

Recruitment & Onboarding Journey



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About Us

Our Vision:

A world of thriving communities

Te Whāinga | Purpose

Anei nā te whāinga o te rōpū:

Te Hono Tangata - Te Huringa Ora.

Ka hono a Te Tūao Tāwāhi i ngā tūao pūkenga ki ngā whakahaere me ngā hapori i te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa me tua atu, hei tautoko i ngā wawata kua tautuhia ā-rohe, ā, kia tutuki ai te panoni toitū.

Volunteer Service Abroad Te Tūao Tāwāhi Incorporated (VSA) has the following purpose:

Connecting People – Transforming Lives.

Volunteer Service Abroad connects skilled volunteers with organisations and communities in the Pacific and beyond to support locally identified aspirations and achieve sustainable change.

We value:

- ❖ Commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- ❖ Respectful Partnerships
- ❖ Working and Learning together
- ❖ Cross-cultural understanding
- ❖ Fairness, social justice and self-determination
- ❖ The spirit of volunteering

Our strategic goals:

- **Impact through development:** To support communities, volunteers and Volunteer Service Abroad to achieve sustainable and meaningful change.
- **Partnerships at the Centre:** To develop and strengthen relationships between Volunteer Service Abroad, New Zealanders, local communities and partners
- **Trusted and Connected:** To increase New Zealanders' awareness of, and support for, Volunteer Service Abroad, our partners and international development
- **Strong and Supportive Workplace:** A place to be yourself, have impact through your work and thrive.



Volunteer Service Abroad
Te Tūao Tāwāhi

A word from VSA's Chief Executive Officer

Let's celebrate the start of a remarkable volunteering journey!

A warm welcome to you and thank you for considering volunteering with Volunteer Service Abroad Te Tūao Tāwāhi.

VSA was established in September 1962 and we had our very first two volunteers start their journey the following year. Forward to today, we have connected over 4,000 skilled volunteers with local communities sharing knowledge and experience to create a lasting, positive change across the wider Pacific.

Over the years, VSA has gained a reputation for being New Zealand's largest and most experienced volunteering agency working in international development. Our Kiwi volunteers share skills with people in the Pacific and beyond to help them build a better future for themselves and their children. The work we do is diverse and driven by the development needs of our partners in the countries where we work. These Partner Organisations include regional and central government agencies, local and national NGOs, educational and health bodies and individual schools, colleges, and health clinics, to name a few.

Volunteering is a unique way to utilise your skills in a new environment, become embedded in a new culture and make friends for life. Congratulations for taking the first step towards making the world a better place. Not only will you be making a difference in the world, you will be contributing to making a positive impact for generations to come. Together, we work towards building a world of thriving communities, and because of volunteers like you, we have already greatly impacted the lives of many.

Together, let's strive to make a difference and bring positive change.

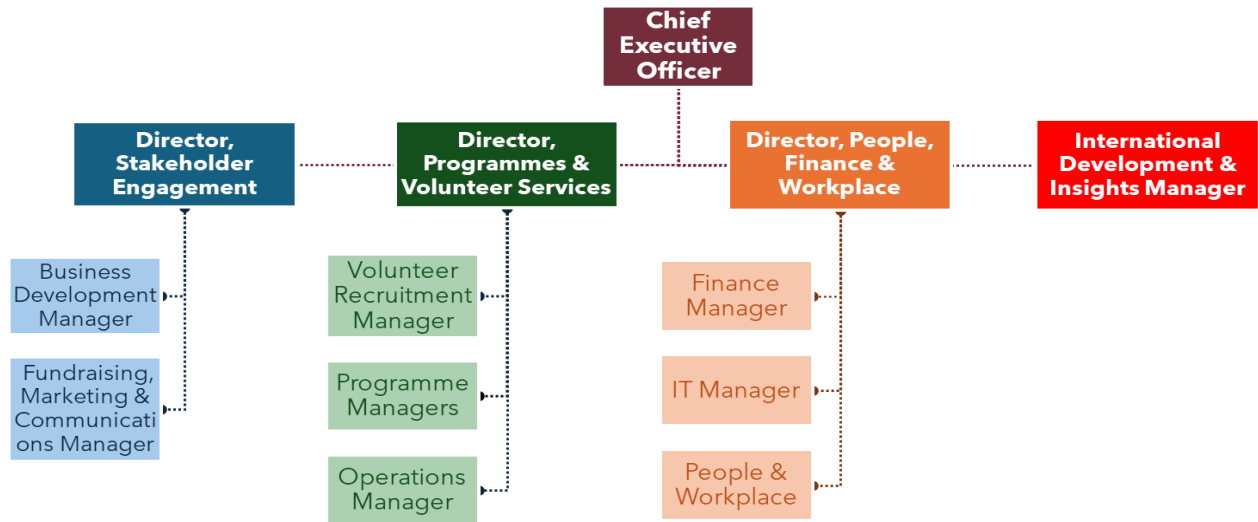
Mā te mahi tahi, ka ora tātou katoa – By working together, all of us can achieve our goals.

Whakawhetai ano koe

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KW', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kate Wareham
Te Tumu Whakarae - CEO

VSA High Level Organisation Chart





How to use this guide

This handbook is designed to help prospective volunteers understand the Recruitment and Onboarding process of becoming a VSA volunteer. VSA works to support local communities, and many assignments work with underprivileged and often the most vulnerable people in a society. For this reason, VSA places high importance on matching volunteers to roles that suit both their technical skills and compatibility with VSA, the community and Partner Organisation. This approach means that the recruitment journey may be more extensive than a standard job application and it may take several weeks, as VSA is aiming to ensure volunteers are well-prepared and aligned with VSA's values.

VSA assignments are locally identified needs and aspire to achieve long-lasting and meaningful change. The assignment development process can start many months before the assignment is advertised by VSA.

VSA offers four types of volunteer assignment experience:

- 1) Standard
- 2) E-Volunteer
- 3) UniVol
- 4) Blended

- **Standard (In-country)**

We recruit and send Kiwi volunteers into the Pacific and Timor-Leste to support initiatives that are locally identified and led. By sharing industry skills and expertise, we enable New Zealanders to engage with communities in ways that foster capacity building, emphasizing sustainable, ethical and inclusive volunteering. VSA covers the cost of economy flights, accommodation, insurance, some utility expenses and a living allowance for our standard volunteers. Standard volunteers typically work a 40 hour week when on assignment.

- **E-volunteer**

E-volunteers offer their skills and expertise remotely from New Zealand to support our Partner Organisations in the Pacific and Timor-Leste. It is ideal for those unable to travel due to work, family or medical reasons. E-volunteers typically dedicate 5–20 hours per week part-time, and VSA will provide you with a monthly honorarium.

- **UniVolunteer (UniVol)**

Open to University graduates under 30, that have graduated within the last two years, the UniVol programme offers a 10-month overseas placement with VSA's partners. Recruitment for UniVol applications open in May and close in August each year. Assignments will typically be in the following year from Feb/Mar to Nov/Dec. UniVols complete the same onboarding process as a standard volunteer.

Being a Univol volunteer is the experience of a lifetime and can provide many personal and professional opportunities for future careers.

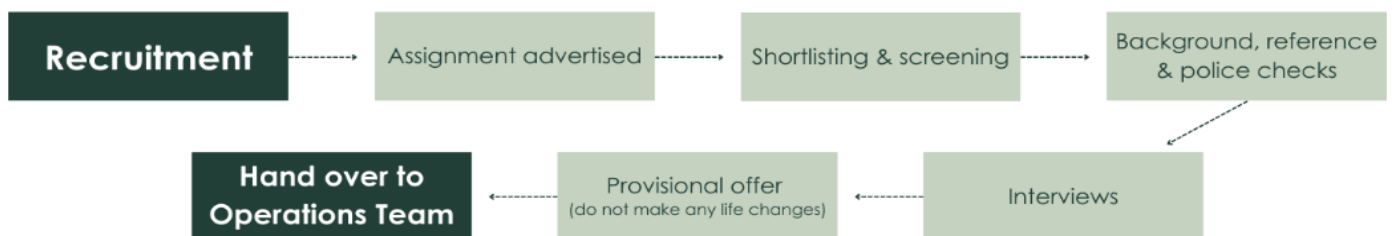
- **Blended assignment volunteer**

This type of assignment is a combination of standard and e-volunteering. The exact blend will depend on the assignment itself and the needs of the Partner Organisation. The overseas component may be at the beginning or later in the assignment, with a minimum in-country commitment of 6 weeks.

You will have dedicated Advisers and Coordinators to assist you through each stage of recruitment and onboarding processes. They will explain each step, assist with documentation and answer any questions that you may have.



Volunteer Recruitment Process



When we receive your initial application, we will assign you to a dedicated Recruitment Adviser who will take you through all the stages of your recruitment process.

Standard (In-Country) and Blended Volunteers

VSA's standard and blended volunteers, when overseas, conduct their assignments in a VSA Programme. The current VSA Programmes are Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARoB), Fiji, Kiribati and Timor-Leste. Each programme has varying levels of need and available resources, which are reflected in the types of assignments offered.

A standard volunteer is a volunteer whose assignment is based overseas for the entire duration of the assignment.

A blended assignment has a minimum of six weeks in-country in the VSA Programme and some time volunteering in an e-volunteer capacity.

The following is an outline of the steps of the recruitment process for both a standard and a blended volunteer.

Application stage

If you are new to VSA, your application is received through an assignment advertisement on either the VSA website, SEEK, or other job boards.

Your CV, cover letter, and answers to the screening questions will be reviewed. If your application meets the requirements for the advertised assignment, you will be invited to an online screening meeting with a Recruitment Adviser.

If you have previously applied for a VSA assignment and were unsuccessful, you may have chosen to remain in our talent pool. In that case, VSA may reach out to you directly about a newly created assignment. We will discuss the opportunity with you, and if you are interested, you will be invited to submit a new application.

If your application is unsuccessful, you will be advised that you have been unsuccessful, and you may be invited to have your details retained in the VSA talent pool for future assignments.

Note that all candidates must be a NZ Resident or Citizen.

On-line screening meeting

The online screening is a 45-minute meeting conducted via Teams or Zoom. In this meeting you will have a VSA Recruitment Adviser assigned to you, and they will work with you throughout the entire recruitment process. You will need to read the FAQ's ([listed on the VSA website](#)) prior to this meeting.

You will be asked to talk about your skills and experience as they relate to the assignment, and your motivation for volunteering. You will also be asked other questions to make sure you are a good fit as a VSA volunteer. You will need to advise if you intend to have your partner accompany you on assignment (for assignments longer than six months) and if they are interested in volunteering for VSA as well. If this screening is successful, you will be sent the full application form to complete and return to your Recruitment Adviser.

Full application

The full application will ask for more information regarding your relevant experience and qualifications. You will be asked to provide colour copies of two forms of photo ID e.g. drivers license, 18+ card and passport. You will need to provide proof of relevant qualifications/academic transcripts, confirmation of professional memberships and two referees: one professional and one personal. While on assignment, VSA volunteers may be required to work with children, or may choose to participate in informal activities in their own time that involve regular interactions with children. VSA is committed to meeting its obligations under the Children's Act 2014. One of your referees must be able to speak to your interaction with children. You will be asked to complete either a New Zealand Police vetting form or NZ Ministry of Justice criminal history check. For some assignment countries you will be required to complete both. Your Recruitment Advisor will let you know what you need to complete.

If you have an accompanying partner, they will also need to complete an accompanying partner form, provide two colour copies of photo ID and complete either a New Zealand Police vetting form or NZ Ministry of Justice criminal history check. Depending on your assignment country, they may be required to complete both. We will advise you exactly what will be needed.

Background checks

The volunteer recruitment team will verify your relevant professional memberships and any academic qualifications that are essential requirements for your assignment.

Reference checks

Your Recruitment Adviser will contact your provided referees. The professional referee ideally should be someone who has recently been your manager and at least one of your referees must be able to speak to your interaction with children as part of VSA's compliance with the Council for International Development and the Children's Act 2014.

Meeting with a Selection Adviser

Once your reference checks have been completed, a time will be booked for you to meet with one of VSA's Selection Advisers. VSA Selection Advisers are a group of people that have been involved in VSA's recruitment process for several years and have a strong understanding of what makes a good VSA volunteer. They come from professional backgrounds such as relationship counselling, clinical psychology or HR consulting.

Your Selection Adviser meeting will include yourself and your life partner (regardless of whether they will be

accompanying you on your assignment or not).

The Selection Adviser will ask you questions including how prepared you are to volunteer in the wider Pacific region, your motivation behind your application, and your family life.

They will also ask questions pertaining to the Children's Act 2014 as part of VSA's compliance with the Council for International Development and the Children's Act 2014.

Panel interview

The final stage of the recruitment process is a panel interview conducted remotely via Teams or Zoom. This 60-minute interview includes at least two panelists: a professional expert relevant to the assignment and your Recruitment Adviser. Occasionally, a third panelist from the Partner Organisation may also join the panel. This interview helps VSA to learn more about you and understand how your skills and experience align with the assignment. It is also an opportunity for you to ask questions about your assignment and the work that you will undertake.

Provisional offer

Following the successful completion of your recruitment process, you will be e-mailed a provisional offer and a copy of the Volunteer Code of Good Practice. On accepting this provisional offer, you will be introduced as a new volunteer candidate to an Operations Coordinator in the Operations team. Your Operations Coordinator will take you through the onboarding stages of the process and they will help you prepare for your deployment to your assignment country. From this point on your VSA contact will be your Operations Coordinator.

*** It is important that you do not resign from your job, or make other major lifestyle changes at this stage ***

This is a provisional offer only. You will still need to obtain a visa for travel into your assignment country, gain written acceptance from your Partner Organisation as their approved volunteer, attend a three day pre-deployment briefing, complete a comprehensive medical check, and continue to demonstrate the values and attitude befitting a VSA volunteer. Your Operations Coordinator will take you through this process.

There are certain deployment windows throughout the year and your Recruitment Adviser will talk to you about these. However, there may be unforeseeable delays in sending you in-country, and a final deployment date will only be confirmed once you have medical clearance, a visa, attended a briefing and have the Partner Organisation acceptance. Visa processing delays are common in the Pacific, and medical assessments may also cause delays if a condition requiring further investigation is identified. Additional factors, such as border closures or natural disasters, could impact your departure timeline. Please do not resign from your job, rehome your pets, sell your house, end your lease, or make other major life changes until advised to do so by your Operations Coordinator. Open and regular communication with your Operations Coordinator throughout this process is essential.

Once all parts of this process are complete we will discuss your deployment date, prepare your contract and book your travel to your assignment country.

E-volunteers

If you are unable to commit to volunteering in-country, there are opportunities to volunteer remotely from New Zealand. For e-volunteer assignments you will need to be able to commit to between 5 and 20 hours per week working on the assignment (time is dependent on the assignment) and have a reliable internet connection.

E-volunteers follow the same recruitment process outlined above for in-country and blended volunteers, except for the provisional offer and pre-deployment medical clearance. For e-volunteering the provisional offer stage is outlined below.

Provisional offer

Following the successful completion of the recruitment process, you will be sent a provisional offer by e-mail. On acceptance of this provisional offer, you will be formally introduced as a new volunteer candidate to an Operations Coordinator in the Operations team. Your Operations Coordinator will then take you through the e-volunteer onboarding process. This will help prepare you for remote volunteering and this includes an e-volunteer briefing. From this point on your VSA contact will be your Operations Coordinator.

UniVol

The UniVol programme caters for NZ university graduates looking for a unique volunteer experience prior to starting a career. To be eligible for the UniVol programme, you must be aged between 18 and 30 years and have graduated within the last 2 years. UniVol applications open in May and close in August each year. The following is an outline of the UniVol recruitment process:

Application stage

Your application is received through an assignment advertisement on the VSA website. You can apply for up to 5 assignments. Once your application is received, you will be sent a link to answer some questions on a video link. This along with your CV, cover letter, and answers to the screening questions will be reviewed. If your application is successful, you will be invited to meet with one of our Recruitment Advisers for an on-line screening.

On-line screening interview

The on-line screening is a 45-minute meeting conducted via Teams or Zoom with a Recruitment Adviser. You will need to read the FAQ's (listed on the VSA [website](#)) prior to this meeting, where you will be asked to talk about your skills and experience as they relate to the assignment, and your motivation for volunteering. You will be asked to confirm your preferred assignment or country. Following the successful outcome of this screening, you may be shortlisted for an assignment and sent the full application form to complete and return to your Recruitment Adviser.

Full application

The full application form will ask for more information regarding relevant experience and qualifications. You will be asked to provide colour copies of two forms of photo ID e.g., drivers license, 18+ card and passport. You will also need to provide relevant qualifications/academic transcripts, and two or three referees; one professional or academic, and one personal (one of which must be able to speak to your interaction with children).

Background checks

The volunteer recruitment team will verify your academic qualifications that are listed as essential requirements for your assignment.

Reference checks

Your Recruitment Adviser will contact your provided referees. The professional referee ideally should be someone who has recently been your manager or academic tutor/professor. At least one of your referees must be able to speak to your interaction with children as part of VSA's compliance with the Council for International Development and the Children's Act 2014.

Meeting with a Selection Adviser

Once the reference checks have been completed, a time will be booked for you to meet with one of VSA's Selection Advisers. VSA Selection Advisers are a group of people who have been involved in the recruitment process for VSA for several years and have a strong understanding of what makes a good VSA volunteer. They come from professional backgrounds such as relationship counselling, clinical psychology or HR consulting. The Selection Adviser will ask you questions about how this assignment will fit into your future, your motivation behind your application, and your family life and relationships. They will also ask questions pertaining to the Children's Act 2014.

Interview days

Following a successful Selection Adviser interview, you will be invited to attend an assessment day held at the VSA office in Wellington.

This day will be comprised of activities and presentations from VSA staff and previous UniVol volunteers. You will also complete a panel interview and group assessment on this day.

A panel interview is the final stage of the UniVol recruitment process. There will be two or three panelists on the interview panel. One panelist will be your Recruitment Adviser and the other will be another VSA staff member. There may be a third panelist representing the Partner Organisation for the assignment. This interview is approximately 60-minutes in duration, and you will be assessed based on the essential attributes of a VSA volunteer as outlined in the assignment description.

Provisional offer

Following the successful completion of the recruitment process, you will be sent a provisional offer. On acceptance of this provisional offer, you will be formally introduced as a new UniVol candidate to an Operations Coordinator in the Operations team. Your Operations Coordinator will take you through the UniVol on-boarding process. From this point on your VSA contact will be your Operations Coordinator.

*** It is important that you do not resign from your job, or make other major lifestyle changes at this stage ***



Returning Volunteers

Volunteering is rewarding and we warmly welcome applications from returned volunteers. If you are returned volunteer who is applying for a new assignment, you may be eligible to go through a “special selection”. This will depend on how much time has passed since your last assignment. Your Recruitment Adviser will send you a returning volunteer form to complete and will undertake a skills match assessment for your new assignment. If you meet the requirements for a “special selection”, it may not be necessary to provide references or go through a panel interview. A "special selection" will still include a meeting with a Selection Adviser, and VSA will try and organise this with the same Selection Adviser used during your recruitment for your previous assignment if possible.

Please note that you may be required to provide documentation previously provided to VSA. This is to ensure your documentation is up to date and that VSA is compliant with the Council for International Development and the Children’s Act 2014 requirements.

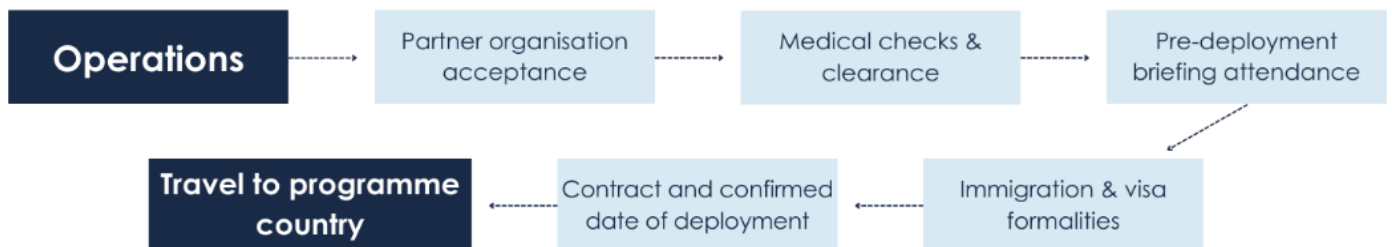
Issues that may preclude an applicant from volunteering:

- You and your accompanying partner must be fully vaccinated or hold a medical exemption to be considered for in-country assignments.
- For in-country assignments, you and your accompanying partner will need to be either NZ Citizens or NZ Permanent Residents. For non-New Zealand passport holders who are New Zealand Permanent Residents or Australian citizens who reside in New Zealand, the relevant Country Programme Manager will need to ascertain if adequate consular support will be available to you in your assignment country.
- If you or your accompanying partner have a criminal conviction you may be declined or experience a problem obtaining a visa for an in-country assignment. The Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004 does not apply to volunteers travelling on a VSA volunteer assignment.
- If you or your accompanying partner are over the recommended maximum age for an in-country assignment, or if you have pre-existing medical conditions, your Recruitment Adviser may refer you to our specialist medical team, VolunteerCare, for a medical assessment prior to sending you the full application form. If you are asked to continue, you will still be required to complete the full medical assessment process at the on-boarding stage.
- Candidates for e-volunteer assignments will need to be able to commit to at least 5-20 hours per week and have reliable internet connectivity.

- VSA are unable to support dependents for in-country volunteers.
- VSA are unable to support accompanying partners for assignments that are less than 6-months duration or for UniVol assignments.
- If you are successfully placed, you will then be introduced to your Operations Coordinator in the Operations team. Your Operations Coordinator will be your contact for the on-boarding process and will look after you until you depart for your assignment in your programme country (for in-country assignments) or start your e-volunteering assignment remotely from New Zealand.



Onboarding Process



Standard and UniVol Volunteers

Now that you have passed the selection and recruitment process, you will be transferred to the Operations Team for your pre-deployment on-boarding process. You will be paired with an Operations Coordinator who will take you through the next steps of your journey. This will be a four-part process including:

- In-country Partner Organisation acceptance (managed by your Operations Coordinator)
- Pre-deployment medical clearance – including dental examination and travel specific vaccinations
- Country visa requirements specific to your assignment
- Wellington pre-deployment briefing

This part of the process is expected to take at least 6 – 8 weeks but could be longer depending on the time it takes to get medical or dental appointments and how long it takes for your volunteer visa to be issued. These factors are outside the control of VSA.

You must continue to show and demonstrate behaviour and attitudes befitting a VSA volunteer and a representative of New Zealand. VSA reserves the right, at any stage, to cancel the assignment and re-advertise a position should a volunteer demonstrate attitudes or behaviour that may pose a risk to the community, Partner Organisation or VSA.

All four parts of the on-boarding process need to be completed before your Operations Coordinator is able to make your flight reservations for your travel to your programme country and send you a final contract for signing. Please do not make any major changes to your life, such as resigning from your job, renting out your house or re-homing your pets, until advised by your Operations Coordinator it is time to do so.

Partner Organisation Acceptance

VSA's Partner Organisations rely heavily on VSA's recruitment, selection and briefing processes to provide them with a volunteer suitable for their assignment. Usually, Partner Organisations accept VSA's recommendations when supported by your CV and copies of your professional certificates and qualifications. When the Partner Organisation accepts you as our volunteer, they will write a formal acceptance letter, and this letter forms part of your visa application process. Your Operations Coordinator and Country Programme Manager will liaise with your Partner Organisation for this written acceptance letter, and you will be advised by your Operations Coordinator as soon as this has been received.

At times a Partner Organisation may face changes in circumstances, such as key staff turnover or loss of funding, which could result in the sudden cancellation of an assignment. If this happens VSA will make every effort to find an alternative suitable assignment for you; however, this is not always guaranteed.

If the Partner Organisation determines that your selection does not fully meet their needs, VSA will respect their decision and re-advertise for another volunteer. VSA will make every effort to find an alternative assignment for you, but an alternative placement cannot be guaranteed.

Pre-deployment medical clearance.

After your initial contact with your Operations Coordinator, VSA's medical team VolunteerCare, will reach out to you to begin your pre-deployment medical clearance. This comprehensive medical clearance process is designed to evaluate whether you are medically able to complete your assignment in your host country, for the required duration, without significant interruption. The cost of the basic medical and dental examinations is covered by VSA. However, in the event further testing or specialist appointments are required, these will be at your own cost. You are within your rights at this stage to withdraw from the assignment and VSA will re-advertise the role.

Past and current health issues may not preclude you from an assignment, but you may be required to undergo additional screening or tests, at your own cost, prior to final medical clearance. VolunteerCare will assist you through this process. It is important to begin your medical assessment tasks and travel medical consultation as early as possible. Some vaccinations such as Japanese encephalitis and rabies can take up to four weeks.

A dental examination is also required as a part of this process. The relevant forms for your dentist will be sent to you as part of your medical bundle.

Medical clearance is a mandatory requirement for the VSA provided insurance for your assignment. If you do not pass your medical clearance for your selected assignment, it may be possible to be considered for placement in another country or for an e-volunteering role. Please liaise directly with your Operations Co-Ordinator regarding this.

Country visa requirements

As a volunteer, you will be required to make an application for a special volunteer work permit/visa for entry into your assignment country. You will be asked to complete country-specific immigration forms soon after your handover to your Operations Coordinator. Visa processing times can vary and for some countries can take several months. VSA are not able to

influence the processing time of your visa. For this reason, it is important to accurately complete and return your visa forms to your Operations Coordinator as soon as possible.

Your Operations Coordinator will advise you the outcome of your visa application as soon as this is known, and the process for entering your programme country.

It is rare for a visa application to be declined; however, without the appropriate visa clearance, you will be unable to enter your assignment country.

If you have an accompanying partner, please refer to the visa information under the accompanying partner section.

Wellington pre-deployment briefing

VSA have developed a three-day pre-deployment briefing programme to prepare you (and your VSA supported accompanying partner if applicable) for your assignment in-country. The purpose of this briefing is:

- Present VSA's philosophies and approach to international development
- Clarify your role and responsibilities while on assignment and when you return to New Zealand
- Offer practical advice on coping strategies, security, health, and safety hints
- Provide information on insurance, travel, baggage, assignment allowances and contractual obligations
- Prepare you for your representational role both as a New Zealander overseas and as a VSA volunteer
- Provide you with an opportunity to participate in cross-cultural activities aimed at highlighting appropriate behaviour and customs
- Help you understand and sign the Volunteer Code of Good Practice and other key policy documents
- Provide a forum to exchange ideas, information, views, anxieties and achievements with other volunteers and VSA staff

The briefing includes key sessions to support your time in-country. Due to the complexity and various cultural contexts across the Pacific, the briefing is generalist in nature. During the briefing you will have an opportunity to meet your Programme Manager and time to ask specific questions on your assignment, your programme country, accommodation and Partner Organisation. We strongly encourage volunteers to also do their own research and there will be resources available both online and at your local library.

Travel to your country of assignment

Many factors will affect the final date of your departure to your assignment country. These include your medical clearance, country visa issuance, Partner Organisation acceptance and attendance at the Wellington pre-deployment briefing.

Your Country Programme Manager will be arranging your housing, finalising your arrival orientation and liaising with your Partner Organisation about the start date for your assignment.

Your final dates of travel will be organised in consultation with yourself and your Country Programme Manager within pre-defined deployment windows and will coincide with you receiving your final volunteer contract for signature.

VSA will cover the cost of the most economical and direct flight route between your usual place of residence in New Zealand to your assignment country and the cost of your return travel at the completion of your assignment.

On arrival into your programme country, you are required to register on www.safetravel.govt.nz. You will also need to complete a personal emergency plan, updating your overseas address, contact details and emergency contact person. Your Programme Manager will help you with these forms.

Baggage

For your travel to your assignment, and your travel home to New Zealand at its conclusion, VSA will provide you with an economy class equivalent ticket with standard airline accompanied baggage allowance only. Should you wish to take additional baggage you will be responsible for meeting any additional cost. You may be entitled to take an additional 10kg for "tools of trade" if you require specific tools for your assignment. Please liaise with your Operations Coordinator for approval from the Director, Programmes & Volunteer Services and your Country Programme Manager for this additional baggage allowance.

Self-briefing and language learning

VSA will provide you with a comprehensive pre-departure briefing before you fly out to your assignment country. Your Programme Manager will provide an in-country orientation when you first arrive and organise some language lessons. There are some additional things that you can do to prepare yourself for your assignment.

- Research your assignment country. There are a range of websites, books and resources that will help you with up-to-date information on your chosen country.
- Language training will be provided as part of your in-country orientation, but you can start learning the local language at any time. If you make the effort to develop a working knowledge of the local language, you will be rewarded with greater ease of communication, an enhanced understanding of the local people and an easier acceptance by your local community. [Speak Pacific App](#) is also a helpful tool for the language of your programme country.
- Research your Partner Organisation and become familiar with who they are and what they do.

Accompanying partners

For standard and blended assignments longer than six months (excluding UniVols), VSA volunteers may travel with an accompanying spouse/partner. Your accompanying partner will need to complete three parts of the four-part onboarding steps:

- Pre-deployment medical clearance
- Country visa requirements – including dental and travel specific vaccinations
- Wellington pre-deployment briefing

Accompanying partners are expected to uphold the same standards as volunteers including behaviour, attitudes and reporting.

Note: If an accompanying partner wishes to volunteer after arriving in-country, there are several factors to consider.

- Visa: In some countries, changing your visa status is not permitted when you are in your programme country. The partner may need to leave the country and apply for a new visa and then re-enter your programme country.
- Medical clearance: The accompanying partner's medical clearance may need to be reviewed by VolunteerCare.
- Important documents: CV and copies of professional body memberships should be carried with you at the deployment stage, as they may be needed as part of a new assignment application process.

If you think that this may be a possibility, please discuss the details with your Recruitment Adviser at the initial stages.

E-volunteers

E-volunteers contribute their skills and knowledge remotely to our Partner Organisations from New Zealand. This option is ideal for those unable to travel due to work or family commitments or medical issues. E-volunteers typically commit 5 – 20 hours per week on a part-time basis, combining direct engagement with the Partner Organisation and independent work.

Once you have been recruited you will be handed over to an Operations Coordinator who will send you a congratulations letter. This e-mailed letter will also include other important documents such as a request for bank account details for payment of your monthly honorarium, emergency contact form for e-volunteers and honorarium tax form.

Your Programme Manager will liaise with your Partner Organisation about the start date for your assignment and they will also arrange an introduction to your Partner Organisation.

Once your assignment start date has been agreed between your Country Programme Manager, Partner Organisation and yourself, you will be sent an invitation to an e-volunteer briefing.

Partner Organisation acceptance

VSA's host country Partner Organisations rely heavily on VSA's recruitment, selection and briefing processes to provide them with the volunteer most suitable for their assignment. Usually, Partner Organisations accept VSA's recommendations when supported by your CV and copies of certificates of your professional competency. Very rarely VSA supplies these documents to a Partner Organisation, and they decide that the applicant is not quite right for their needs. VSA will respect their wishes and re-advertise for another volunteer. When the Partner Organisation accepts you as our volunteer, they will write a formal acceptance letter. Your Operations Coordinator and Country Programme Manager will liaise with your Partner Organisation for this written acceptance letter, and you will be advised by your Operations Coordinator as soon as this has been received.

E-volunteer briefing

All e-volunteers must complete an online briefing prior to starting an assignment. This involves watching a series of videos followed by a one-hour online session with your Wellington-based Operations team.

We have developed a video series covering the following:

- Building Relationships through technology
- VSA's approach to international development
- VSA past e-volunteers sharing their experience
- E-volunteering – video digital tech

After watching these videos, a meeting with two members of the Operations team will be organised to discuss the content of the videos, answer any questions and make sure you are feeling ready and equipped for your assignment.

At this stage, a meeting will be set up with your Programme Manager and your work with your Partner Organisation can begin from your agreed start date. From this point onwards, your VSA point of contact will be your Programme Manager.

Blended Volunteers

Blended assignments involve elements of both standard in-country assignments and remote e-volunteering. The pre-deployment process for blended assignments is the same as those modalities above depending on the order in which they take place. For example, if the in-country part is at the beginning of the assignment, the process will be the same as if it was an in-country assignment. If the remote volunteering component takes place first, you will go through the e-volunteer process, followed by the in-country part closer to the time of departure.

Each Blended assignment has a different mix of in-country and remote volunteering and the timelines and process is variable depending on blend, length of assignment, location and complexity. You should read both the in-country and e-Volunteer process to understand the requirements of a volunteer doing a blended assignment.

Capacity Development

What is capacity development?

Capacity development is sometimes used interchangeably with the term 'capacity building' and refers to a long-term improvement to individual, organisational or system-level abilities. Capacity development favours a strengths-based approach which builds on existing abilities and capabilities.

Why is capacity development important?

Capacity development:

- Promotes local ownership and locally led development
- Reduces over-reliance on outside experts to provide knowledge, resources and solutions to community issues
- Fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment
- Can be contextualised to local culture and context, leading to more effective community solutions
- Values reciprocal growth, learning and change

What are the different levels of capacity development?

Building capacity at multiple levels ensures that the competent and committed staff in our partner organisations are supported to deliver efficient and effective services to their local communities.

- At the individual level, capacity strengthening improves individual skills and knowledge by mentoring and training counterparts and staff
- At the organisational level, capacity development improves an organisation's systems, structures, processes and people to enhance its operations, services and/or products
- At the sector level, capacity development strengthens the ability for people, organisations, businesses and service providers within, and across, sectors to work together to identify, and respond effectively to, sector-wide challenges and needs
- An enabling environment refers to the broader economic, cultural, social and/or political context that enables capacity development to occur.

How can I support capacity development on assignment?

- At the individual level, improving individual skills, knowledge and performance through mentoring, training, motivation and experiences
- At the organisational level: supporting the development and effective implementation of resources that enhance the leadership, strategies, structures, policies, practices and technologies of the organisation
- At the sector level: enabling relationships within, and across, sectors to exchange ideas, access resources, address shared issues, and facilitate collective problem-solving
- At the enabling environment level: improving policy frameworks to address economic, political, environmental and social factors, such as economic growth, financing, labour markets, judicial systems and the legislative environment in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way

Principles of capacity development

The following principles underpin VSA's approach to capacity development:

- take time to understand the context and culture and adapt methods to suit
- recognise and reinforce potential, existing capacity and strengths
- ensure change is wanted and owned by local people
- understand that capacity development can be a slow process that is likely to be a culmination of many smaller-scale, difficult-to-measure achievements rather than large successes
- strive for positive change that is sustainable long-term rather than focussing on immediate 'fixes'
- be flexible and open-minded and learn as much as you share.

Important Contacts

Below you can find the key contact details you may need during your onboarding journey.

Volunteer Service Abroad

VSA Recruitment Team E-mail	volunteer@vsa.org.nz
VSA Operations Coordinators	programmes@vsa.org.nz
VSA General Enquiry	info@vsa.org.nz
VSA Website	www.vsa.org.nz
VSA Fundraising team	info@vsa.org.nz
VSA Privacy Officer	privacy@vsa.org.nz
VSA Main Phone	04 471 8690

VolunteerCare Medical Team

VolunteerCare Medical team e-mail	vsa.medical@volunteercare.co.nz
VolunteerCare portal	www.volunteercare.co.nz
VolunteerCare Phone	+64 4 2821699

Lockton Insurance

Mel Commerford	
Phone:	+61 477 009 429
E-mail:	melissa.commerford@lockton.com

Rebecca Fleming

Phone:	+61 448 647 248
E-mail:	Rebecca.fleming@lockton.com



VSA Glossary and FAQs

Accompanying partner: The partner of a volunteer, identified during the selection process, who accompanies them into the field for all or most of the assignment. Permitted on assignments longer than six months.

Council for International Development: The national umbrella agency for New Zealand organisations working in international development.

Country Programme Coordinator: Your Programme Manager's in-country support.

FAQ's: Frequently asked questions that are listed on the VSA website and the About Us section of this handbook.

Full application: A more detailed application that we will require you to complete after you have successfully completed the on-line screening meeting.

Life partner: Husband, wife or de facto partner

Operations Coordinator: Your contact in the operations team who will be supporting you through the onboarding process, including helping organise your visas, briefing and travel to your assignment country.

Partner Organisation: VSA's partner in the Pacific that you will be working with on your assignment.

Programme Manager: (or Country Programme Manager) VSA's manager in your assignment country.

Recruitment Adviser: VSA's specialist recruiter located in our office in Wellington who will be helping you with everything in the recruitment process for your assignment.

Selection Adviser: One of a group of people that have been involved in VSA's recruitment process for several years. They come from professional backgrounds such as relationship counselling, clinical psychology or HR consulting.

Skills match assessment: The process for matching the skills on your CV to the skills required for a new assignment by a returning volunteer.

Special selection: The process for returning volunteers applying for a new volunteer assignment.

UniVol: NZ university graduate, aged between 18-30 years and recently graduated or has graduated no more than two years ago.

Volunteer candidate: The name for all volunteer applicants until they are handed over to the Operations Team.

VolunteerCare: VSA's specialist medical team that will help you through VSA's medical clearance process.

Frequently asked questions

You can find up to date frequently asked questions at www.vsa.org.nz/volunteer/faqs/

Haere pai atu, hoki pai mai - travel safely and return well.

