Use the generational matrix below to learn more about each generation and characteristics that are defined by that generation. This matrix is not designed to give you all the answers for your volunteering program, but rather an insight into each generation and the things that you may need to consider when engaging different ages of volunteers.

	Silent Generation Born 1925-1946 'Radio' generation	Baby Boomers Born 1946-1964 'Television' generation	Generation X Born 1964-1980 'Computer' generation	Generation Y Born 1980-1990 'Digital' generation
Value	Hard work	Loyalty	Work-life balance	Innovation and change
Views on Authority	Respect authority, and will rarely challenge it, even though it may frustrate them.	Willing to challenge the status quo. Some concern for how this is done. Desire accountability.	Tendency to mistrust authority, cynical of authority and large organisations. Authority is self and peers. Expect accountability.	Authority is irrelevant. Question frequently, WHY? Demonstrate respect after they are treated with respect. Demand accountability.
Autonomy	Conforms and plays by rules; limited if any questioning of the rules. Can live with limited choice.	Personal freedom and self expression are important. Want choices. Many are used to authority.	Choice is expected. Highly self-reliant.	Demand choice; and ability to mix a range of choices. However, keen to seek insight from those they see as respected.
Organisation preference	Generally have faith in and support mainstream organisations. Support Australian causes, and children/poverty in overseas countries. Give time and money.	Support organisations they can trust. Interest in diversity/inequality issues. May be juggling time and money and are interested in alternative ways of contributing. Shifting lifestyle choices with impending retirement.	More global interests, humanitarian and social justice causes. Interested in innovation and pragmatism, and less interested in mainstream organisations.	Open to joining lesser known organisations, and ask why they should support any organisation. Interested in joining communities they can relate to and be creative and expressive. Want convenience and speedy process

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	Silent Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Identity	Proud of achievements; honour and integrity valued. Interest in family and community.	Have a general sense of optimism. Have both a serious/hardworking side and frivolous/indulgent side. Desire personal happiness and internal fulfilment.	Cynical yet pragmatic. Perceive themselves to be different from other generations especially parents.	Questioning but fun-loving; value experiences and variety. Thrive on change, need for visibility and making a personal mark
Sense of obligation	Outward face to other matters, support for community activities, external focus.	Obligation and responsibility to self, personal development and self esteem; nurturing important.	Detached from self absorption of both Boomers and Gen Y; but interested in doing things that work for them and align with their values. Get on with it and get over it.	Concern for communities that they identify with (physical and virtual). Still young enough to not feel a strong sense of obligation.
Technology	Generally wary of technology; tentatively embracing it and safer if people are involved. Some opt out as being 'too old'.	Difficulty adapting to constantly changing technology. Recognise the value of technology, but need good support and are constantly in learning mode.	Technology savvy, adapt rapidly to change when it brings convenience. Boundaries blurred between actual and virtual experience.	Live with and through technology. Use it to expand personal experiences. Rely on the immediacy of technology and 24/7 access to information. Confident to take initiative and explore technology.
View of others	Prejudge Boomers as self- orientated	See Silent Generation as limited in views and experiences. Often perceive Gen X'ers as negative, but interact well with energetic Y's.	See Boomers as inflexible to change. Respect the lessons to be learned from Silent Generation, but less patient with the 'cut through' approach of Y's.	Respect Boomers, providing they live up to expectations.

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	Silent Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Time	Patience for quality outcomes, and see patience as having its own reward. Willing to delay gratification. Feel they have time.	Time is precious, highly valued and in short supply. Seek quick outcomes or milestones. Tend to be impatient when don't know if progress is being made.	Time is highly valued, and convenience is priority. Innovative shortcuts and efficiency are important, attracted to pragmatic approaches.	Live in the moment. Expect speed and fast turnarounds. Live in the 24/7 world of multi-tasking and get impatient if things take too long.
Work	High degree of loyalty; duty before pleasure. Will maintain dedication to a job once they take it on, limited adaptability.	Known for overworking to climb corporate ladder. Increasing need for personal satisfaction. Troubled by rapid change and likely to change career. Loyalty to work questioned: is the company loyal to me?	'Work to live' attitude. Open to contracts, and want clear expectations from employers. Feel responsible for own satisfaction, and likely to change careers. Don't expect loyalty.	Work in fits and starts; and have no loyalty. Tend to ask why would I want to be loyal? Demand clear expectations to ensure productivity. Have several career changes.
Family	Desire stability. Preservation of family and community values to be respected.	Fragmented families through separation/divorce and re-defining of family. Both parents working and struggle to keep family together.	Single parent, blended family, sole living are popular options. Alternatively, full-time parenting (that they feel they missed out on) are options. Change and choice are they key words to these families.	Grown children returning home between experiences; family structures changeable. Often benefited from more time with their parents than their Gen X big brothers and sisters and as such close parental ties exist.
Learning	Need a learning environment that is structured and stress free. Require full orientation and motivated to learn when it is for the good of the organisation.	Need a learning environment that is interactive. Respond well to brainstorming and group discussions.	Prefer self directed life-long learning. Focus on real life and informal learning, combine learning and entertainment. Rely heavily on internet and are big 'scanners' of information.	Respond well to learning environments which combine personal challenge, teamwork, technology and visually appealing materials. Appreciate group work and interaction.

Adapted from deKort (2006) Generations at Speed; Madden (2007) Changing Generational Characteristics, Deal (2007) Generational Differences

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