



Landcare Notes

Landcare Note 10.1
September 2010

Employing staff

Your group will reach an exciting and rewarding stage when you're in a position to employ staff to do a specific job or implement a project for you.

However, if you are in that position, you need to reflect on the best ways to use the people you are employing, and be aware of your responsibilities and obligations as an employer.

This Landcare Note outlines the steps to go through to successfully employ staff, and also provides references for finding more information and tools to help you.

What employing staff is all about

You may want to employ staff where there is a specific job to be done and your members and other volunteers are not available to do it.

You may also choose to do it when you have the funds available to pay someone and you're able to meet your responsibilities as an employer.

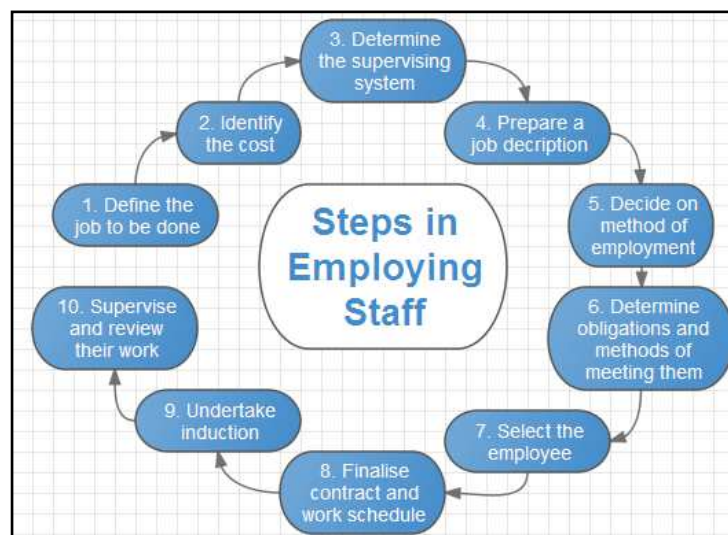
Success is having the job done without excessive problems or friction, and to the satisfaction of all concerned, including the employee.

How to do it

Steps in employing staff

While Landcare groups such as yours are often involved with the employment of Landcare coordinators, facilitators or project managers (known collectively as 'Landcare support people'), there are times when you may employ staff for more specific jobs.

No matter what the situation, you need to go through the following steps to make sure the employment arrangements happen smoothly.



1. Define the job to be done.

As a group, you need to agree on the specifics of what needs doing. You must consider your priorities, what the job entails, the resources needed to support the job, the time to be dedicated to the job, the duration of the job and what result you want.

2. Identify the cost required

Often employment is based on a group gaining a grant to do a specific project or job. Project-based funding will put boundaries around the work and the dollars allocated to it. Funding for staff may also come from on-going sponsorship, or from group subscriptions.

Your treasurer will play an important role in advising on finances and the financial projections (see Landcare Notes: 4.1 Financial Management; 4.2 Keeping Financial Records; 4.4 Budgeting) as far as whether hiring someone is feasible.

3. Determine the supervising system

Whatever the job is, the employee or contractor needs to report to one person as delegated by the group to represent all of you. This person is the day-to-day contact for the employee, and therefore responsible for you meeting your obligations to your employee,



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and to make sure that decisions are made for your employee as required.

In the case of a short-term job, this person might be directly authorised by the Committee. In the case of a longer-term job (such as a Landcare support person), a subcommittee may directly support the delegate in managing the employee.

4. Prepare a job description

A job description should clearly state your expectations of the employment. The detail needed will be determined by the type of job. The job description needs to explain the things to be done and the skills needed to perform adequately in the job.

5. Decide on a method of employment

There are four basic methods of employment which you can choose from. They include the group directly employing the staff member or contractor or employment through an agency. You could have a co-operative arrangement with a public agency to act on your behalf or arrange a service contract

Each option has advantages and disadvantages. Landcare Note 10.2: Selecting a Method of Employment gives you a check list of considerations to help make this decision.

6. Determine obligations and methods of meeting them

As an employer there are a number of obligations you should plan for:

- Introducing the new employee to the culture of your group: For example, the staff member should be invited to attend events or meetings so they can be introduced to members and get a sense of the way you operate and socialise while the group learns about their role.
- Ensuring all parties are aware of the employment conditions: E.g. in terms of duties, leave entitlements, pay, and supervision systems.

- Meeting all requirements of occupational health and safety, payment and record keeping, equal opportunity, grievance and disputes, and management/ reporting/ recording systems.

A policies and procedures handbook of some form is the best way of dealing with this step and the detail required will depend on which method of employment is chosen.

In regards to Occupational Health and Safety for staff, a guide has been developed specifically for Landcare by the Statewide Landcare Coordination Team called *Landcare Support Persons in Victoria – A Practical Guide to Assist with the Employment and Management of Landcare Support Persons in Victoria, 2009* (see references below).

7. Selecting the employee

The selection process involves a number of steps including determining the role of your employee, advertising, seeking, interviewing, assessing and agreeing to the terms of employment. If the job has been well defined, then the type of person you are seeking should be clear. There is an interview evaluation matrix contained in reference – Statewide Landcare Coordination Team 2009 (see below).

8. Finalise contract and work schedule

See the two examples of employment agreements contained in the reference Statewide Landcare Coordination Team 2009 (see below).

9. Undertake induction

An induction process ensures there is a good working relationship between you and your employee. It establishes good communication and clear expectations in both directions. Induction covers introductions, responsibilities, available resources, support systems, imperatives and general familiarisation.



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10. Supervise and review

This process involves putting in place the support systems identified in Step 3. This process is about reviewing the job and the performance of your employee, and should also allow them to raise any concerns with you. The process allows for reflecting on and adjusting the role accordingly. Sometimes a review may mean terminating the employment agreement.

Key tools

A set of templates and sample documents to help you complete the steps above are contained in references from the Statewide Landcare Coordination Team (2009) (see below).

They include position descriptions, work plan template, interview evaluation matrix, employment agreement (for use between you and your employee), employment agency and service coordinator agreement (for use when contractors or an employee agency are undertaking the employment), and a draft occupational health and safety code of practice for Landcare.

The State Services Authority also has a set of standards for the application of public sector employment principles which could be directly adopted by you if you are employing staff. These are contained within the reference Public Sector Standards Commissioner (2006) (see below).

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Further references

Victorian Landcare Gateway:
www.landcarevic.org.au

Statewide Landcare Coordination Team (2009)
– *A Guide to Assist with the Employment and Management of Landcare Support People in Victoria*: <http://www.landcarevic.org.au>

Statewide Landcare Coordination Team (2009)
– Editable employment toolkit templates:
www.landcarevic.org.au

Related Landcare Notes

This Landcare Note is one of a series. These notes provide an excellent guide for the ongoing operation of your group.

Landcare Note 4.1: Financial Management

Landcare Note 4.2: Keeping Financial Records

Landcare Note 4.4: Budgeting

Landcare Note 9.1: Recruiting and Retaining Members

Landcare Note 10.2: Selecting a Method of Employment

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Jude Niemiec: Landcare Note – *Employing a Coordinator* (2000)

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Accessibility

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