Volunteering to Learn:

Introducing our Good Practice Guides

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Our team

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Research assistance provided by: Project Management:

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Our project

Specifically, the project is investigating

➤ the nature and goals of Australian university student volunteering programs,

➤ the learning outcomes desired and achieved by students who volunteer,

➤ expectations of both universities and host organisations, and

➤ available options for locating programs within universities.

Aim: Develop Good Practices Guides

Our approach

Pilot

Literature Review

Matrix

Interviews

Team analysis and development of GPGs

Reference Group workshop

ACEN Workshop Perth

Critical Friends

Team revision and refinement of GPGs

Road show

Good Practice Guides

➢ What do we mean by "Good Practice"?

➢ What are the guides intended to achieve?

The contents of the guides are derived from the data collected for this project.

What guides do we have?

Concept Guides
➢ Terminology
➢ Learning

Good Practice Guides
➢ Students
➢ Host organisations
➢ University decision makers
➢ University program managers
➢ Potential employers

Key findings - Terminology

In general, *University Student Volunteering* refers to those activities that university students do that meet the four criteria:

1. of benefit to the community and the volunteer;
2. of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion;
3. for no financial payment; and
4. in designated volunteer positions.

Two main differences of opinion were identified in this study.

There is debate around whether students are volunteering if

1. they receive credit for a unit of study, or
2. the activity is compulsory within a unit or course of study.

Key findings - Students

Motivation to volunteer		
Social	*Values*	*Employability*
To be active	To act upon values	For credit
For fun	To help others	To gain experience
To make friends	To support a cause	To add to their CV
Because their friends do	"It's expected "	To increase employability
	"It's what you do"	To develop skills
		To learn/practice English
		***Because it's required

Good communication at the start of the volunteering relationship will lead to better outcomes.

Key findings about - Universities

Strategic:
Effective programs…

➢ Have **champions** and achieve **buy in** - **incl. senior champions**

➢ Are properly **planned** before implementation

➢ Have **policies** in place – including **structure** and **funding**

➢ Are clear about **credit and reward**

➢ Have clear **structure and accountability**

➢ Provide **job security and ongoing funding**

➢ Develop **strategic partnerships**

➢ Put appropriate **feedback** loops put in place for evaluation

➢ Document and follow **risk management**

Operational:
Effective programs…

➢ Provide **social support** mechanisms

➢ Establish clear **expectations** with all parties

➢ Ensure activities are **scheduled** appropriately

➢ Set up **realistic** views in **advertising** and **promotion**

➢ Ensure that activities are **equitable and comparable** when **credit bearing**

➢ **Have alternatives** for those not on campus

➢ **Build relationships** with partners

➢ Set up **feedback loops**

➢ Monitor the **legal frameworks**

Two guides developed – institutional level and manager/co-ordinator level

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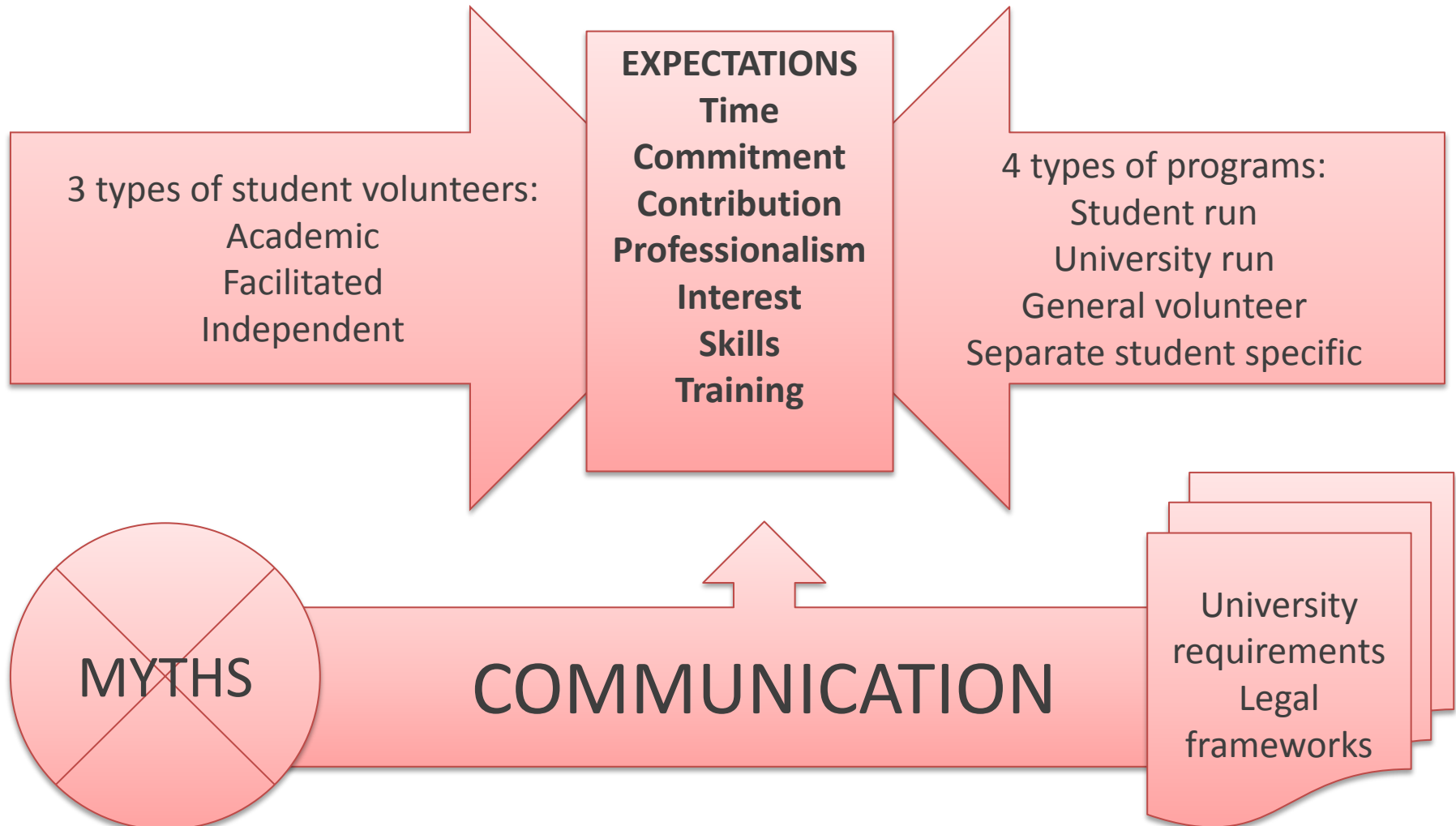➢ Document and follow **risk management**

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Key findings – Host organisations

Volunteering to learn

3 types of student volunteers:
Academic
Facilitated
Independent

EXPECTATIONS
Time
Commitment
Contribution
Professionalism
Interest
Skills
Training

4 types of programs:
Student run
University run
General volunteer
Separate student specific

MYTHS

COMMUNICATION

University requirements
Legal frameworks

Key findings for Employers

Importance of employing graduates with volunteering experience

- Engaged workforce
- Value congruence
- CSR involvement
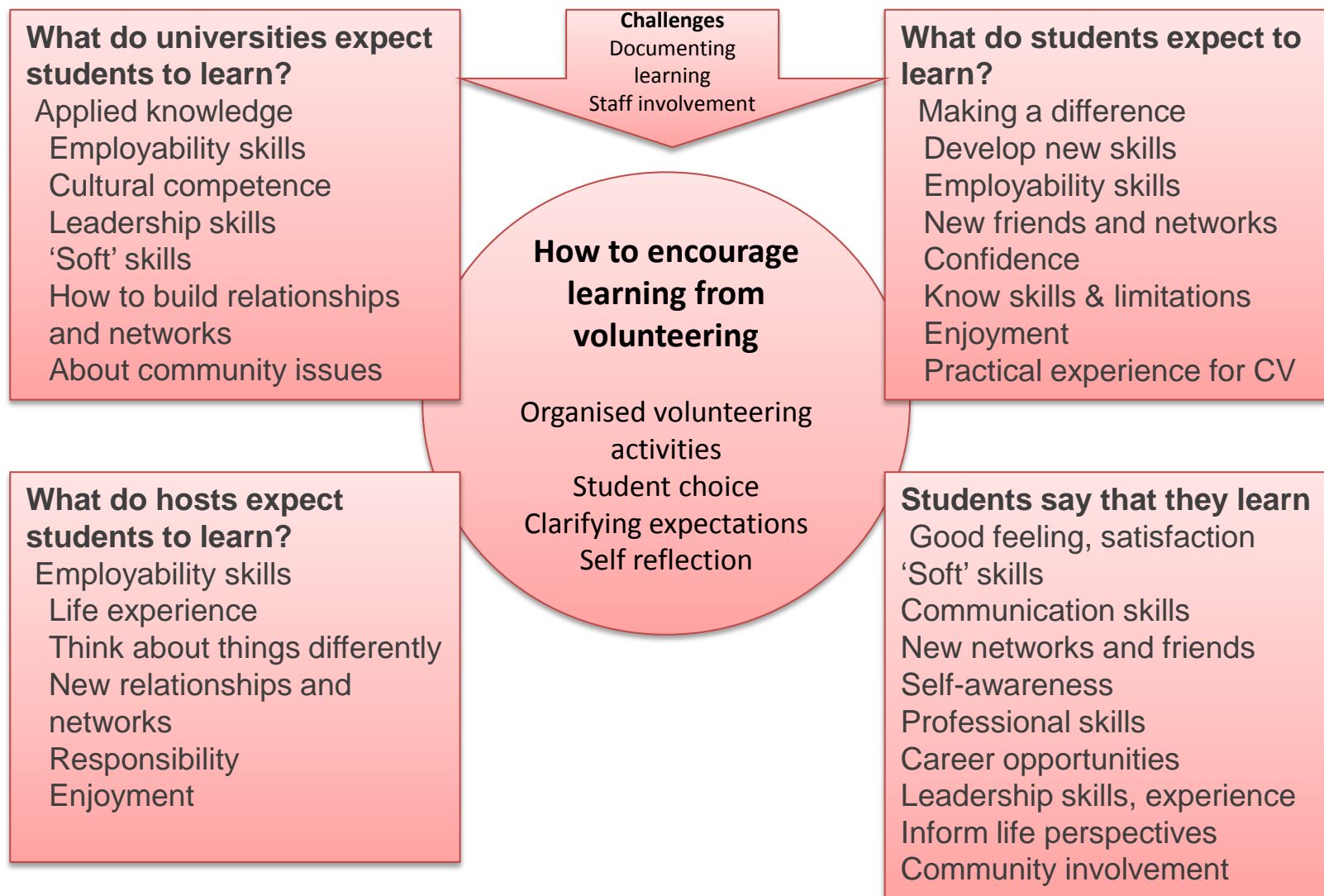- Attracting people with skills, values and experience

What to look for in potential employees' CV

- What did they do?
- Type of volunteering
- Leadership roles
- Skills developed
- Experiences
- Grants

Referring to the voluntary experience during the selection process :

1. Tell us about your volunteering experience in the university. Where did you volunteer? For how long? How often?
2. What kind or roles did you undertake in your volunteering? What tasks and responsibilities did they include?
3. Why did you want to volunteer? Why did you stop volunteering?
4. What level of responsibility did you have? Did you have any leadership roles as part of your volunteering? (See GPG for additional questions)

Key findings about Learning

Volunteering to learn

What do universities expect students to learn?
 Applied knowledge
   Employability skills
   Cultural competence
   Leadership skills
   'Soft' skills
   How to build relationships
   and networks
   About community issues

Challenges
Documenting learning
Staff involvement

What do students expect to learn?
  Making a difference
  Develop new skills
  Employability skills
  New friends and networks
  Confidence
  Know skills & limitations
  Enjoyment
  Practical experience for CV

How to encourage learning from volunteering

Organised volunteering activities
Student choice
Clarifying expectations
Self reflection

What do hosts expect students to learn?
 Employability skills
   Life experience
   Think about things differently
   New relationships and
   networks
   Responsibility
   Enjoyment

Students say that they learn
 Good feeling, satisfaction
'Soft' skills
Communication skills
New networks and friends
Self-awareness
Professional skills
Career opportunities
Leadership skills, experience
Inform life perspectives
Community involvement

Controversies & contradictions

➢ What do we mean by "voluntary"?
➢ Who benefits?
➢ At what point is it exploitation?
  – Of students?
  – Of hosts?
  – Of clients?
➢ Who "owns" the program? (demarcation disputes)
➢ Where does activism and politics fit in?
➢ Myths and Mysteries
  – Why would employers not value experience gained volunteering?
  – If all students volunteer will 'different' be sought somewhere else?

Thank you
to the people who have generously given of their time.

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