation.

- Guidelines and/or frameworks for making difficult ethical decisions in humanitarian contexts, along with a set of practical questions to assist in evaluating ethical dilemmas, should be provided to volunteers.

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

2.3 Communicating opportunities for episodic volunteering

2.3.1 Marketing messages

The messages used to communicate opportunities for volunteering are most effective when they align with people's motivations for wanting to become involved and the benefits associated with the volunteering activity (Randle & Reis, 2016b). Research has demonstrated that people react more positively towards advertisements for volunteering opportunities if they include messages that match their own personal motivations for volunteering, as compared to advertisements with messages that do not match their motivations (Clary et al., 1998). Ideally, messages are communicated in ways that are meaningful and motivating to the target audience.

While longitudinal research on episodic volunteer motivations was not identified in this review, some authors have provided high-level evidence in the form of systematic reviews. Dunn et al. (2016) conducted a systematic review on motivations for episodic volunteering. Their synthesis of 33 studies also identified motivations according to the sector in which the volunteering opportunity was offered (for example, events, sports, tourism). Most articles identified for the review were from the United States (15), with eight from Australia, four from both Canada and Europe, one from the United Kingdom and one which included data from multiple countries. When data from all sectors was considered together, the most commonly reported motivations for episodic volunteering were: helping others in the community; socialising and meeting new people; and a desire to help a particular organisation or cause.

However, differences emerged when results were analysed according to 'sector'. Charity-based volunteering tended to be more altruistically motivated, including a desire to raise funds for the cause, having a personal connection with the cause and a desire to 'give something back' in memory of a loved one. In contrast, volunteering at cultural or sporting events (event-based volunteering) tended to be motivated by the recognition received and tangible benefits (for example, tokens of appreciation), improving fitness or health, social pressure to volunteer, a love of sport and a desire to be involved in sporting events. The type of motivation was also found to predict retention and frequency of volunteering across these studies, with volunteers who reported being motivated by wanting to help others and socialising more likely to volunteer again.

Demographic differences in motivations were also evident. Women were more likely to be motivated by wanting to help others, a desire for personal growth or a challenge and a wish to be involved with the cause. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to cite material benefits, an enjoyment of sport and physical activity as motivators for episodic volunteering (Dunn et al., 2016).

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

Overall, this review suggests that episodic volunteers are primarily motivated by altruistic and social factors (Dunn et al., 2016). Attracting volunteers for these kinds of experiences may involve the use of messages that appeal to these motivations. Because motivations for volunteering at charity events tend to be altruistic in nature, recruitment messages emphasising the nature of the cause and the potential to help others would be expected to increase volunteer numbers. For sporting or event-related episodic volunteering, marketing messages should emphasise the prestigious nature of the event, the value of being personally involved in it and also the benefits this may have for physical health and fitness.

Other systematic reviews on motivations for volunteering have identified differences between the motivations of episodic volunteers and regular volunteers. Hyde, Dunn, Scuffham and Chambers (2014) conducted a systematic review of 20 articles, primarily from the United States and Canada, examining volunteering in the public health and social welfare sectors. Regular volunteers tended to cite social motivations more often, but these were rated less important for episodic volunteers – possibly because of the short-term nature of their work and the lack of opportunity to form lasting social relationships in this context. Less than half of episodic volunteers reported having formed relationships because of their volunteering. Overall, Hyde et al. (2014), like Dunn et al. (2016), found that episodic volunteers are altruistically motivated and wish to support an important cause and help others. However, episodic volunteers are also motivated by psychological factors (for example, a sense

of self-esteem from participating, a sense of accomplishment), physical enhancement factors (for example, enjoying a physical challenge) and also social factors. However, Hyde et al. (2014) note that the reliance on cross-sectional designs, the failure to control for potentially influential demographic factors (for example, gender and age) and the dominance of United States-based research suggests a need for well-controlled prospective research from a wider variety of cultural contexts.

Some research has analysed cross-cultural data from episodic volunteers. Handy et al. (2010) conducted a large-scale (n = 9482) study spanning nine countries to examine the motivations of episodic volunteers. In particular, they were interested in student volunteering as a product of two motivational facets: résumé building and value signalling. The authors hypothesised that the greater the positive signalling value of volunteering (that is, volunteering being seen as an indicator of positive personal characteristics which may lead to career enhancement), the more likely students were to volunteer. Questionnaires were administered to approximately 600 students in each of 12 countries: the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, the Netherlands, India, Israel, Japan, Korea and China. Results show that students who reported being highly motivated by résumé building were significantly less likely to volunteer than those who reported altruistic motivations. Résumé building was more often reported as a reason for volunteering by students in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom than students in other countries. However, altruistic motivations were the only positive motivational predictor

2. Governance of episodic volunteering programs (continued)

of the amount of time spent volunteering. This cross-national study suggests that, for student populations, altruistic reasons for volunteering may be effective promotional messages when presented alongside career advancement messages in order to increase student volunteering. However, while this study featured a large and culturally diverse sample, it was cross-sectional in nature, and therefore may not allow elucidation of the (potential) causal nature of motivations in relation to volunteering.

2.3.2 Communication channels

Generally, reviews of various social marketing campaigns have found that using a wide range of communication channels to distribute messages is most effective in trying to influence community attitudes or, in this case, volunteering behaviour (Randle & Reis, 2016a; 2016b). While mass media can be a useful way of reaching a large number of people in the general population, it tends to be relatively expensive and beyond the budget of many volunteering organisations.

In terms of recruiting episodic volunteers, researchers have reported the internet as being particularly effective. In their study of episodic volunteers at a religious mega-event, the highest proportion of volunteers (26 per cent) reported having heard about the one-off volunteering opportunity through the internet (Cnaan et al., 2017). Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, can spread information quickly when people 'like' or 'share' posts about short-term or one-off volunteering opportunities.

If particular types of people are the target of marketing communications for specific episodic volunteering opportunities, it may be that certain communication channels are more appropriate in reaching them. For example, Cnaan et al. (2017) found that men are more likely than women to hear about one-off volunteering opportunities through mainstream media (for example, television or radio); while women are more likely than men to hear about such opportunities through social groups such as family and friends. Older people (over 65 years) were also more likely to hear about it through traditional media; while younger people were more likely to hear it from family and friends. Cnaan et al. (2017) also found a strong association between hearing about the event at work and volunteering with a group of work colleagues.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering

3.1 Retention of episodic volunteers

A cross-sectional survey conducted by Hyde et al. (2016) examined motivations of episodic volunteers in Australia utilising a volunteer process model combined with a three-stage model of volunteer service. The volunteer process model is organised according to three key features of the volunteering process (antecedents, experiences and consequences) and considers the impact of these at different levels (individual, interpersonal, organisational, societal). For example, antecedents of volunteering at the individual level might include psychological processes (for example, decision making, motives and expectations); whereas experience variables at the individual level might include aspects such as satisfaction with the volunteering opportunity, and therefore, the consequences would be likely to include retention (or lack thereof).

To complement this framework, the three-stage model of volunteers' duration of service was integrated. This model adds temporal estimates regarding the likelihood of retention under certain conditions. Under this model, motivation and satisfaction are thought to influence retention and intention to volunteer again in the short term; while organisational commitment is proposed as the main predictor of volunteer retention in the long term. The combination of these two models is argued to provide a more holistic model of episodic volunteer retention, because it incorporates predictions regarding both the setting and stage of the volunteer lifecycle.

In order to uncover different stages of the volunteer lifecycle, participants for this study were categorised as:

- novice episodic volunteers (first time volunteering, n = 80)
- transition episodic volunteers (volunteered sporadically over a period of two to four years, n = 157)
- sustained episodic volunteers (who volunteered five or six years in a row, n = 103).

Episodic volunteer retention was measured via self-reports of intention to continue volunteering. Other variables, including motives, psychological sense of community, social norms, satisfaction and organisational commitment, were also measured for the 340 episodic volunteers. Participants were all team leaders in a popular cancer fundraising event 'Relay for Life'. The majority of the sample was female (89 per cent), with ages ranging from 13 to 77 years (mean = 50 years).

Findings related to *novice episodic volunteers* reveal that decisions to continue volunteering were related to self-oriented motives (for example, spending time with friends and family, having fun), but not related to other-oriented motives (for example, 'fighting back' against cancer). Furthermore, increased retention of this group was related to greater perceptions of social norms, suggesting that the social support (possibly offered by friends or family) was an important predictor of retention. Finally, findings indicate that satisfaction, rather than organisational commitment, was important for novice episodic volunteers.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

However, *transition and sustained episodic volunteers* demonstrated different characteristics. For these groups, organisational commitment was related to retention, but a sense of connection to the community was not. A sense of community was defined in terms of geographical boundaries for the purposes of Hyde et al.'s (2016) study. Results may have differed if a sense of community had instead been defined in terms of the 'Relay for Life' event or cancer supporter communities. Other variables important to the retention of these episodic volunteers included financial motivations (for example, providing financial help to the cause), and also social norms – particularly for sustained episodic volunteers who were more likely to report having a close familial link or personal experience with cancer. Satisfaction was again a predictor of retention for transition and sustained episodic volunteers, suggesting that satisfaction is an important factor in volunteer retention across all stages of the episodic volunteer lifecycle.

Results from the Hyde et al. study are highly relevant to the study of episodic volunteering in the Australian context, and allow analysis of different needs and motivations according to volunteer lifecycle. Thus, effective messages targeting novice episodic volunteers might focus on the social support offered when engaging in these types of volunteer activities; whereas longer-term episodic volunteers might be more motivated by messages focusing on the qualities of the organisation, loyalty and goodwill. Because this research used cross-sectional design and intention to continue volunteering was used as a proxy measure of retention, further longitudinal research should consider whether these measures are an accurate indicator of actual retention of episodic volunteers for this type of event.

Bryen and Madden (2006) conducted a qualitative study in Australia to examine the critical success factors that may be used to re-engage episodic volunteers, and compared this to methods commonly used to retain regular volunteers. The authors use the phrase 'bounce back' to describe the repeated engagement of episodic volunteers within a particular organisation. Motivations to bounce back were examined using semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups. The volunteering activity in this study involved a 'Bushcare' program, which aimed to regenerate and preserve natural bush environments in the local community. Episodic volunteers (n = 5, aged 45–65) participated in semi-structured in-depth interviews; while groups leaders who were involved in managing the volunteers participated in focus groups (n = 5).

These data collection methods produced qualitative findings suggesting that the primary motivation for episodic volunteers in this context was environmental preservation (an altruistic motive), and this drove their decision to bounce back. A sense of community was also a primary motivating factor, with a need to 'give something back to the community' commonly cited as a reason for returning. Consistent with other episodic volunteer research, social factors (for example, developing friendships, having fun) also played a part in volunteers repeatedly returning; whereas egoistic motivations (for example, being recognised or rewarded for their work) were rarely mentioned and were deemed by the authors to be insignificant in this small cohort. Rather, multiple and simultaneously held altruistic motivations were found to be responsible for episodic volunteering.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

From an organisational perspective, factors that increased bounce back potential of episodic volunteers have been found to differ from those of regular volunteers. While training has been linked to retention of regular volunteers (Randle & Reis, 2017), this was not found to be important to episodic volunteers and their intention to bounce back. Episodic volunteers for Bushcare also felt that the rewards they received from performing an altruistic activity such as bush regeneration were sufficient, and they therefore did not require additional extrinsic rewards or recognition from the organisation – another factor found to distinguish them from regular volunteers. In this study, episodic volunteers were motivated by the personal sense of satisfaction they received from taking part. However, they did emphasise the importance of feeling appreciated by their group leaders and other volunteers in their group.

Making volunteers feel welcome was cited by both group leaders and the volunteers themselves as an important factor determining bounce back. Therefore, while altruistic motives were the most frequently cited, providing a welcoming environment and showing appreciation of volunteers made it more likely that volunteers would return. In addition, the findings suggest that one of the aspects episodic volunteers enjoyed most about their role was the care and appreciation from supervisors, and also the provision of refreshments and opportunities to have some social time during breaks between volunteering activities.

Overall, the findings of Bryen and Madden (2006) suggest two main factors that motivate episodic volunteers to keep returning, or 'bouncing back'. The first is if the individual had been personally asked to be involved as a volunteer. Thus, it is recommended that episodic volunteers are contacted personally and invited to volunteer – possibly by someone they know who is already involved with the organisation. The second is if the volunteer can see that their work makes a tangible difference to the bushland area. Thus, follow-up activities, either at the conclusion of volunteering or afterwards, highlighting the difference that has been made by the volunteers (for example, 'before and after' photographs or other evidence) may be useful in increasing bounce back of episodic volunteers.

While the small sample size and restricted age range (45–65 years) for Bryen and Madden's study (2006) means that generalisability to other types of volunteer activities and causes may be problematic, the in-depth results are specific to the experience of episodic volunteers and represent one of the few studies conducted in the Australian context. Findings also highlight potential differences between episodic volunteers and regular volunteers, which may provide insight into how to specifically target episodic volunteers through marketing and recruitment campaigns, and the design of volunteer work programs.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

3.2 Comparing episodic volunteers with regular volunteers

In addition to the systematic review provided by Hyde et al. (2014), other research has compared and distinguished between regular and episodic volunteers on a number of factors. For example, Holmes (2014) conducted an Australian study examining motivations for episodic volunteering in the tourism sector. Semi-structured interviews with episodic volunteers (n = 10) and regular volunteers (n = 10) were conducted, with qualitative data demonstrating differences in motivations for the two groups. While regular volunteers reported having been invited by a friend or family to perform their role, episodic volunteers tended to have actively sought out their role because of an intrinsic interest in the event or cause. Consistent with the findings of Hyde et al. (2014), regular volunteers were more likely to be motivated by social factors, and episodic volunteers instead tended to bring existing friends and/or family to volunteering opportunities. They were also more likely to be motivated by the desire to 'do something worthwhile', and often expressed motivations associated with a passion for the organisation or cause. Episodic volunteers also tended to think of regular volunteering – and the regular commitment this requires – as constraining their lifestyle. They expressed a need for spontaneity and flexibility in opportunities, and tended to have greater affiliation with the cause, rather than the organisation and its long-term operations.

Again in the tourism sector, Lockstone, Smith and Baum (2010) conducted a study in the United Kingdom examining the notion of flexibility in volunteering in the tourism sector. Taking both a volunteer and organisational perspective, their aim was to identify preferred flexibility options for individuals who volunteer. Three different forms of flexibility were identified:

- functional – volunteers can use multiple skills or shift between tasks (for example, job rotation)

- numerical – being able to change the size of the workforce at short notice (for example, job sharing)

- temporal – flexibility with quantity of staffing and timing (for example, shift work).

Lockstone et al.'s research used a cross-sectional survey methodology, with different questionnaires adapted for volunteers (n = 238) and organisations (n = 45). Of the volunteers, 153 were episodic volunteers and 83 were regular. Results reveal that temporal and numerical flexibility were more important to episodic volunteers; whereas functional flexibility was more important to regular volunteers.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

Another large-scale (n = 4081) cross-cultural study was provided by Smith et al. (2010), which again found differences between episodic volunteers and regulars. Participants were young people (school or university age) with an average age of 21 years. Within each cohort, 60–75 per cent was classified as an occasional (episodic) volunteer. The research of Smith et al. included participants from Australia (15 per cent), New Zealand (15 per cent), Canada (24 per cent), the United Kingdom (15 per cent) and the United States (32 per cent), and found that younger people tended to volunteer for different reasons than did older people. They reported a desire to gain work experience, add qualifications or learn new skills to assist them later in life (Smith et al., 2010).

Smith et al. (2010) also found that regular volunteers reported more altruistic motivations than non-volunteers or episodic volunteers; for example, wanting to learn about or assist an important cause. Social motivations (for example, peer pressure) were reported more frequently by episodic volunteers than regular volunteers and non-volunteers, and non-volunteers were more likely to perceive that volunteering was a function of career-related motivations (for example, to make business contacts or have material to include in their résumé). While this research is cross-sectional in nature and only involved young people predominantly from middle-income brackets, the inclusion of a group of non-volunteers in the analysis and the cross-cultural comparison addresses some concerns regarding the limited research in the area of episodic volunteering (for example, Kim & Cuskelly, 2017).

Cnaan and Handy (2005) provide a literature review on episodic volunteering in an attempt to provide insight into the nuances and differences between motivations of episodic volunteers and regulars. They note the plethora of research showing that episodic volunteers are not a significantly different group compared to regular volunteers in terms of sociodemographic characteristics such as age, education or gender. They also cite additional findings from a study of 129 episodic volunteers (Allison, Okun & Dutridge, 2002), that reveal that the main motivating factor for episodic volunteers was the value of the activity and the social engagement provided by the volunteering activity. This is consistent with findings from previous research which found that episodic volunteers felt the need to make a difference, emphasised altruistic motives and valued social motivation (Hyde et al., 2014). However, because Cnaan and Handy's study lacked a comparison group of regular volunteers, or those who engaged in both traditional and episodic volunteering, the extent to which the purported characteristics of episodic volunteers are unique to them is difficult to determine.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

Another study conducted by Hustinx, Haski-Leventhal and Handy (2008) in the United States attempted to compare episodic volunteers and regular volunteers at Philadelphia's Ronald McDonald House, an organisation which offers separate roles for episodic volunteers and other, more regular volunteers. The researchers predicted that key differences would be found between episodic volunteers and regular volunteers. Specifically, they hypothesised that regular volunteers would report more altruistic motives, higher satisfaction with their experiences and be more motivated by rewards and recognition than episodic volunteers. A cross-sectional survey methodology was used to collect data from 258 episodic volunteers and regular volunteers at Ronald McDonald House (aged 18–89, mean = 45 years), with 68 per cent of the sample classified as regular volunteers and 32 per cent classified as episodic or occasional volunteers.

Findings reveal significant differences between the two types of volunteers in terms of motivations – but not in the manner predicted. Episodic volunteers tended to be more motivated by values (the opportunity to give altruistically and display humanitarian concern) than were regular volunteers. The two types of volunteers did not differ significantly in terms of career enhancement motivations (for example, improving one's job skills) or self-enhancement motivations (for example, being appreciated by the staff and organisation as a whole).

Furthermore, episodic volunteers were more idealistic about their involvement with the organisation (for example, emphasising their sense of civic and religious duty, and a desire to make Philadelphia 'a better place'), and were also more likely to volunteer because they were asked to or because their friends volunteered. This supports the work of Bryen and Madden (2006), who found that being personally asked to volunteer was an important determinant of episodic volunteering. Also consistent with previous research, Hustinx et al. (2008) found that regular volunteers valued tangible rewards (for example, free parking, attendance at recognition events, certificates) to a greater extent than episodic volunteers. Thus, evidence suggests that spending resources such as time and money on tangible rewards for episodic volunteers might be of less value than providing similar recognition and rewards to regular volunteers.

Finally, the findings of Hustinx et al. (2008) demonstrate different levels of satisfaction according to the type of volunteer. Episodic volunteers were significantly less satisfied with the level of training and experience they received in their volunteer role, and were also less satisfied with the flexibility around when they could volunteer. This reinforces the relative importance of providing varying and flexible roles for episodic volunteers and, even for short-term roles, providing an appropriate level of training that allowed them to perform their role effectively.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

3.3 Specific types of episodic volunteers

3.3.1 Older episodic volunteers

A study by Onyx et al. (2007) provides Australian data on the experiences of 'grey nomads' – defined as 'people aged over 50 years who adopt an extended period of travel within Australia' (p. 124). Grey nomads often engage in volunteering opportunities in the towns they visit, and so constitute an important part of the Australian episodic volunteering workforce. In an attempt to uncover the motivations for volunteering among this group, and to identify tasks and jobs they might be most interested in performing, Onyx et al. (2007) used a combination of data collection methods, including ethnographic methods (with each of six participating towns treated as an in-depth case study) and surveys of grey nomads (n = 314).

Results indicate that grey nomads were motivated primarily by a wish to get to know some of the locals (77 per cent), learn something new (72 per cent), use their skills (69 per cent) and help the local town (67 per cent). In terms of the type of work they are interested in, more than 40 per cent either agreed or strongly agreed they would be interested in historical preservation, talking to primary school children about their lives, assisting with Aboriginal community projects, teaching a short course fitting with their skills and expertise, and assisting in a local land care project. Findings suggest that grey nomads have little interest in career enhancement, but demonstrate greater motivation around understanding, enhancement and social aspects of volunteering. Thus, efforts to recruit transient grey nomad episodic volunteers should focus on the opportunity to learn about and meet members of the local community.

Martinez and colleagues (2011) conducted a study in the United States to examine motivations for, and barriers to, volunteering among older, low socioeconomic and ethnically diverse populations. They noted that while regular or traditional volunteering tended to be highly valued within the community, the type of civic engagement commonly undertaken by older people was often ignored or undervalued. This includes informal activities (for example, helping a neighbour paint a fence) and also short-term episodic volunteering. The authors suggest that people who are older, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds experienced greater barriers to participation in volunteering activities. Using a mixed-methods design (focus groups and surveys) with 35 people over the age of 65 (mean age = 74), Martinez et al. (2011) identify notable barriers to volunteering for these groups, including:

- Health and medical problems (37 per cent); for example, illness, loss of mobility, lack of energy, loss of vision

- Lack of time (14 per cent)

- Transport issues and expenses (14 per cent)

- Lack of perceived 'match' between opportunities offered and the skills/interests of potential volunteers (11 per cent).

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

Facilitators of volunteering for older people included flexibility in the time commitment required, free parking or other assistance with transportation; and also, consistent with earlier research (for example, Bryen & Madden, 2006; Hustinx et al., 2008), being asked personally to be involved was a facilitator of volunteering. Thus, the findings of Martinez et al. (2011) suggest that older people from lower socioeconomic groups face particular hardships committing to formalised volunteering, and expressed reluctance to get involved in structured activities that involved a fixed schedule. This makes them ideal candidates for episodic volunteering. Episodic volunteering roles may be even more attractive to these groups when the opportunities are designed to be flexible, and take into account the sometimes deteriorating health of older people by providing them with transport options to facilitate their participation.

Australian research by Brayley et al. (2014) examines the validity of the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI, Clary et al., 1998) among 187 older adults engaging in episodic volunteering in rural non-profit agencies. They adapted the Volunteer Functions Inventory for the older population and derived six volunteering functions:

• Continuity (for example, volunteering would allow me to continue to use my professional knowledge and skills)

• Values (for example, I feel it is important to help others)

• Social (for example, people I'm close to want me to volunteer)

• Understanding and social connection (for example, I could explore my own strengths)

• Enhancement (for example, volunteering would make me feel important)

• Protective (for example, volunteering would be a good escape from my own problems).

Findings indicate that intention to take up episodic volunteering in the future was related to continuity motivations (that is, a need to continue to use one's skills or continue the work they were doing prior to retirement) and values motives (that is, wanting to show compassion and help others in the community). Thus, appealing to these kinds of motivations when promoting episodic volunteering opportunities to older people is likely to be effective. Offering roles that require higher-level skills and experience, and promoting the opportunity to keep a 'professional identity' are also likely to be motivating for older people. This kind of individualised matching of volunteers to roles is likely to provide a more satisfying volunteer experience and increase bounce back.

3.3.2 Episodic volunteering for one-off mega-events

Cnaan and colleagues (2017) used a cross-sectional survey to examine a large sample of one-off episodic volunteers (n = 2408) assisting with a religious mega-event in the United States (Pope Francis's visit to Philadelphia). The researchers' aim was to ascertain motivations for volunteering, as well as provide insights into how a large influx of episodic volunteers may be managed effectively. When asked about their motivations for volunteering, the most common response was to 'fulfil spiritual satisfaction' (77 per cent) followed by 'to fulfil emotional satisfaction' (55 per cent). This result is unsurprising, given the nature of the event and the fact that almost 90 per cent of episodic volunteers were also Catholic. Other motivations included 'to see Pope Francis up close' (45 per cent) and 'to set an example for others (family, children, friends)' (44 per cent).

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

Factors that positively impacted volunteer satisfaction included social aspects such as interaction with people from other countries and cities (25 per cent), being part of the community (20 per cent) and enjoyment of working with other people (12 per cent). A smaller proportion of volunteers also valued the 'opportunity to express faith' (16 per cent). Factors that negatively impacted volunteer satisfaction included a lack of communication by supervisors and logistical challenges, which occurred due to the geographic location of the event and the level of security needed. While logistical problems were out of the hands of supervisors, improving communication and the provision of information to volunteers was thought to be a feasible improvement for future events, and had the potential to improve the experience of this cohort of episodic volunteers (Cnaan et al., 2017).

While these results provide some insight into volunteer motivations and the challenges associated with managing episodic volunteers, it is important to note that many participants in the sample (78 per cent) reported that they also volunteered regularly. Even though this large-scale event was episodic in nature, the characteristics of those who participated cannot be used to distinguish them from regular or repeat volunteers.

Other research has attempted to identify motivations for volunteering at mega-events in a different context: travelling overseas for international sporting events. Fairley et al. (2007) examined motivations of repeat volunteers: Australians who had already volunteered at the Sydney Olympic Games and were about to travel to Athens to volunteer for the 2004 Olympic Games. Twenty-two qualitative surveys (both online and paper format) were completed by the volunteers and 14 unstructured interviews augmented the data. Key motivations for repeat volunteering included nostalgia for the 'once in a lifetime' experience gained at the Sydney Olympics; social aspects associated with camaraderie and friendship (for example, celebrating kinship of those amongst the group, a sense of belonging, sense of community); the Olympic connection (that is, the need to participate in such a large, prestigious and historically significant event like the Olympics); and sharing and acknowledgement of expertise (using knowledge and skills gained at previous Olympic Games to assist with the next one, and the intrinsic value of making a difference). These results should also be considered alongside the significant amount of money spent by the participants in order to travel to Athens – estimated by participants to be approximately $10,000. Thus, these motivations were thought to be sufficiently powerful to overcome the financial costs of participating in this type of short-term volunteering activity. The motivations identified appear to be different from other types of volunteer tourism opportunities – which are often associated with more altruistic connections with the community being helped – and instead focused on the reward of having a connection to such a prestigious event.

3. Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering (continued)

3.3.3 International humanitarian episodic volunteers

Other forms of episodic volunteering have been found to present specific barriers, and may require alternative governance strategies. Short-term humanitarian volunteering and volunteering abroad has been identified as a growth industry, but research suggests it may not always be beneficial for the communities it seeks to help (Zavitz & Butz, 2011). For example, Zavitz and Butz (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with seven Canadians who volunteered as part of project on a Costa Rica organic farm, and augmented that qualitative data with observational data from other volunteers, farm owners and locals from the area.

Results indicate that volunteers perceived a lack of interaction with the community and connection with local culture – which were some of their key original motivations for volunteering. Volunteers also reported a sense of dependency and felt they could not adequately do the tasks they were assigned – partly because many did not have Spanish language skills. Because they felt they could not master their work, it was difficult for them to remain motivated because they could not see the results of their work, or that they were making a difference in the community they set out to help. Thus, some participants reported a lower commitment to volunteering following this experience. Observational data also indicated that the work did not contribute significantly to social or ecological development in the area, but neither was it detrimental to the community. However, this particular volunteering opportunity was only six days in duration, and it is possible that this short timeframe may have been responsible for the lack of intention to volunteer again.

The work of Zavitz and Butz (2011) highlights some of the barriers that should be considered when managing short-term humanitarian volunteering, including language barriers, short timeframes that do not allow connections with the community to develop and a lack of proper orientation and training of volunteers that would help them to feel competent and useful. Ensuring these factors receive sufficient attention may provide greater benefits to the community and also the short-term volunteers themselves.

An analysis of the differences between local and international episodic volunteering suggests specific challenges and considerations that should be accounted for when managing these types of volunteer programs. While motivations are likely to differ according to the type of episodic volunteering opportunity (for example, an international humanitarian initiative compared to the sporting mega-event described in the previous section), an emphasis on adequate training and support, and education around cultural practices and systems, should be built into these volunteering opportunities (Asgary & Junck, 2013; Zavitz & Butz, 2011). In addition, repeat volunteers for events may be motivated by a sense of nostalgia (for a previous experience) and a sense of community among their group of fellow volunteers; therefore, emphasising these factors when promoting volunteering opportunities may be beneficial, especially since experienced volunteers are highly valuable (Fairley et al., 2007).

4. Discussion and recommendations

This rapid review provides insights into effective management of episodic volunteers and the challenges and issues specific to episodic volunteer programs. This section summarises and discusses the findings of this rapid review and also provides evidence-based recommendations.

4.1 Governance of episodic volunteering programs

It has been suggested that episodic volunteers can be conceptualised in two ways: those who perform lower-level tasks and do not require any significant training and support; and those more experienced volunteers who are effectively unpaid consultants and contribute to the organisation at a higher level (Handy & Brudney, 2007). This conceptualisation of episodic volunteers is somewhat consistent with the classifications of short-term volunteers proposed by Rehnborg et al. (2009). They describe 'short-term generalist' volunteers as being involved because of an affiliation with the organisation or event and perform roles that do not require high levels of specialised knowledge or skill; while 'short-term specialist' volunteers are highly skilled and provide specialised expertise to the organisation, making them highly valuable.

Critical to effective governance of episodic volunteer programs is efficient and coordinated management practices. Volunteer management has been identified as a key factor predicting episodic volunteer satisfaction and their intention to volunteer again in the future (Cnaan et al., 2017).

Effective management includes providing flexible volunteer roles that are meaningful and offer a range of different tasks and levels of responsibility that can be matched with the particular skills and interests of individual volunteers. It also involves allowing individuals to nominate their preferences for the types of roles they would like to perform and how much time they want to contribute. Written position descriptions for volunteer roles should be provided, which have clear time requirements and a distinct completion point. Volunteers should also know who they can contact with questions or for guidance, and be supervised and monitored to ensure their work and associated outcomes are satisfactory. Episodic volunteers are also likely to value tangible rewards such as small gifts or mementos, rather than expressions of thanks by volunteer managers (Cnaan et al., 2017). These types of rewards are likely to be particularly valuable for major events (for example, the Olympic Games or major cultural festivals) which offer a prestige factor and nostalgia for volunteers associated with them.

4. Discussion and recommendations (continued)

Areas of volunteer governance where authors disagree relate to the types of roles episodic volunteers should perform and how much training and support should be provided. Both Burkham and Boleman (2005) and Volunteering Queensland (2017a) emphasise the importance of giving episodic volunteers meaningful roles rather than menial tasks, and ensuring they receive appropriate training. On the other hand, Handy and Brudney (2007) recommend giving episodic volunteers simple tasks that do not require much skill, and keeping preparation costs (including orientation and training) to a minimum. However, episodic volunteers are, by definition, less committed (in terms of time) to the organisation than regular volunteers, and while menial tasks may have the advantage of requiring little training and support, they may also have the disadvantage of dissatisfying episodic volunteers and them leaving the organisation prematurely and not returning. In many cases, minimal training and orientation may be appropriate if the tasks involved are basic and straightforward. However, it is important that episodic volunteers feel they have the skills and knowledge to perform the role effectively, and for more complex or higher-level tasks, this may necessarily require some form of training and orientation.

Generally, volunteers should receive a level of training appropriate for the roles they will perform and their existing knowledge and skills. Ideally, managers of episodic volunteer programs need to assess volunteers on a case-by-case basis to determine the appropriate training which makes optimal use of available resources. This could include more cost-effective options like internet-based training such as webinars (particularly popular with older people) or mobile apps (preferred by younger people) (Cnaan et al., 2017).

Appropriate recognition and rewards for episodic volunteers also appear to differ according to the particular volunteering activity being undertaken. For volunteering activities associated with charitable, humanitarian or environmental causes, rewards are often intrinsic, and tangible rewards have little value. This aligns with typical motivations for being involved in these types of activities, which are often altruistic in nature. Volunteers involved in major sporting or cultural events or festivals seem to place more value on tangible rewards or gifts that act as a memento and evidence of their presence in the event. Again, this aligns with the motivations of these types of episodic volunteers, which are typically around egoistic motivations such as the social aspects and prestige of the volunteering opportunity.

Marketing communications designed to attract episodic volunteers should align with the motivations of people who are typically interested in the type of volunteering opportunity being offered. For example, this might include altruistic messages (for example, the chance to help others) for charitable episodic volunteering roles, and egoistic messages (for example, social or prestige factors) for roles at major events. By doing this, marketing messages are more likely to be meaningful and motivating to the target audience.

In terms of recruiting episodic volunteers, the internet can be particularly effective in reaching people (Cnaan et al., 2017). Because of their now widespread use amongst the general population, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can spread information quickly through people 'liking' and 'sharing' posts about one-off or limited time volunteering opportunities.

4. Discussion and recommendations (continued)

Beyond the internet, effective recruitment strategies depend on what type of people the organisation wants to attract as volunteers. Generally, reviews of social marketing campaigns have found that when trying to influence community attitudes (or in this case actual behaviour) a wide range of communication channels should be used to distribute key messages to the target audience (Randle & Reis, 2016a; 2016b). If particular segments of the population are required, then more specific recruitment channels may be optimal. For example, men are more likely than women to hear about a one-off volunteering opportunity through mainstream media (for example, television or radio); while women are more likely than men to hear about such opportunities through social groups such as family and friends (Cnaan et al., 2017).

While much of the research reviewed directly addresses management of episodic volunteering, a recent systematic review conducted by Kim and Cuskelly (2017) highlights gaps in knowledge in this area. These authors focused on research in the area of volunteers' participation in events, a volunteer opportunity that is episodic in nature. Their systematic review of 71 research articles (mostly from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada and Australia) reveal important limitations to the study of volunteering at events (and in other episodic contexts). Although research on management of episodic volunteers was found to have increased in the six years leading up to 2014, more than half of the articles (61 per cent) lacked a theoretical framework, and most relied on cross-sectional survey methodology.

Kim and Cuskelly (2017) argue that the application of theory would be expected to provide a better understanding of episodic volunteer management, so that research can more effectively predict the types of recruitment and retention strategies that are most effective. The authors recommended that future research into volunteer management at events feature a strong theoretical basis, and employ methods and measurement instruments that are matched to and suitable for that particular theory.

Furthermore, it may be that pre- and post-data collection with volunteers before and after the event may be more reliable and informative than surveying them after their experience only. There is also relatively scant literature pertaining directly to governance of episodic volunteering, as distinct from volunteering more generally. Because of this, it is difficult to ascertain key systematic differences in the way they should be managed, further than those elucidated in the present review. Despite these methodological and theoretical limitations, it is still possible to gain understanding of the best practice for the management of episodic volunteering from the current pool of literature.

4. Discussion and recommendations (continued)

4.2 Issues and challenges specific to episodic volunteering

Some research has been conducted in an effort to understand retention of episodic volunteers as compared to retention of regular volunteers. Hyde et al. (2016) classify episodic volunteers as either novice episodic volunteers (first-time volunteers), transition episodic volunteers (who have volunteered sporadically for two to four years) or sustained episodic volunteers (who have volunteered for five or more years in a row).

Differences were identified in factors predicting retention according to the length of time episodic volunteers had been involved. For novice episodic volunteers, key factors predicting retention were satisfaction with the role and social support. However, for transition and sustained episodic volunteers, other factors also predicted intention, such as organisational commitment and having close personal links to the cause.

While satisfaction appears to be an important predictor of retention at all stages of the volunteer lifecycle, the fact that other factors come into play, because having volunteers keep on returning for longer periods has important implications in terms of how managers communicate with volunteers and frame calls for volunteers to bounce back for future volunteering opportunities. Ideally, these communications should align with the predictors of retention that are relevant according to the stage each volunteer is at in their volunteering life. For example, communications with novice volunteers should emphasise the social aspects of the role; whereas communications with transition and sustained volunteers should emphasise volunteers' commitment to the organisation and their strong connection with the cause.

While differences have not been established between regular volunteers and episodic volunteers in terms of sociodemographic characteristics (Cnaan & Handy, 2005), differences in a number of other areas have been identified by researchers. However, in many instances, the findings of different studies are conflicting. For example, in terms of recruitment, some research indicates that regular volunteers are more likely to have been asked by someone they know to volunteer; whereas episodic volunteers are more likely to have proactively sought the opportunity to volunteer (Holmes, 2014). Other research reports that episodic volunteers are more likely to volunteer because they had been asked to by family or friends (Hustinx et al., 2008).

In terms of motivations, numerous studies have identified differences between regular and episodic volunteers; however, findings were again conflicting, and seem to depend on the particular type of volunteer activity being performed. For example, regular volunteers have been found to cite altruistic motivations (Smith et al., 2010) and social motivations in terms of meeting new people (Hyde et al., 2014) more often than episodic volunteers. Other studies have found that episodic volunteers are more likely to cite altruistic motivations (Hustinx et al., 2008) and social reasons such as peer pressure (Smith et al., 2010), but were significantly less likely to report having formed new relationships as a result of their volunteering and instead tended to bring existing family and/or friends along to volunteer (Holmes, 2014; Hyde et al., 2014).

4. Discussion and recommendations (continued)

The conflicting findings suggest that managers of episodic volunteer programs need to have a good understanding of the motivations of episodic volunteers for their particular type of volunteering program, which can be gained by conducting interviews or surveys with existing volunteers to find out why they were attracted to the program and why they continue to return. Research can also be conducted with volunteers who come for a short time and then discontinue their involvement, to understand why they failed to bounce back for more instances of episodic volunteering.

In terms of the types of roles preferred, regular volunteers have been reported to prefer functional flexibility (for example, job rotation); whereas episodic volunteers prefer temporal and numerical flexibility (for example, flexible hours and job sharing) (Lockstone et al., 2010). This body of research, which identifies many differences between episodic volunteers and regular volunteers, calls into question the extent to which research on regular volunteers can be meaningfully applied to episodic volunteer contexts. It supports more research on episodic volunteering specifically to grow this body of knowledge to the extent knowledge of regular volunteering has grown in recent decades.

Finally, episodic volunteering lends itself to particular types of roles that require specific types of volunteers. Episodic volunteering opportunities can be particularly attractive to older people who have retired from paid employment but like to travel for extended periods and so are not suited to regular volunteering roles. Instead, many 'grey nomads' express interest in short-term volunteer roles in the places they stay when travelling. For these people, roles that make a contribution to the local community and that use the skills they developed in their paid work are most appealing.

One-off mega-events also require large numbers of volunteers in a one-off capacity and so lend themselves to people interested in episodic volunteering opportunities. People interested in these types of roles are often attracted because of the prestige and historical significance of the event and the opportunity to attend when they might otherwise not be able to. International humanitarian programs also offer opportunities for intense periods of volunteering; however, it is important that volunteers have the appropriate skills to perform their roles and feel like they are making a difference in the relatively short time they are there. This often involves higher levels of training and orientation than other forms of episodic volunteering, but is essential in volunteers being satisfied in their role and bouncing back for future volunteering opportunities.

4. Discussion and recommendations (continued)

4.3 Recommendations

Based on the research reviewed, evidence-based recommendations for episodic volunteering programs include:

1. In terms of the **types of roles** offered to episodic volunteers, they should be:

a. **identified through consultation** with key stakeholders to ascertain where episodic volunteers could make a valuable contribution to the organisation

b. **engaging and meaningful**, because episodic volunteers are, by definition, less committed (in terms of time) to the organisation than regular volunteers, and therefore need to be engaged in order to volunteer again in future. It is important that roles are perceived to be interesting and meaningful, and worth coming back to perform in future

c. **flexible and offer a range options** in terms of type of work performed, time and skill level required, level of involvement or participation and when the volunteering occurs

d. **clearly defined**, with written position descriptions that include a discrete completion point.

2. A sound understanding of the **motivations and preferences** of episodic volunteers for the specific type of opportunity being offered is important. This involves conducting research with current and past volunteers to understand what attracted them to the role, why they continue to bounce back or why they no longer bounce back. Once this is known, this information should underpin all aspects of the volunteer program design, including roles offered, marketing and recruitment efforts, and ongoing supervision, support and recognition of volunteers. This is particularly important, given the consistent finding that episodic volunteers are different from regular volunteers, but variation in opinions regarding how they differ.

3. **Customised marketing communications** according to motivations of episodic volunteers and the particular volunteering opportunity available are important. Generally, for episodic volunteers, this includes the flexibility of the roles, the limited commitment required and the opportunity to do something worthwhile. Overall, and particularly for charity events, messages focusing on helping others (altruistic motivations) are likely to be most motivating for episodic volunteers. However, for sporting or other major events, messages focusing on the prestige of being present and the value of being personally involved (egoistic motivations) are likely to be effective.

a. For **older episodic volunteers**, key messages include the opportunity to use and retain **skills** developed during their time in paid employment, and the opportunity to help others. For grey nomads, this includes the opportunity to get to **meet local people** and learn about the local area.

b. For **one-off event episodic volunteers**, key messages include the **opportunity** to experience a once in a lifetime event, the **historical significance** of the event and social aspects associated with the **camaraderie** developed between volunteers.

c. For **international humanitarian episodic volunteers**, key messages include the opportunity to **make a difference** to people in a developing country, but also reassurance that appropriate training and cultural considerations are in place to ensure volunteers can make an observable difference in the short time they are there.

4. Discussion and recommendations (continued)

4. Effective **governance structures** for programs utilising episodic volunteers including the following key elements:

a. Carefully **matching the specific skills, knowledge and motivations** of individual volunteers with suitable volunteering roles. This includes effective screening of volunteers when they initially approach the organisation, and allowing volunteers to express their preferences regarding the type of role performed. Effective matching of individuals to positions also helps increase retention of volunteers.

b. Appropriate levels of **training and orientation** for the roles being performed, while keeping resource expenditure to a minimum. For higher-level roles this may require face-to-face orientation and training; however, for lower-level positions, this may include more cost-effective options such as standardised online training modules.

c. Appropriate levels of **supervision and monitoring**, including providing a **contact person** within the organisation whom volunteers can go to with questions or for guidance, and ensuring supervisors are available and communicate effectively with volunteers.

d. **Recognising and rewarding** volunteers appropriately according to the type of role they are performing. For sporting or cultural events, this could involve small tangible gifts they can keep after their volunteering concludes, such as hats, backpacks or mementos. For charitable or environmental roles, this might include expressions of thanks from supervisors or refreshments and opportunities to socialise during breaks.

e. **Evaluating episodic volunteering programs** in terms of whether goals were met but also in terms of the **satisfaction** of volunteers with their experience (and hence their intention to volunteer again in future). This should include soliciting **feedback** from volunteers and other key stakeholders regarding what worked and didn't work and what could be improved in future.

5. Utilising a **range of communication channels** to inform people about opportunities for episodic volunteering. The internet and social media platforms have been particularly successful in spreading the word about one-off or short-term volunteering opportunities, and can be useful in targeting certain types of people who are particularly suited to a volunteering role. When used in conjunction with other channels such as mass media, word of mouth and through workplaces can be successful in attracting large numbers of volunteers.

6. Where possible, extending **personal invitations** to past volunteers to increase bounce back for future volunteering opportunities. This can be facilitated by keeping contact details in a database that can be used for direct recruitment efforts in future. Using volunteers who have prior experience of the role also offers other benefits such as making efficient use of resources spent on training and orientation in the first instance.

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