



Volunteer Management Activity

Frequently Asked Questions

What will the new Volunteer Management Activity model look like?

- From 1 July 2021, the Australian Government will distribute around \$33.5 million (excluding GST) over five years under this new Volunteer Management Activity, through the state and territory volunteering peak bodies.
- Grant agreements with the state and territory volunteering peak bodies will be from 1 July 2021 until 30 June 2026, with a review of the effectiveness/efficiency of the program to be undertaken after three years.
- The new model will focus on building the capacity of Volunteering Involving Organisations (VIOs), primarily through online volunteer management services, and breaking down barriers to volunteering for identified priority groups including people with disability, newly arrived migrants, and First Nations people.
 - The online services delivered to VIOs will focus on implementing best practice recruiting and training of volunteers, retaining volunteers, volunteer management and understanding regulatory obligations and risk management. There will also be online resources.
 - Increasing the accessibility of volunteering opportunities for people in priority groups includes building the capacity of VIOs to engage volunteers from these groups and providing face to face and other services to support these groups to participate in volunteering.
- State and territory peaks know their state or territory's needs and are best placed to work closely with their local volunteer organisations. This new approach will enable volunteering peak bodies to respond more efficiently to the current and emerging needs of local volunteer organisations and their volunteers.

How much funding will be provided through the redesigned program?

- From 1 July 2021, the Australian Government will distribute up to \$33.5 million (excluding GST) over five years under the new Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) model.

- This is equivalent to the total funding previously provided under the VMA, including the equivalent of Social and Community Services wage supplementation, which will be rolled into base funding going forward.
- The Department of Social Services (the department) is currently working with the state and territory volunteering peak bodies to develop a new jurisdictional funding model that ensures no state or territory is worse off under the new program.
- In addition, the Commonwealth Government will further invest a one off sum of up to \$2.5 million in 2020-21 to develop and improve volunteer management IT infrastructure associated with the delivery of the program.

Who will receive funding through the redesigned program?

- Under the new Volunteer Management Activity (VMA), funding of up to \$33.5 million (excluding GST) over five years will be distributed through the state and territory volunteering peak bodies
- The volunteering peak bodies will be responsible for effective channelling of VMA funding to meet needs and priorities across their jurisdiction.
- Volunteering peak bodies are best placed to work closely with the volunteering sector within their own jurisdiction, guided by a thorough understanding of local issues and needs.
- Volunteering peak bodies will develop appropriate strategies and mechanisms to ensure equitable service coverage, using existing localised services and structures where possible. They will work with local organisations to develop service delivery strategies.
- The new approach will enable volunteering peak bodies to respond more effectively to the current and emerging needs of local volunteering organisations and their volunteers.

Will any current VRC/VSS be funded by the department under the new Volunteer Management Activity model?

- Only the seven volunteering peak bodies will be invited to apply for funding under the new Volunteer Management Activity (VMA).
- Volunteering peak bodies may decide to partner with some existing VRC/ VSS organisations. However, there are clear guidelines for the new program that require experience and expertise in priority areas. The peaks will need to partner with the most appropriate organisations to deliver the specified services.
- Volunteering peak bodies will be responsible for determining funding amounts provided to any VRC/ VSS they may partner with.
- VRC/ VSS organisations are encouraged to engage with their state/territory volunteering peak body in relation to how they could support the new VMA program.

How will funding be made available to the peak bodies?

- It is anticipated that funding will be made available to the volunteering peak bodies through the Department of Social Services (the department) standard grant making process via the Community Grants Hub.

- The department will work with the volunteering peak bodies through this process to finalise funding agreements in the first part of 2021.
- The department will publish the Grant Opportunity Guidelines on GrantConnect in the coming months, which will outline the jurisdictional funding split.

How will the government support organisations through this transition?

- The current Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) will cease on 30 June 2021, and be replaced by the redesigned VMA from 1 July 2021.
- The Department of Social Services (the department) has been working with currently funded VMA organisations about the impending changes since July 2017.
- A recent independent review of the Activity informed government decisions on the redesign; and lead to nationwide stakeholder consultations on the VMA in early 2020.
- The department is working with the volunteering peak bodies to ensure adequate information and support is provided to currently funded VMA organisations during the transition to the redesigned VMA.
- As a requirement of their funding agreements, under the new program, the volunteering peak bodies will be required to work closely with local organisations in the delivery of VMA.

Will any currently funded Volunteer Management Activity organisations be given funding extensions to allow for transition?

- No. From 30 June 2021, all current funding agreements under the VMA will cease. These funding agreements will not receive any form of extension, as the Commonwealth Government does not have the Constitutional authority to continue the program in its current state.
- As a requirement of their funding agreements, under the new program, the volunteering peak bodies will be required to work closely with local organisations in the delivery of the VMA.
- VRC/ VSS organisations are encouraged to engage with their state/territory volunteering peak body in relation to how they could support the new VMA program.

Won't the timing create a gap between when the current Volunteer Management Activity funding ceases and when the peaks commence their work?

- While there may be a short period of adjustment for some organisations, there will be immense long-term benefits and improvements across the volunteering sector.
- The department is working with the volunteering peak bodies to ensure minimal gaps in service delivery.

Why has the Government chosen to defund Volunteer Support Service organisations and its face-to-face services, and shift Volunteer Management Activity funding to an online model of support?

- The Government has a responsibility to ensure that activities undertaken by Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) funded organisations are aligned to a Commonwealth head/s of power under the Australian Constitution. The redesigned VMA program has addressed this issue, and is now more aligned to a head/s of power.
- The Government also has a responsibility to ensure that funded programs deliver services efficiently and effectively to Australian communities.
- The sector has been undergoing constant change for the last 20 years.
- A recent review of the Activity found the current model could lead to duplication and confusion amongst volunteer organisations, and there was varying support depending on location.
- The review found that, in its current state, the VMA led to an inconsistent use of resources, IT infrastructure, and application of best practices.
- The Australian Government is prioritising vulnerable target groups and regional and rural Australia through the new model. This will:
 - reduce barriers for priority groups, e.g. people with a disability, newly arrived migrants and First Nations people, in accessing volunteering services
 - guarantee service coverage of rural and remote areas.
- The new model will grow the sector's resilience and adaptability.
- Under the redesigned VMA, not all services will be online. Volunteering peak bodies will work with other organisations to build the capacity of Volunteering Involving Organisations (VIOs) to decrease barriers faced by priority groups.
- This means that the peak bodies could, as part of their strategies, include face to face delivery of services, but only to priority groups that the Commonwealth Government has the power to fund. These groups include:
 - People with disability
 - First nation peoples
 - Newly arrived migrants

Will the department reduce the number of funded organisations from 52 to 20?

- The department will be funding the seven (7) state and territory volunteering peak bodies to deliver the new VMA program. The number of organisations the peak bodies partner with will be a matter for them.

How will the Commonwealth support Volunteer Support Services/Volunteer Resource Centres in the future?

- From 30 June 2021, all current funding agreements under the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) will cease. These funding agreements will not receive any form of extension, as the Commonwealth Government does not have the Constitutional authority to continue the program in its current state.
- Under the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) the department will specify that the peak bodies need to work in partnership with other organisations to deliver the new VMA program.
- This means that who the peak bodies partner with, any funding they receive, how much funding they receive, which organisations will be given priority etc. will be a matter for the peak bodies. Any requirements for which organisations the volunteering peak bodies partner with will be outlined in the GOGs and will include things such as: peaks will not be able to provide funding to any organisation that has been named in the National Redress Scheme and has not signed on.

What will the \$2.5 million one off investment in IT infrastructure be used for?

- The Commonwealth Government will invest a one off sum of \$2.5 million in 2020-21 to develop and improve volunteer management IT infrastructure for the program. The aim of this investment is to support national consistency in volunteer management.
- This one off investment in IT infrastructure with support organisations by reducing cost barriers to information, training materials, governance materials etc.

Will Data Exchange Reporting be a requirement under the new VMA?

- The department is working with peak bodies to determine the most appropriate mechanism for data collection for the redesigned VMA program.

What is the Australian Government doing to ensure a smooth transition to the new VMA program?

- The department is working in consultation with the peak bodies to ensure open communication and national consistency on the implementation of the new VMA program.
- It is expected that the peak bodies will work with the VRCs/VSS in their respective jurisdictions.
- The department is also meeting on a regular basis with state and territory government officials to discuss the new VMA program and work collaboratively in ensuring a smooth transition and minimal service delivery gaps.