

Volunteering Victoria

VMA5 Development Of A Framework And Implementation Process For Victoria

February 2022

**This report has been prepared by LDC
Group for Volunteering Victoria**



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Acknowledgement to Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, LDC Group respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging leaders and to the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal people.

LDC Group works with the community, health, and government sectors to strengthen their impact and shape positive social change. We support organisations and sectors to:

- » Change and transform
- » Build knowledge
- » Plan for the future
- » Evaluate outcomes
- » Strengthen organisational systems
- » innovate

Our focus is on working with people and organisations to build on their existing expertise and insights; to understand where they are at and give them the confidence to find their way through complex problems; and to work together to generate great outcomes. Key to this is building trusted relationship

At the heart of our approach is a desire to improve the system of supports available to people who experience some form of disadvantage, in order for them to live meaningful lives in their community.

Introduction

The Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) is funded by the Federal Government's Department of Social Services (DSS) to strengthen volunteering across Australia. An independent review of the VMA was undertaken by mpconsulting in 2018. The review indicated changes in the volunteering landscape and found that the focus of the VMA was not well aligned with best practice volunteer management, nor well aligned to the way that most people (including those experiencing disadvantage) accessed volunteer opportunities. The report concluded that the performance framework could not adequately measure the effectiveness of the VMA. This led to challenges around demonstrating the value of the program, performance assessment, or driving continuous improvement. It was concluded that the volunteer management strategies delivered needed to be efficient and fit for purpose as well as minimising duplication of work. Several recommendations were made to improve the VMA.¹

On 1 July 2021, DSS replaced the VMA with the Volunteer Management Activity 5 (VMA5) to operate for the period 2021-2026. The new program focus is:

- » The delivery of online services to build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) within their relevant jurisdictions.
- » The breaking down of barriers to volunteering faced by three identified priority groups: People with Disabilities, First Nations People, and Newly Arrived Migrants (i.e., those who have arrived in Australia within the past five years).
- » An increase in coverage across regional, rural, and remote areas.

The VMA redesign is a radical departure from how volunteer management services have previously been delivered across Australia and puts Volunteering Victoria in a new role as jurisdictional provider and funder of services. Volunteering Victoria has previously collaborated with Volunteer Support Organisations (VSOs) but not been their principal funder. In 2020 Volunteering Victoria administered 13 grants to most of these organisations through State Government project funds. This funding was short term in scope.

Under the new VMA5 program, Volunteer Peak Bodies (VPBs) across Australia will be responsible for delivering the new program to support capacity building in their jurisdiction. Volunteering Victoria will develop appropriate strategies to ensure equitable service coverage, using existing localised services and structures where possible.

Volunteering Victoria will partner with VIOs, VSOs, Local Government Authorities (LGAs), Indigenous entities and other businesses in their jurisdiction to develop service delivery strategies consistent with the DSS Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

An important consideration of the new VMA5 programs is its scope of delivery. A key concern reiterated by the volunteer sector, including discussions with State Government, is how the new program focus will impact current and historical volunteering activities and how expected subsequent funding gaps can be addressed to ensure that successful volunteer programs do not cease.

Volunteering Victoria's direction since the announcement of the VMA redesign has been for transparent and independent sector-wide engagement to inform its delivery of VMA5—see Volunteering Victoria's approach overleaf.²

1 (mpconsulting, 2018)

2 Volunteer sector consultations-see Appendices

LDC Group was engaged by Volunteering Victoria over approximately 10 weeks to provide a framework and implementation process that could meet the aims of the VMA5 and engage with a wide range of stakeholders across Victoria.

Desk research, surveys, focus groups and individual interviews were conducted by a team of consultants that informed the development of the VMA5 framework and implementation process for Victoria. A project reference group comprising volunteer sector stakeholders deliberated on options and recommendations—see *Appendix One: Project Reference Group*.

Endorsement of the proposed framework and implementation process

The recommended VMA5 framework and implementation process for Victoria provided in this report to Volunteering Victoria have been endorsed by the Project Reference Group and the Volunteering Victoria Board of Directors. Feedback received on the draft report that is within the context of the project objectives, has been incorporated into the final report.

Organisation of this report

The following discussion provides the background for the development of this project and the project outcomes. The discussion is grounded in desk research and sector consultations—see *Appendices*.

The report progresses from a discussion of the initial intentions of the VMA5 through to its implications for the volunteer sector and recommendations for a framework and implementation process that best fits Victoria.

Victorian Volunteer Strategy

The Victorian Government recognises that volunteering provides positive health and wellbeing outcomes for people, communities, and the environment, supports delivery of vital services, and strengthens place-based approaches. During this project the Victorian Government's, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) was working to finalise and release the State Volunteering Strategy.³

The Victorian Volunteer Strategy (the Strategy) will provide a roadmap of practical improvements to support and enhance volunteerism in Victoria and it is being informed by extensive community consultation and guided by a Taskforce. State Government recognises that volunteers and volunteering are changing, and to remain relevant and sustainable in the future, a range of demographic, social and environmental challenges will need to be addressed.⁴

The Strategy will:

- » Support more flexible and inclusive volunteering options.
- » Focus on the volunteer experience and role of volunteer managers.
- » Measure, value and recognise the impact of volunteering, including informal and community-led approaches.

3 (DFFH, 11 August 2021)

4 (DFFH, 11 August 2021)

- » Encourage joined-up and streamlined approaches to reduce administrative burden and maximise impact.⁵

DFFH was keen to coordinate with the redesign of the VMA in Victoria to minimize duplication, and ensure their Strategy is targeted to meet state needs not covered by the scope of the new VMA. State Government representatives from DFFH responsible for delivering the Strategy were also involved in early communications with VSOs around the changes in funding and their potential role in the volunteering sector in Victoria. At the time of.

Recommendation 1: Volunteering Victoria work with partners to address and find additional funding sources and continue dialogue with DFFH in relation to aligning the VMA5 framework and implementation process with the Victorian Volunteer Strategy.

The VMA

Since 2005, the Australian Government has invested in volunteer management through the VMA. It has funded VSOs to deliver place-based volunteer management services across Australia including:

- » Individual matching of those experiencing disadvantage to volunteer opportunities and the referral of potential volunteers to volunteer involving organisations (VIOs).
- » Provide support, advice, and information to volunteers and VIOs.
- » Promote volunteering.

The average funding provided by the Commonwealth DSS, although small (\$70,000 per activity per annum) has enabled VSOs to establish partnerships, garner in kind support and utilise volunteers to deliver their services. This has allowed VSOs to deliver on a wide range of services consistent with the objectives of the VMA that would not be possible within the annual funding provided.

In 2018 a review was undertaken by mpconsulting for DSS to examine the appropriateness, effectiveness, and efficiency of the VMA. The review was also informed by a range of consultations held with key stakeholders including with DSS staff, funding arrangement managers, VSOs, VIOs, peak bodies and volunteers.

While the stakeholders consulted through the review stressed the value of the VMA and services it created, and the departmental data demonstrated the reach the VSOs had (over 130,000 people assisted to volunteer, and training provided to over 35,000 volunteers and volunteer managers annually) it had its limitations within the program design, funding, implementation, and administration which impacted on the capacity of volunteering organisations to deliver on outcomes and changes in the volunteering environment. These were acknowledged by stakeholders through the review.⁶

The 2018-2021 VMA funded 52 organisations to deliver 72 Volunteer Support Services (VSS) from 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2021. The total funding was \$18.791 million (excluding GST). The funding was provided to increase participation in volunteering through the development of resources and support to individuals, volunteers, volunteer managers and volunteering organisations.⁷

5 (DFFH, 11 August 2021)

6 (mpconsulting, 2018)

7 (mpconsulting, 2018)

On 1 July 2021, DSS replaced the VMA with the VMA5 which will operate for the period 2021-2026 with the aim to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the program. The new program will focus on:

- » The delivery of online services to build the capacity of VIOs within their relevant jurisdictions.
- » The breaking down of barriers to volunteering faced by three (3) identified priority groups: People with Disabilities, First Nations People, and Newly Arrived Migrants.
- » An increase in coverage across regional, rural and remote areas.

To assist with managing the risks associated with VMA5, the national Volunteer Management Activity Council (VMAC) have developed a national risk management policy and Volunteering Victoria have undertaken the same at the jurisdictional level.

Risks

In Victoria, several risks have been identified in relation to the delivery of the VMA5 framework and implementation process recommended in this report. *Appendix Two: Risks and Proposed Mitigation Strategies*, lists potential risks and mitigation strategies for Volunteering Victoria's consideration. Volunteering Victoria is ISO accredited and will undertake a risk mitigation strategy.

Recommendation 2: The VMAC and Volunteering Victoria monitor and report the risks identified for the recommended VMA5 framework and implementation process in Victoria.

From 1 July 2021, the Australian Government will distribute up to \$40.1 million (excluding GST) over five years under the new VMA5. This includes a one-off funding of up to \$6.6 million (excluding GST) to support a smooth transition to the redesigned VMA1 in 2021-22. 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.

Volunteering Victoria has been contracted by DSS to support the Victorian volunteering community through two grant processes:

1. The 2021-26 VMA Grant referred to as the 'VMA5'.
2. The 2021-22 'Supporting the delivery of the Volunteer Management Activity' Grant (as announced in the 2021-22 Federal Budget) referred to as the 'VMA1'.

Under the new VMA5 program, Volunteer Peak Bodies (VPBs) will be responsible for delivering the new program to support capacity building in their jurisdiction.

Volunteering Victoria will develop appropriate strategies to ensure equitable service coverage, using existing localised services and structures where possible.

Volunteering Victoria will partner with VIOs, VSOs, Local Government LGAs, Indigenous entities and other businesses in their jurisdiction to develop service delivery strategies consistent with the DSS Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

The Key Differences Between VMA and VMA5

The transition from VMA to VMA5 includes some important changes. The key differences between VMA and VMA5 are shown in the following table.

Table 1: From VMA to VMA5

<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Place based funding for volunteer support.» Not evenly distributed across the state (or throughout Australia).» Support for anyone looking to volunteer/engage volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Focus on online state-wide resources.» Emphasis on breaking down barriers for those in identified priority groups.» Direct one-on-one matching, screening or referring of volunteers will not be funded.» Face to face service delivery for volunteer management will not be funded, unless it is focused on one of the three priority groups.⁸
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Volunteering Victoria's approach

LDC Group was engaged in late August 2021 to provide a framework and implementation process for Volunteering Victoria that could meet the aims of the VMA5 and engage with a wide range of stakeholders across Victoria.

Volunteering Victoria recognised that the success of this work would be maximized by having the project managed independently of Volunteering Victoria and transparently. Further, it was considered that this approach would help to shape an appropriate implementation model for VMA5 across Victoria as well as effectively mitigate risks. Central to this work were:

- 1. Integrity**—Ensuring the integrity of the project, including transparency, stakeholder participation and data accuracy.
- 2. Accuracy**—Answering the identified research questions and emerging questions or issues. Demonstrating a chain of evidence for accurate analysis of the reported findings and recommendations.
- 3. Achievability**—Achieving the intended project outcomes and offering recommendations within the scope and capabilities of Volunteering Victoria, its partners, and stakeholders.
- 4. Coordination**—Consideration of the Victorian Government's Volunteering Strategy in relation to VMA5 to prevent duplication and address areas not covered by VMA5.

The work was completed at the end of October 2021 to also inform the Victorian Government State Volunteering Strategy due for release in mid to late October 2021.

8 (Australian Government Department of Social Services, 2021)

Engaging the sector

Volunteering Victoria has approached the VMA redesign in a collaborative manner with the volunteering sector and related stakeholders. Consistent with this approach, Volunteering Victoria continued to engage with VSOs funded under the previous VMA funding as key stakeholders throughout this process due to the uncertainty around their eligibility for future funding. These organisations are key partners in delivering the previously designed VMA, as a vital part of the volunteer sector infrastructure and as members of Volunteering Victoria. This has included:

1. A series of externally facilitated weekly online meeting with VSOs March – May 2021 to provide information about the VMA redesign and to gauge the likely associated impacts and risks—see below Weekly meetings with VSOs.
2. A transition planning workshop with VSOs in May 2021—see below VMA Transition Workshop for VSOs.

The *VMA5 Development of a framework and implementation Process for Victoria* project furthers Volunteering Victoria’s approach to the redesign of the VMA in Victoria using independent analysis informed by the expertise of the volunteer sector. The key steps and findings of the project are discussed in the following sections of this report.

Research and consultations








To develop a VMA5 framework and implementation process for Victoria, LDC Group consultants undertook a series of research and consultation activities including:

1. An environmental scan including desk research and stakeholder consultations.
2. Progressively workshopping research findings with the Project Reference Group.
3. Development of a proposed framework and implementation process informed by the desk research and consultations and assessed with the project reference group.

These activities supported the final recommendations to Volunteering Victoria on a VMA5 recommended framework and implementation process as shown in figure 1.

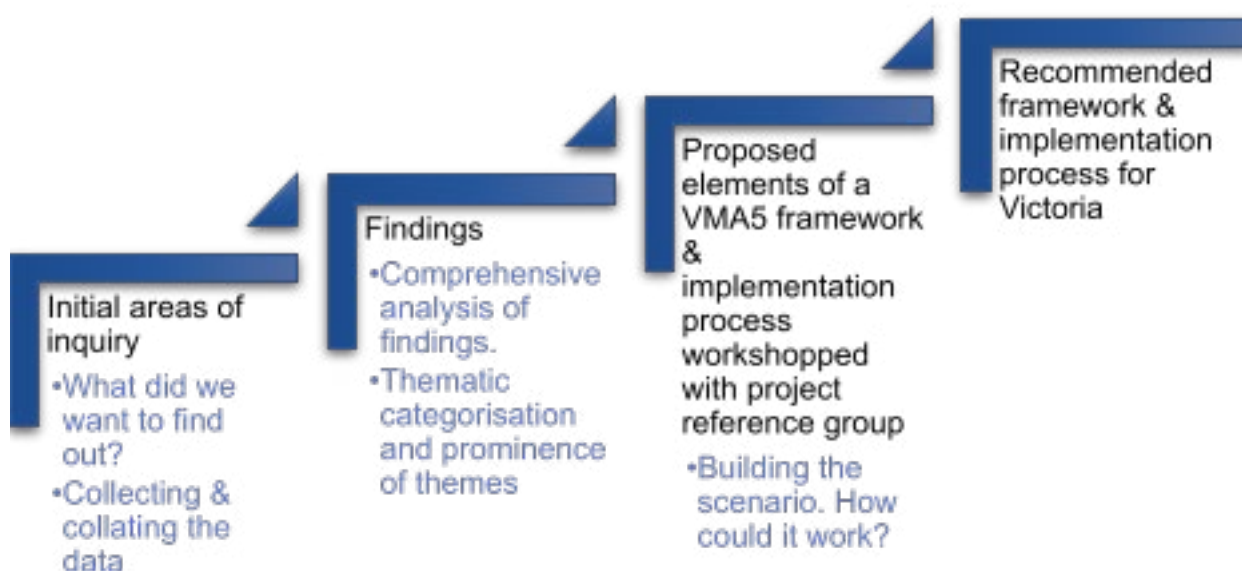
Environmental scan

The consulting team collected information through research activities involving purposeful samples including two surveys and discussions with VIOs, VSOs and organisations working with the three priority groups. The environmental scan included the following activities:

	Review of relevant reports and data.
	An online survey for all stakeholders generating 262 responses.
	An online survey for VSOs generating 11 responses.
	Six focus groups with a total of 62 participants.
	Three individual interviews with key informants.
	Four project reference group meetings including workshopping emerging findings.
	Weekly team meetings with Volunteering Victoria.

See Appendices for all data generated from surveys, focus groups, individual interviews, and project reference group workshops.

Figure 1: Project Process



Areas of Inquiry

The findings of the research discussed in this report revolve around the areas of inquiry captured in the following diagram.

Figure 2: Areas of Inquiry



Key research questions

Our focus of the desk research, consultations and workshops with the Project Reference Group was to address the key research questions raised by Volunteering Victoria in relation to the VMA5:

1. How should the needs of the three priority groups and those of Volunteer Resource Centres (now referred to as Volunteers Support Services-VSS by DSS), Volunteer Involving Organisations and other stakeholders be assessed?
2. Depending on the outcomes of the consultation process/environmental scan, should Volunteering Victoria invite/nominate organisations to be part of the delivery of VMA5 or should allocation of funding be strictly based on an EOI process? Should Volunteering Victoria opt for a hybrid approach?
3. Should there be a minimum and/or a maximum amount allocated to a single organisation?
4. How many of the 16 VRCs already funded under VMA1 should be eligible for VMA5 year 1 funding?
5. Should the funding be allocated on a regional or jurisdictional basis? If the regional approach is deemed preferable, should it be based on a map of councils/shires, a map of emergency services (akin to weVolunteer)? Should funding be allocated pro rata based on the population of each region or more specifically based on members of the three priority groups in each region?

6. Should Volunteering Victoria adopt a place-based approach (akin to VMA), allocate funds to jurisdictional peak bodies for a redistribution across the State or opt for a mixed approach?
7. Should Volunteering Victoria set a minimum and maximum funding to be allocated for each priority group? How might this impact the funding of place-based service providers where there might be fewer members of the three priority groups?
8. Should VMA5 funding be allocated on an annual basis or for the five years of the program on the proviso that the funded partners meet the requirements on a bi-annual or annual basis?
9. What are the parameters of the Commonwealth funding and funding implications for current state?
10. What are the options/potential models that maximise state-wide coverage and maximise funding for Victorian organisations?
11. What are the gaps?

The Victorian Volunteer Sector

It is important to understand how the volunteer sector operates and the impact of volunteering in the community to understand the implications of the VMA5, including the potential strengths and challenges of the new model.

Key Stakeholders

At present the key stakeholders in the delivery of the VMA5 include:

- » Volunteering Victoria – which is in contract with DSS to deliver the VMA5 and is also the peak organisation for the Victorian volunteer sector.
- » VSSs (including VRCs and VSOs) are organisations solely focused on promoting volunteering within a place-based area across Victoria. They support VIOs in a range of ways and funded variably by federal, state, and local government.
- » VIOs – ranging in number, size, scope, location, and focus
- » Organisations working with the three priority groups - including organisations that may not have volunteer programs.
- » LGAs - in some municipalities providing key coordination and management of community volunteer programs.
- » State Government, DFFH – currently developing the State Volunteering Strategy.
- » Volunteers – who commit to volunteering and giving in their communities.
- » Volunteer recipients – who benefit from the contribution of volunteers.

These stakeholders reflect the depth and breadth of the volunteer sector discussed further below.

In 2019, DSS funded 17 out of approximately 30 VSOs across Victoria—see Appendix Four: Volunteer Support Organisations

Weekly meetings with VSOs

On 12 March 2021 DSS announced changes to the current VMA beginning 1 July 2021 (see: The Volunteer Management Activity Program (VMA)). At this stage Volunteering Victoria initiated nine weekly meetings March – May 2021 with VSOs to provide information and updates to VSO's about VMA5 and seek their input and responses to implications and impacts of the change in funding arrangements. This would inform both Volunteering Victoria and DFFH of key issues/elements/priorities regarding their respective programs of work. To reflect and ensure an effective strategy for engagement with the sector including providing anyone and everyone with consistent information. The meetings were intended to complement the regular formal Volunteering Victoria Support Network (VVSN) meetings where Volunteering Victoria provided formal updates (see: Engaging the sector).

Important considerations raised at these meetings included:

- » Clarifying the new VMA requirements and securing transition funding.
- » The perceived threat to place based services and the likelihood of being able to use localised structures and knowledge.
- » Whether the State Government Volunteering Strategy would fill the gap and fund services not covered in VMA5 to support a strong volunteering sector.
- » Understanding the intention and implementation of a nationally consistent approach.
- » Understanding reporting requirements.
- » How to address the three priority groups in relation to organisational capacity, knowledge, and appropriate and culturally safe practices.
- » Organisational and individual volunteers' capacity for online delivery and the wisdom of this given people's preference for face-to-face interactions.
- » The need to build staff capacity, i.e., HR – huge requirement for staff resourcing and skills to deliver – specialist knowledge and expertise needed in areas of cultural understandings, building relationships, co-design. Huge demand on part time roles.
- » Potential issues of conflict and probity for Volunteering Victoria.
- » Possibilities for partnering and collective efforts

VMA Transition Workshop for VSOs

Volunteering Victoria also organised a VMA Transition Workshop in May 2021 for VSOs to further orientate them to the VMA5 objectives, to understand assistance and support that would be required and how organisations could be assessed in meeting VMA5 requirements.

The transition workshop included discussions about:

- » Working with diverse target groups and organisations.
- » Building relationships with other organisations to share learnings and address identified gaps.
- » The importance of taking a collective approach to the presenting issues and potential solutions.
- » Being able to take a futuristic outlook to initiate changes.

- » Possibilities for integrated systems.
- » Consistent ways of measuring outcomes and adopting an evidence-based approach.
- » Reality checking the capacity to deliver programs within available funding and time frames.
- » Economies of scale in the provision of induction and training programs.
- » Opportunities to self-assess against agreed criteria.
- » Impact of COVID on sector and subsequent adaptations.

VSO funding to 30 June 2022

Following these initiatives, as part of the VMA1 transition funding Volunteering Victoria asked for expressions of interest from VSOs with existing DSS funding to undertake work aligned to the new VMA for up to 12 months to 30 June 2022 and explore ways in which programs could be delivered to support the focus areas (see: The Volunteer Management Activity Program (VMA)). This was a closed process. Based on the expressions of interest the following 16 VSOs received funding to 30 June 2022 as shown below. This includes two programs that are directly run by Volunteering Victoria.

1. Ballarat Foundation United Way Incorporated
2. Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre Inc.
3. Campaspe Shire Council
4. Centre for Participation Inc.
5. City of Boroondara
6. Cobaw Community Health Services Limited
7. Community Information & Support Victoria Inc. Banyule
8. Eastern Volunteer Resource Centre Inc.
9. South East Volunteers Incorporated
10. The Centre for Continuing Education Inc.
11. Volunteer West Inc.
12. Volunteering Geelong Inc.
13. Warrnambool City Council
14. Volunteering Victoria Melbourne
15. Volunteering Victoria Gippsland
16. Whittlesea Community Connections Inc.⁹

The Diversity, Depth and Breadth of volunteering

Formal Volunteering is defined by Volunteering Australia as ‘time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain’. In the 2016 Census, a volunteer is defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as someone who has ‘spent time doing unpaid voluntary work through an organisation

9 Volunteering Victoria background information on VSOs provided 2021

or group, in the twelve months prior to Census night. Informal Volunteering is ‘time offered for the common good outside of an organisational context’.¹⁰

This excludes spontaneous volunteering which usually occurs in times of crisis including natural and human-made disasters. For example, in the wake of the summer bushfires in Victoria in 2010, 22,000 people volunteered either as a resident (and therefore a victim) or as ‘someone wanting to help’.¹¹

There is a myriad of organisations that engage volunteers across Victoria including VSOs, VIOs, Local Government, community service organisations, health providers, educational institutions and more. The range of activities undertaken by volunteers is extensive. In fact, it has been reported that, ‘The volunteering sector is over one and a half times larger than the Victorian government sector and nearly half the size of the private sector’.¹²

In 2016 the Census rate for formal volunteering in Victoria was 19.2% (931,544) volunteers. The statistics of Indigenous status among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander volunteers was 16.8%.¹³

The census also found that 9.5% of the population (560,807) cared for someone with a disability, long term illness or problems relating to old age with a further 8.7% (333,385) of Victorian volunteers providing care for a child other than their own.¹⁴

In 2014, volunteers in Victoria worked across the following types of organisations Note: the totals are greater than 100% as some volunteers worked for more than one type of organisation:

- » Welfare/community 21%
- » Education/Training 25%
- » Health 11%
- » Religious 19%
- » Sport and Recreation 32%.¹⁵

The survey conducted for this project demonstrates both the diversity and complexity of the sector. As shown in Figure 3, many organisations work across multiple sectors and areas of activity. The survey respondents’ interests and activities ranged from the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and State Emergency Services (SES), Surf lifesaving clubs, environmental groups with very specific interests such as supporting a local park, cemetery, or museum, to clubs or groups that support participation in art, cultural or sporting activities including theatre and musical groups, bowls, golf, football, softball etc.

Survey respondents included well recognised organisations such as Red Cross and Oxfam, large health services such as Western Health and Royal Melbourne Hospital, community health organisations, local councils, neighbourhood houses in their many forms and other smaller local and interest specific community groups. There are also many organisations that are working to mitigate disadvantage across all aspects of society and to build social inclusion delivering a wide range of activities and creating opportunities for connection, learning and inclusion. A number work within their own ethnic or indigenous group or local community. Some organisations, such as community

10 (Volunteering Victoria, January 2018)

11 (Volunteering Victoria, January 2018)

12 (Volunteering Victoria, 2020, p. 2)

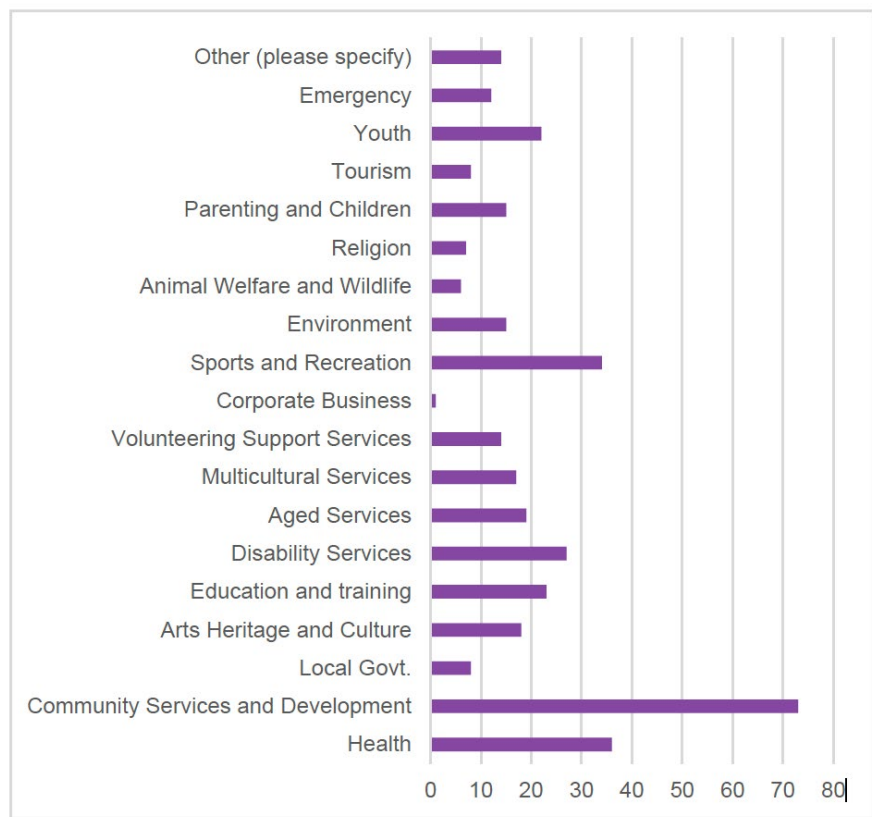
13 (Volunteering Victoria, January 2018)

14 (Volunteering Victoria, January 2018)

15 (Volunteering Victoria, January 2018)

health services provide a range of health services (medical/ allied health/ health promotion) as well as wellbeing and community services across multiple LGAs. Many organisations work across multiple sectors and areas of activity.

Figure 3: Volunteering involving organisations by Sector



A survey specifically completed by 11 VSOs for this project indicated that:

- » Five of the eleven VSOs do not have a membership model where a membership fee is paid.
- » The numbers of VIOs supported by the VSOs ranged from 20 to 750.
- » Training events typically provided by VSOs for VIOs in a year ranged from five to 40 events and included as few as 10 participants and as many as 264 participants.
- » In relation to recruitment, most VSOs indicated they promote volunteering opportunities on an ongoing basis using multiple platforms including newsletters, Facebook, radio interviews, individual conversations, and networking meetings. Support to recruit volunteers may include other activities, e.g., one VSO identified they also help with PD design and candidate screening. Advertised roles ranged from 50- 400 a year not necessarily including referrals. One VSO noted they had 6000+ referrals during 2019 – 2020.

Figure 4 shows the spread of volunteering activity across LGAs, based on the survey sample, i.e., responses from the broader survey conducted for this project which was completed by a range of volunteering organisations and organisations working with the three priority groups.

Figure 4: Volunteering Organisations by LGA

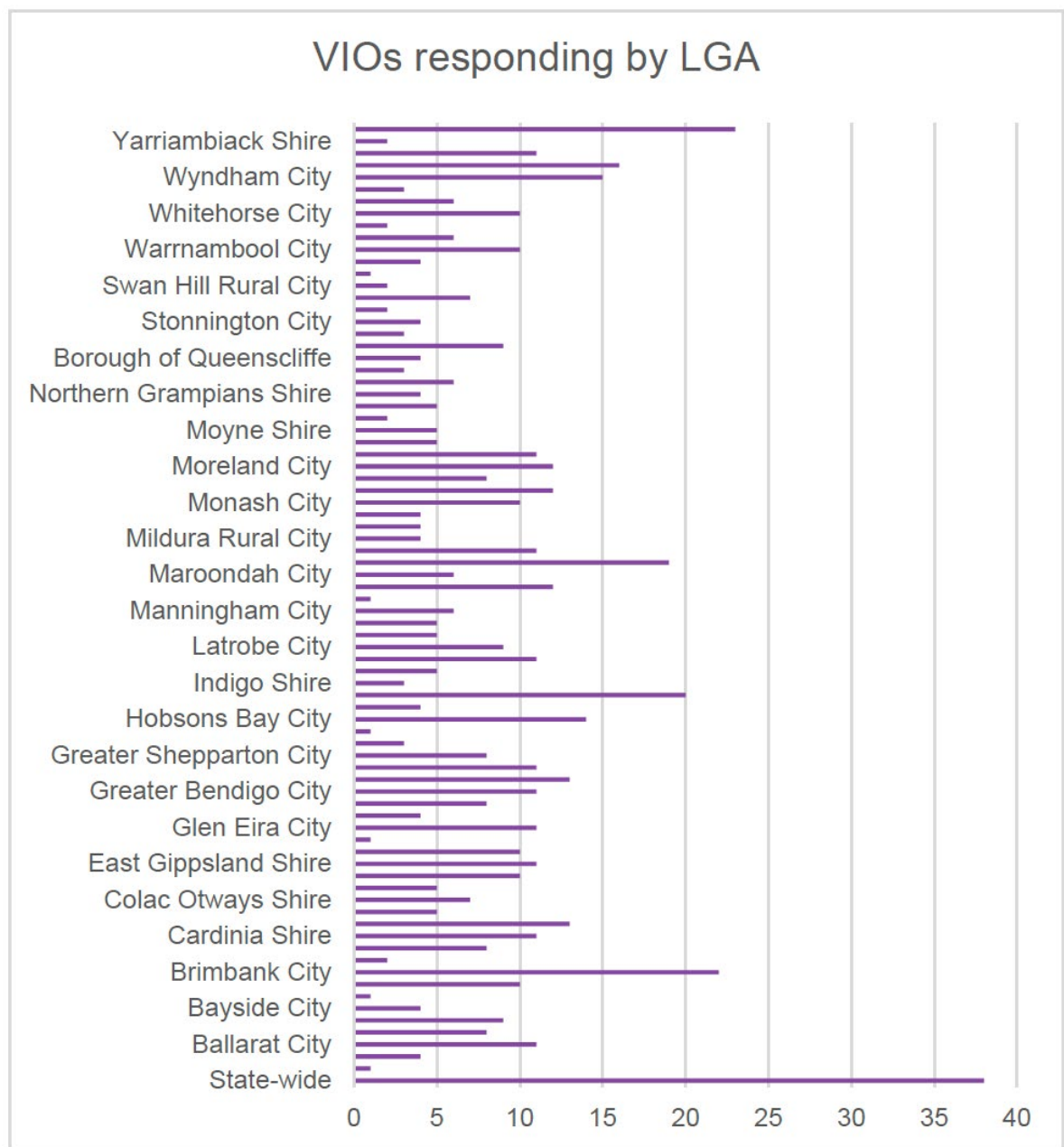
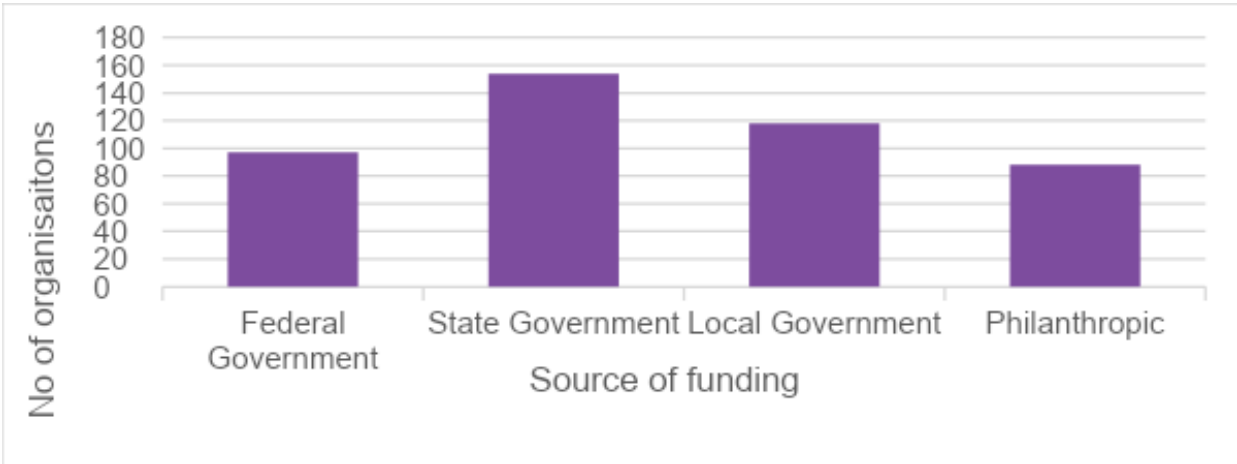


Figure 4 also shows that some VIOs provide services across multiple LGAs.

Survey respondents also indicated they received funding from a variety of sources including multiple levels of government as well as philanthropic funding. Other funding sources identified included donations, community funding raising, sponsorship, and revenue generated from sales or hire and memberships. Twenty-two organisations identified they receive funding from Federal, State and Local Government as well as philanthropic funding, a further 23 were receiving funding from the three levels of government with no philanthropic funding. Twenty-eight were receiving Federal and State Government and 10 of those were also receiving philanthropic funding. Forty organisations were receiving no regular government or philanthropic funding with revenue coming primarily from memberships, self-funding, sales, some grants, or sponsorship. It was reported that funding, particularly grant funding, is often provided for specific purposes and is short term. This leaves the challenge of core funding to organisations to self-fund—see Figure 5.

Figure 5: Organisation Funding Sources



The value of volunteering to the Victorian community

The value of volunteering could be understood through several lenses including contributions to peoples’ wellbeing, community development, crisis support, economic contribution and much more.

Survey respondents reported that the number of volunteers and the difference that they make to communities is significant, providing emergency relief, enriching lives through companionship, and enabling people to do or achieve things otherwise unimaginable. It was reported that volunteers extend the capacity of available services and increase community connection in organisations large and small across an incredibly diverse range of needs and interests. Activities include developing and maintaining rail trails, gardens, reserves, cemeteries, wilderness areas, and supporting theatres, museums, galleries. Many organisations including community radio stations, football and netball, golf, bowls, and tennis clubs only exist through volunteers, other organisations such as scouts and girl guides, emergency services, as well as community health and community houses are all reliant of volunteers. These volunteering activities are important because they:

- » Enhance and enrich community experiences and social cohesion.
- » Offer direct and needed support to individuals and communities.
- » Expand educational, recreational, artistic, and cultural opportunities for children, young people, and adults.
- » Contribute to understanding about and helping to improve the environment.
- » Support people with specific needs or in difficult circumstances.
- » Balance out systemic injustices by supporting people who are disadvantaged.

Using the data captured from the project survey Figure 6 is a snapshot of the interconnected nature of volunteering in community.

In 2019, volunteers donated an average of 223.9 hours annually per person. This figure equates to 18.7 hours per month or 4.3 hours per week. These findings suggest that Victorians donated at least 507.7 million volunteer hours to the community.¹⁶

16 (Volunteering Victoria, 2020)

Within the set of Victorian volunteers, it was found that: 44.5% of volunteers volunteered both formally and informally and 39.9% of volunteers did so exclusively in formal settings with VIOs (not-for-profit, government and private organisations), and 15.6% of volunteers donated their time exclusively in informal contexts.¹⁷

Aggregated, this shows 84.4% of Victorian volunteers are active in formal volunteering and 60.1% are active in informal settings. Further, 10.0% of Victorians volunteered to support government services for an average 146.5 hours per year (12.2 hours per month), and 8.6% of Victorians volunteered in private (for-profit) organisations for an average 101.4 hours per year (8.4 hours per month).¹⁸

Model of Value Creation

The Model of Value Creation used to convey the value of volunteering refers to hidden capital, that is, it is only when the potential of capital is expressed for individuals and the community that it has utility, or value. Based on this model, the value of volunteering can be observed and felt by individuals and communities when opportunities are created within each of the three domains of the model including money through the creation of employment (economic capital), the impact of happiness, trust, and engagement through the development of friendships (social capital) and the improvement of knowledge and skills that can then be used for social gain (cultural capital).¹⁹

Another way to describe volunteering capital is to refer to it as the potential for individuals to use their resources and capabilities for the mutual benefit of themselves and the community through volunteering. 'This capital is created by the investments of time and money in each unique volunteering event and is ultimately made tangible by its utilisation'.²⁰

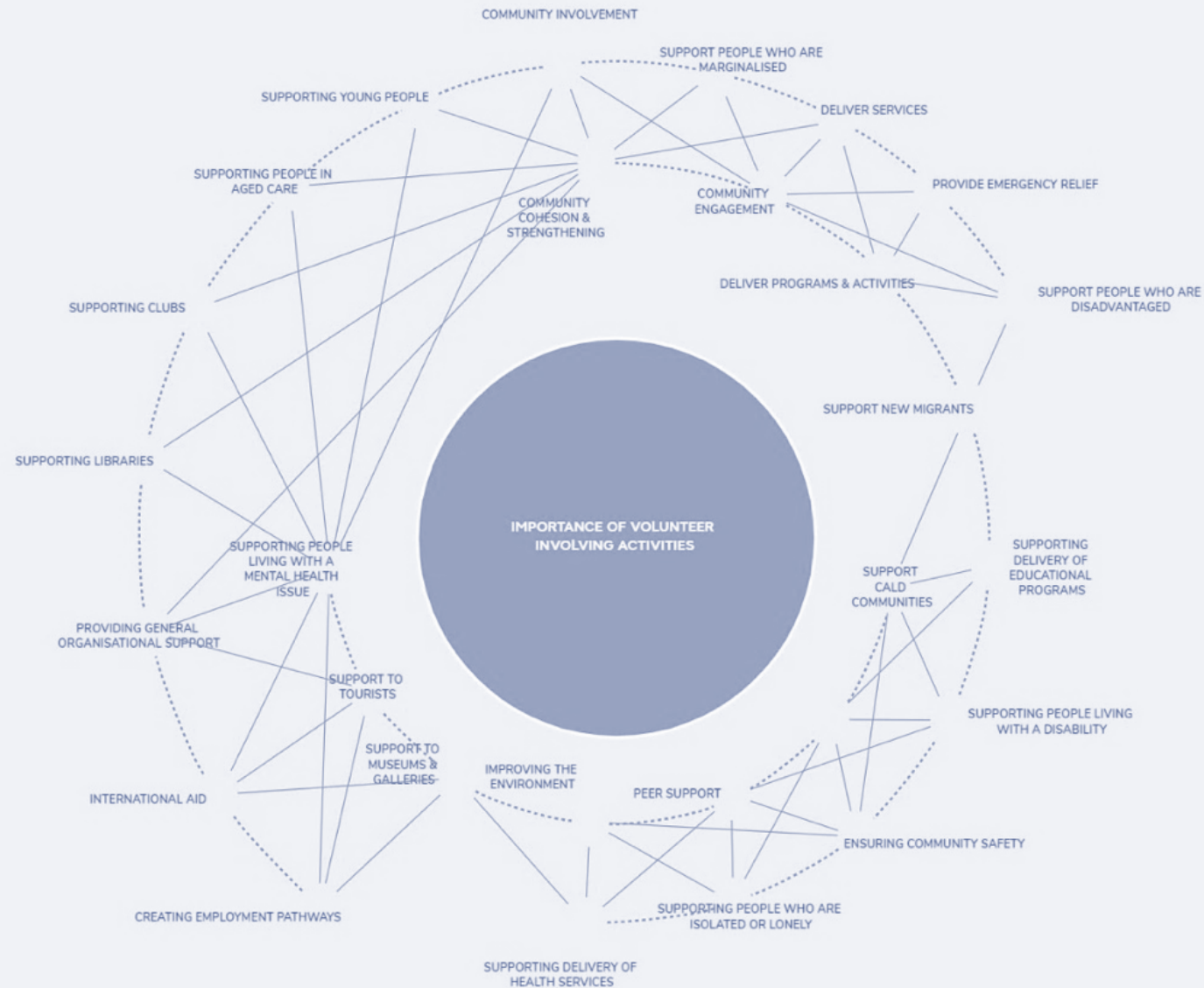
17 Volunteering Victoria, 2020)

18 Volunteering Victoria, 2020)

19 Volunteering Victoria, 2020)

20 (Volunteering Victoria, 2020, pp. 18,29)

Figure 6: Importance of volunteering activities



State Volunteering Strategy Consultations

General feedback obtained by DFFH in consultations with the volunteer sector for the preparation of the State Volunteering Strategy indicated the following characteristics are important to volunteering:

- » Professionalisation and effective governance and management.
- » Promoting opportunities and supporting portable credentialing.
- » Personal fulfilment and development.
- » Recognising the value of older adults to grow volunteering.
- » Sense of recognition, feeling valued and being part of the local community.
- » More help with associated costs, e.g., transport.
- » Ongoing funding to make organisations and programs sustainable.
- » Safety, support, training, culture, respect.
- » Strengthening youth participation.
- » Improving recognition, promotion and awareness.
- » Flexible opportunities that enable episodic, virtual and short-term engagements.
- » Experiences that are accessible, inclusive and value diversity.
- » Recognising the importance of place-based volunteering support
- » Building skills, pathways to employment and life-long volunteering.²¹

Costs of Volunteering

The costs of volunteering are often referred to as the hidden costs of volunteering. Understanding the economics of volunteering, the real costs of the activity confirms that volunteering is more than just giving up time to participate. The data indicates it costs individuals \$1,710 p.a. for costs such as food and beverages, memberships and subscriptions, uniforms and clothing, phone, internet, fuel and vehicle costs, office supplies. These are ‘regular’ costs occurring when a person volunteers. From these expenses, volunteers have reported being reimbursed an average of \$212.65. Therefore, on average they were out of pocket by \$1,497.11. When this figure is multiplied by the estimated number of volunteers in Victoria, this equates to volunteers in Victoria having net outgoings of approximately \$3.9 billion, or \$6.69 per volunteer hour.²²

Volunteering Victoria undertook an online survey of its database of VIOs across April-June 2020. The survey was distributed widely through multiple channels, and the respondents self-selected by answering the survey. From the responses it was estimated that a further \$4.8 billion was spent by VIOs in 2019 on a range of activities which included salary costs, volunteer resources, induction and education, office and admin expenses, motor vehicle, catering, and marketing.²³

The direct costs described that are incurred by individuals and VIOs in support of volunteering activities estimates ‘the change in final demand attributable to volunteering’ in Victoria in 2019. It was

21 (DFFH, 11 August 2021)

22 (Volunteering Victoria, 2020)

23 (Volunteering Victoria, 2020 p. 54)

concluded that the costs met by volunteers in support of their own volunteering almost matched VIOs' expenditure of \$4.8 billion. Further, 'the diversion of money to volunteering implies that other opportunities to improve individual welfare are denied – another social cost that must be considered'.

24

For this project, an important consideration is the understanding of the economic, social and cultural value of volunteering in their area and region of Victoria. This is not just to understand the inputs that enable and facilitate volunteering and the related outputs that come at a cost, but also the needs of their community.

Through an economic lens volunteering infrastructure can enhance and strengthen communities which contributes to a sense of belonging. Ready examples include building for sporting clubs or improving infrastructure to allow more people living with a disability to experience inclusive volunteering.

Cultural capital, also known as human capital, is important to understand as it is, for example, one of the key components in welcoming new volunteers. It directly relates to the training and education of volunteers and acknowledging of seniors' abundant cultural capital, and direct delivery of services to communities. Understanding Capital and its place in Volunteering is important, for example, in creating increased access and breaking down barriers for priority groups, assessing needs within organisations and keeping volunteering relevant and effective. It also may provide good data that demonstrates to governments and philanthropists the value of their programs, outcomes achieved and funding needs.²⁵

Multidimensional needs analyses that capture social, economic, environmental, and other elements may therefore be important tools for assessing community needs and gaps. For example, a needs analysis, from a social value perspective, may be useful in understanding the needs of New Migrants and First Nations people. Through this volunteering can cultivate structured programs which strengthen the social ties between groups and individuals.

Delivering the VMA5 Program

The proposed VMA5 framework and implementation process discussed in this section of the report is grounded in the research findings generated by this project. Further, the Victorian Government's Volunteer Strategy Framework has identified the following key enablers which generally align with the recommendations made in this report:

Evidence and data—A robust evidence-base and data analysis supports a sophisticated understanding of volunteering across communities, organisations and government.

Governance and culture—Effective governance ensures organisations and programs are effective and sustainable, and risks are managed appropriately.

Volunteer management—Leaders and managers of volunteers are supported in their roles and have access to quality professional development pathways.

Innovation and technology—Organisations are supported to continuously apply new technology and approaches and meet modern volunteer expectations.

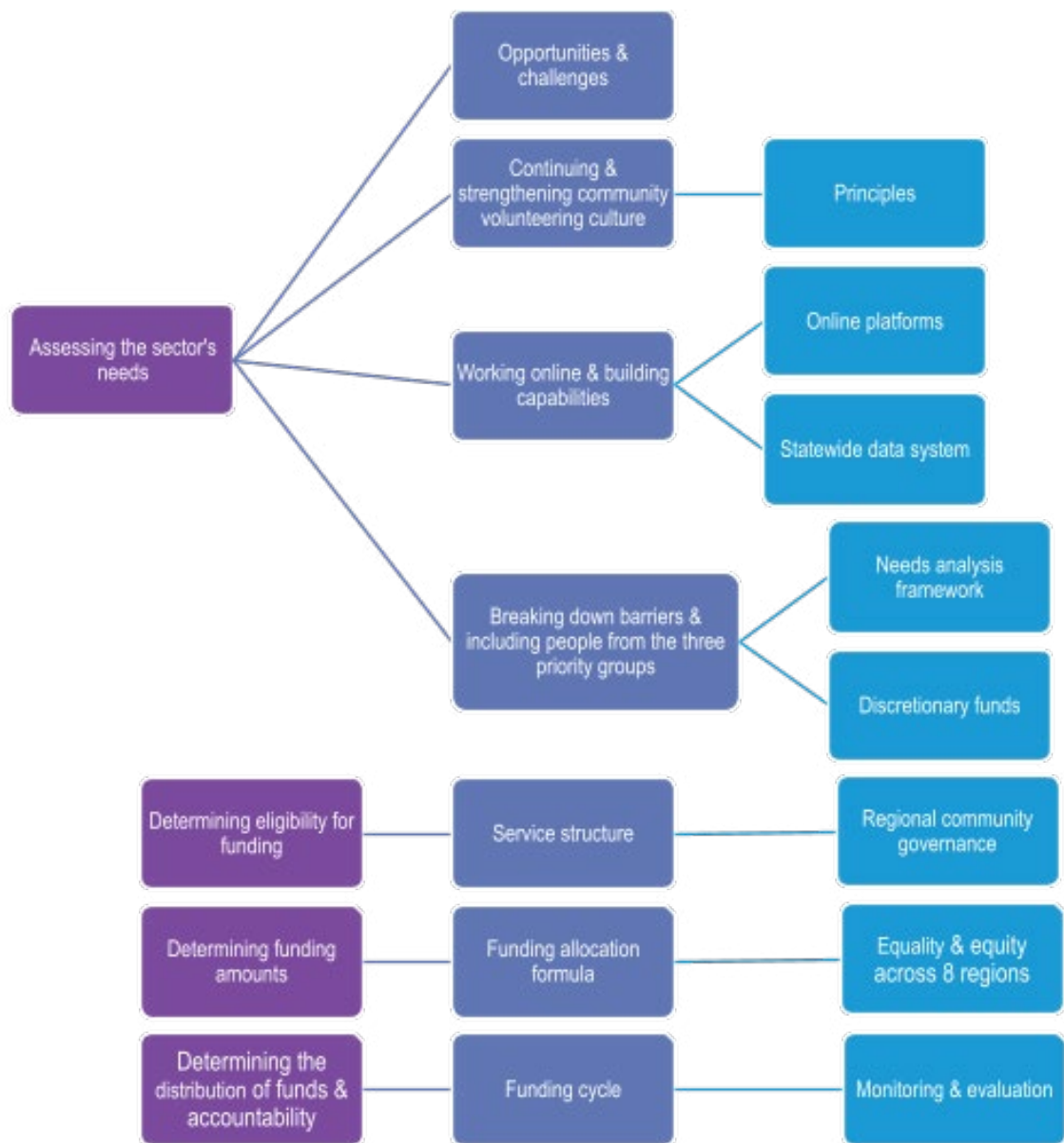
24 (Volunteering Victoria, 2020, p. 54)

25 (Volunteering Victoria, 2020)

Partnerships—Organisations create partnerships, and share resources, support, and information to maximise the impact and sustainability of volunteering.²⁶

The key themes from the research findings underpin the recommendations made below. More detailed analyses of the data generated from the project are found in Appendix Three: Survey data and Appendix Four: Focus Group and Interview Data. A map of the key themes and recommendations is provided in the following diagram.

Figure 7: Map of Key Themes



26 (DFFH, 11 August 2021)

Assessing the Sector's Needs

The inquiry into the sector's needs focused on assessing the needs of the key stakeholders to help determine the distribution of funds. This inquiry generated data and discussions about:

- » Opportunities and challenges
- » Continuing and strengthening community volunteering culture
- » Working online and building capabilities
- » Breaking down barriers and including people from the three priority groups
- » Each of these is discussed below.

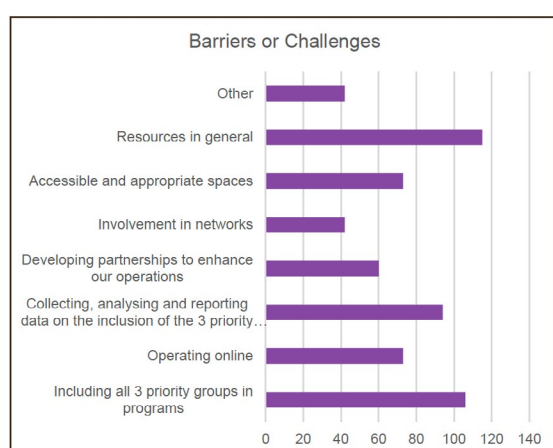
Opportunities and Challenges

The VMA redesign has created the opportunity to focus on volunteering across the whole of Victoria more closely and for organisations to develop closer working relationships and integrated approaches. Potentially there is greater opportunity to share learnings and tap into resources. Further, the changes imposed by the VMA redesign may lead to innovation and further sharing of practice and resources across the state, and the opportunity to strengthen evidence-based approaches to volunteer programs; and the opportunity to create evidence-based approaches to volunteer programs. But what type of structure will foster collaboration, innovation, and shared learnings and who could be involved? And what data systems will help to further enrich the culture of volunteering in Victoria and provide an evidence base?

Volunteering is a demonstration of commitment to community engagement and creating opportunities for people to participate in the community. The research indicated that at present VIOs and VSOs have well developed processes in place for recruiting and supporting volunteering programs. However, there is the risk that the VMA5 will change the volunteering culture in Victoria, particularly in relation to place based volunteering. Another concern is that community relations may suffer because of increasing online interactions. Important questions are therefore raised about how the proposed VMA5 framework and implementation process will ensure volunteering remains relevant, effective, and valued by regional/local communities; and how it will demonstrate the value of volunteering to the Victorian community and inform government direction on volunteering in Victoria.

Survey respondents were asked to identify which of the activities listed in Figure 8 below would present challenges or barriers for them.

Figure 8: VMA5 priorities- barriers and challenges for organisations



Thirty-five organisations noted that their resources were already stretched with staff and were concerned staff wouldn't be able to provide the support required, particularly with the three priority groups likely to have different needs and support requirements. Thirteen organisations suggested that they would need new linkages and partnerships to engage the three groups as well assistance to better understand New Migrant and First Nations cultures. A number raised the issue of online recruitment as a barrier to those with low literacy, poor proficiency in English and no or little access to digital devices (acknowledging this is not such an issue for young migrants) as well as some not wishing to undertake compliance training online. Thirteen cited the cost in administrative time as well as data management concerns as issues for data collection as well as concerns that people would find the questions intrusive and many not wish to identify for a range of reasons. A few also noted that the demographic makeup of their communities did not include many migrants and First Nations People. Other issues raised included, wishing to remain inclusive to all groups and as well as concerns about reduced focus on other groups such as young people and the unemployed.

Continuing and strengthening community volunteering culture

Analysis of the research findings points to some important ingredients for continuing and strengthening Victoria's community volunteering culture. These include:

- Whole of sector capability**—by adopting a whole of sector capability building approach, utilising online platforms, and coordinated information exchange and expertise across Victorian regions, the volunteering sector can leverage on achievements to date and develop consistencies in the delivery of programs and activities.
- Regional community focused governance**—by supporting regional community focused governance, local and regional organisations can make context informed decisions and design programs that reflect community needs.
- Funding based on equality and equity principles**—a funding formula with equal distribution of funds across the state and discretionary funds for region-specific responses, including engagement with the three priority groups, will offer opportunities to create and deliver volunteer programs responsive to local/regional community needs.
- State-wide sharing**—a system of cross-regional and state-wide shared learning and collaborations will provide opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas, development of partnerships and collaborative exchanges between regions and state-wide projects.

Recommendation 3: Volunteering Victoria embed in the VMA5 framework and implementation process the following set of principles that reflect the values, culture, and ethos of volunteering in Victoria.

Principles

Building whole sector capabilities facilitated by online platforms and coordinated information exchange and expertise.
Community-focused governance across 8 Victorian Emergency Management regions.
Focus on regional and local community contexts including the three priority group populations
Funding based on equality and equity across eight regions.
Shared learning, cross-pollination, cooperation, collaboration, and partnerships between regions across Victoria .

See also Elements of a Victorian VMA5 Framework and Implementation Process.

Working online and building capabilities

Across Victorian LGAs access to the internet varies, the online digital capabilities of organisations vary, as do available resources, and preferences for working online. VSOs currently operate in different ways, e.g., they may or may not have a membership base, they may run different types of training programs and events, and the number of VIOs they support may vary. There are currently several regional organisations that have transitioned to working online much more, primarily due to COVID.

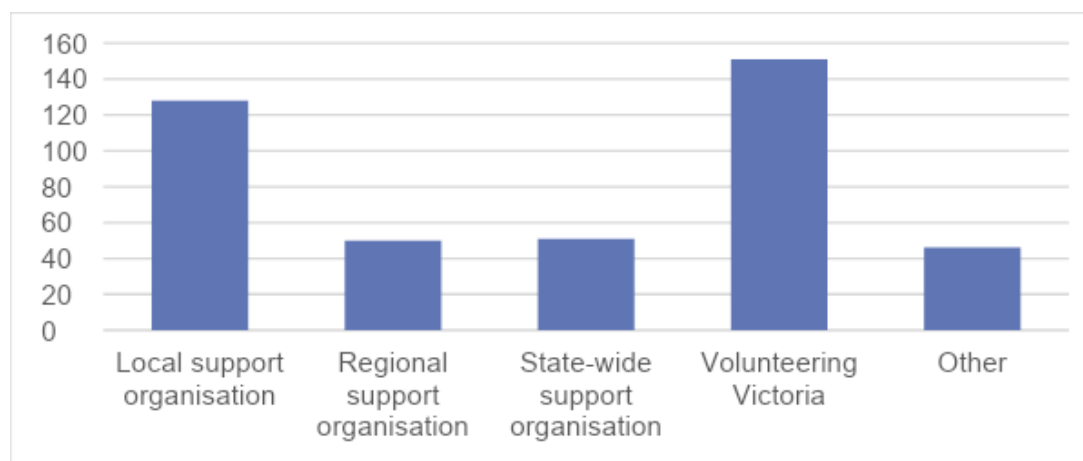
Types of assistance needed and providers

Survey respondents indicated they need funding to: build capability to support volunteer management and coordination direct to the organisation, access to training for volunteer management and for volunteers, online materials, translated in some cases, a scheduled program of online courses; networking opportunities with priority groups and links to organisations that would be willing to work with VIOs. Other support identified included a network for volunteer managers, regional expertise to support recruitment, information about the three priority groups, such as the barriers they experience, local data, shared resource library examples of roles, and avenues to promote volunteering to newly arrived migrants, those living with disabilities and First Nations People. Other requests were for more information about VMA5, resources such as policy and procedures resources, updates on standards, information and templates, ideas for implementing, best practice information, access to information about data requirements and a database for recruitment and volunteer management. Some organisations identified the need for a well-resourced local/regional volunteer support service (like Volunteer West) and support with barriers to priority groups, including required checks (police, NDIS) —see *Appendix 2: The types of assistance that organisations considered they would need, and they thought were best placed to assist them*.

Organisations reported they understand that investment in a CRM is critical to their operations, recognising that online interactions can facilitate collaborations and partnerships. However, several organisations reported they fear they will not be able to afford this. Smaller organisations especially indicated they need support in this area.

Survey respondents identified different combinations of support organisations. the majority identified the local support organisation and Volunteering Victoria as shown in Figure 8 below —see also *Appendix 2: The types of assistance that organisations considered they would need, and they thought were best placed to assist them*.

Figure 9: Organisations best placed to provide support to VIOs



The feedback from organisations indicates that some thinking and planning is required on:

- » How online platforms can work centrally and regionally/locally to meet needs.
- » How currently operating online platforms will be utilised.
- » A structural strategy for working effectively with these variations.
- » Identifying 'local connectors' and their roles.
- » Identifying who will be able to work with VIOs to facilitate capability building across a range of areas.

Recommendation 4: Volunteering Victoria, supports the implementation of an online platform informed by the outcomes of the Commonwealth Government's investment in online service delivery. This should be undertaken in alignment with the National IT Platform Project being developed by Volunteering Australia. In addition, it should provide for both centralised and cross-regional access and input to promote collaborations and capability building across Victoria, and to identify region-specific IT needs that should be considered in future developments.

Capacity to undertake key activities online

To assess readiness and capability in relation to undertaking activities online survey respondents were asked to rate their capacity to be involved in key areas. A small number noted most of their work is already online, for others Covid has found them adapting to the new online environment in a range of ways and with a range of success. Many noted they had good existing relationships and interest/capacity to develop more and stronger networks, citing online as good for sharing and partnering, this was an area where most expressed a level of confidence and interest. A number noted that they already have online training and have their volunteers participate in online training offered elsewhere as well and it appeared to be an area where there is already significant activity. An area where online was seen as less effective was recruitment of volunteers.

For many groups though online capacity and capability was limited for a range of reasons including, competence with technology, language barriers, minimal and/or part-time staff, limited technology and equipment, online presence, and online expertise. Many organisations noted their volunteers were not comfortable with online learning or using computers. Rural communities particularly were likely to feel more isolated and under resourced. It was also noted that Covid has made home and online lives busy so there is competing access for time and equipment (home schooling, working from home). The nature of some programs precludes online participation or sharing, and some services are not suitable for any online component. The overall ratings of their capacity in each of the areas is summarised in Capacity to undertake key activities online.

Data collection

The collection of data by organisations varied in terms of whether they collected any data, how they collected it and what they did with it. Survey respondents were asked to identify if they collected data in relation to the three priority groups, 148 responded stated that they did not collect data, 109 responded yes and five left the question blank. Of those who answered no, 63 provided reasons for not collected data including:

- » Not relevant to what they do, no requirement or need to (32).

- » No capacity, resources to do so (13).
- » Some organisations consider asking this question is a barrier for some, others referred to preferring a more welcoming approach, other felt it wasn't respectful to ask and was encroaching on personal privacy (7).

Of the 108 organisations that answered yes to this question many also noted they were unsure, or their answer was incomplete or unclear in relation to the data they collect. Some noted they ask what language is spoken at home or where people were born, some stated they collect demographic data, and others indicated they collect data about disabilities and migrants but not First Nations Peoples. Others noted that responding to demographic questions were optional or they considered data patchy for reasons to do with technology. A number mentioned the systems they use or that data is collected elsewhere.

A two-way, user-centric/VSO-supported approach to data collection between individual organisations and a central system could clearly benefit the volunteer sector. At the time of writing this report while it was known that DSS would support online and data system initiatives, Volunteering Victoria was waiting for comprehensive information about future development from DSS.

Breaking down barriers and including people from the three priority groups

At present several organisations across Victoria are engaged with the three priority groups, while others have not engaged at all, especially with First Nations communities, and, to a lesser extent, with people living with a disability.

The three priority groups, First Nations Peoples, New Migrants and people living with a disability, have specific needs and issues. Organisations reported they understand that nuanced approaches are required to meet the needs of these groups, including relationships and interactions with representative organisations. However, they also recognise that some of the presenting issues are outside the control of VIOs and VSOs, e.g., COVID border closures has impacted the numbers of new migrants to Victoria, so the numbers are likely to be low. In some regions there are low numbers of people from one or more of the three priority groups. In addition, people living with a disability are spread across Victoria. These uneven distributions of the three priority groups across Victoria signal tailored strategies are required for engaging with each of the three priority groups region by region.

Interacting online can be challenging for some members of all three priority groups for obvious reasons such as low English language proficiency, low literacy and numeracy skills, low IT competencies, and lack of access to hardware and software. In addition, the three population groups are not homogenous. They comprise individuals and communities with specific abilities, needs and issues. For example, many New Migrants living in Australia less than five years may be less inclined to participate in volunteering as they are likely to be preoccupied with settlement issues, despite some having high level IT skills and English language proficiency. Others with lesser capabilities may require interpreters and translators to participate. First Nations Peoples may be less interested in participating in volunteering programs organised by mainstream organisations and may understand volunteering from a culturally specific lens operating tacitly within their communities and organisations. People living with a disability are a very heterogeneous population. Their online and other capabilities are likely to vary from expert to novice. Further, their capacity to participate online and in volunteer programs may be subject to a range of factors including personal support essential for participation, and adapted equipment. The personal circumstances of individuals must be understood and valued. In the words of one respondent: 'people with an intellectual disability do have something to offer'. Hence, the lived

experience of the people in each of the priority groups is different and may be influenced by how and where they live. This means we need to think beyond a ‘one-size fits all’ approach.

In a study into ‘Giving and Volunteering in CALD and Indigenous Communities’ it was acknowledged that there has been little research undertaken on these communities despite significant involvement in volunteering and giving.

The aims of the research were to:

- » Gain insight into what the term ‘volunteering’ means within these communities
- » Develop a better understanding of volunteering and giving within CALD and Indigenous communities
- » Understand the challenges to participating in volunteering and giving in these communities, and identify enablers to growing volunteering and giving among these communities
- » Better understand how the philanthropic sector engages with CALD and Indigenous communities.

The research found that most CALD and Indigenous community members would prefer to volunteer in settings where they are comfortable and where staff and other volunteers are culturally sensitive. Volunteer involving organisations and philanthropic organisations would benefit from a focus on building the cultural competency of their organisations, staff and volunteers, in order to be able to work effectively and successfully with CALD and Indigenous organisations.

The report also documents the challenges constraining volunteering and that there were common challenges cited from both communities. These included being time poor, the demands placed upon them leading to burnout and the potential for exploitation and racism by non-CALD workers and managers and by lack of cultural awareness on the part of staff and other volunteers.

CALD communities reported additional challenges including a lack of English, financial demands on new migrants and refugees during settlement.

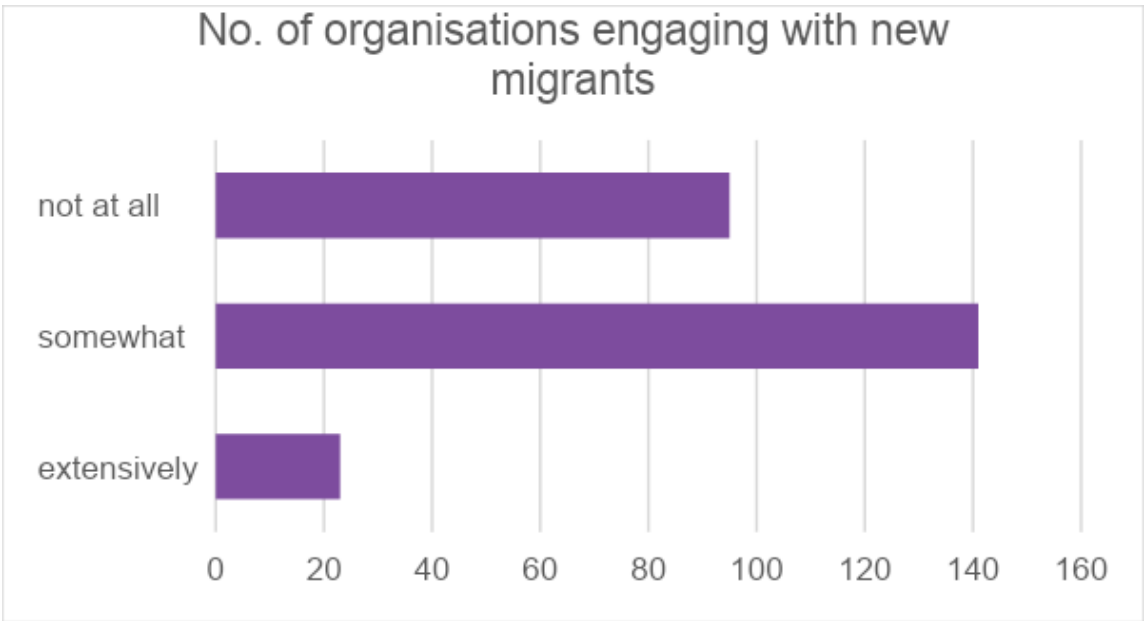
Indigenous communities reported a further challenge regarding the lack of transport particularly for elders and those in remote areas that volunteer.²⁷

New Migrants

Our survey of 262 organisations showed that 24 identified that migrants are extensively involved in their teams and programs and 141 organisations responded that they somewhat involve new migrants. Of these working extensively with new migrants approximately five are run by and for specific migrant groups, a number were community development and community service organisations, several football clubs and health organisations both small and larger organisations such as of Brotherhood of St Laurence and Oxfam. The type of activities included providing support for work, English language skills, engagement in community through sport or volunteering, and provision of emergency relief. There were several organisations focussed specifically on new migrants and overseas students such as AMES Australia and Travellers Aid providing opportunities for volunteering as well as benefiting from settlement support programs—see Figure below.

27 (Cultural & Indigenous Research Centre Australia, 2016)

Figure 10: The extent to which organisations are engaging with new migrants



The survey also found that 95 organisations including health, sporting, arts and cultural organisations responded that they didn’t have any new migrants in teams or programs. Of these 74 provided explanatory comments with 17 indicating that there was no or few new migrants in their geographical area. Challenges and enablers to the inclusion of new migrants identified:

- » The need for transport due to location
- » The need to build engagement and trust with local multicultural groups, limited funding so limited capacity for stakeholder development and engagement with people in these communities,
- » Language as a barrier for some migrants was mentioned by many and not having the resources to support and train.
- » Several organisations sited an apparent lack of interest or suggested that many needed to work and didn’t have time. Several organisations noted that new migrants wishing to volunteer usually do so to gain and/or improve language skills and to get experience that will help them to gain employment.

While many organisations were open to involving new migrants, they were not actively targeting them. Others had multicultural engagement but not necessarily meeting the 5-year criteria. Some noted that requirements such as a criminal history checks and working with children card (both are free to volunteers) can present barriers for some volunteers.

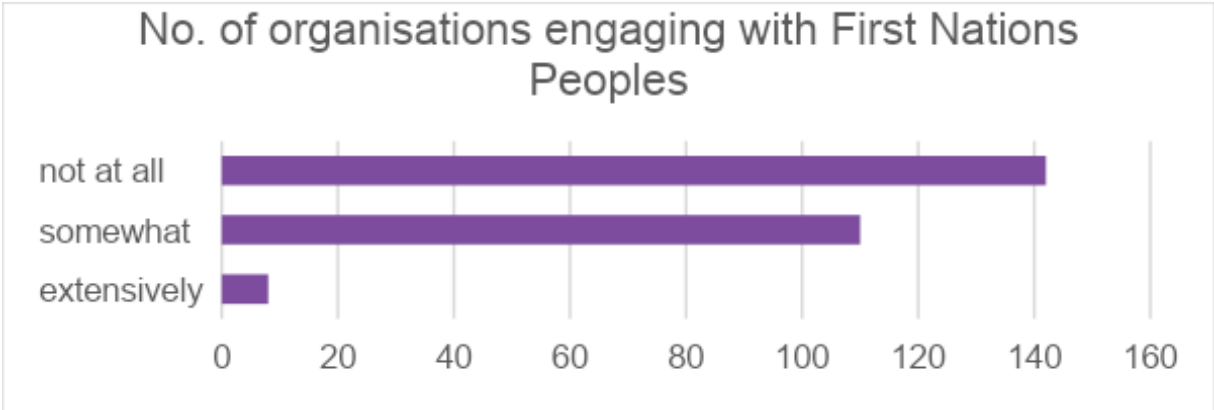
It was also highlighted in discussions about New Migrants, although it most likely applies to all three priority groups, that it is important to raise awareness around unconscious as well as obvious biases which may be barriers to inclusion.

First Nations Peoples

As show in Figure 5 below, eight survey respondents identified that they work extensively with First Nations Peoples, 110 have some engagement and 142 organisations identified that they have

no engagement. Those that responded they work with First Nations Peoples extensively included areas such as community health, creating career paths, national parks and community gardens acknowledging First Nations Peoples history and culture.

Figure 11: The extent to which organisations are engaging with new migrants



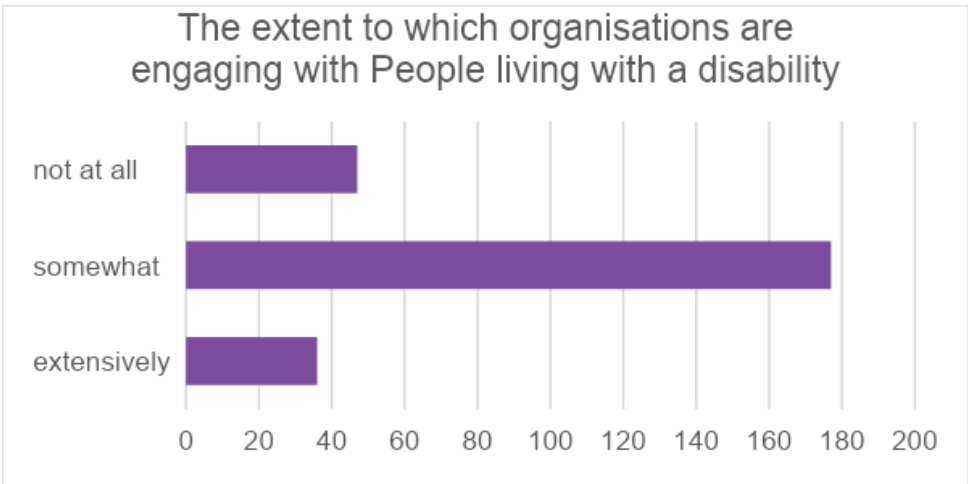
Of the 110 organisations that responded somewhat, 22 were open to and thought they might have some volunteers but weren’t actively targeting or supporting First Nations Peoples. Thirty-three organisations were working with indigenous groups in a small way or just beginning to and several had dedicated programs and staff. A further eight organisations noted they would like to engage better and would appreciate support to do so, while five sited low demographics and approximately seven identified partnerships or links with indigenous groups/organisations.

Of the 142 organisations that responded, ‘not at all’ with First Nations Peoples 63 noted they were not aware of anyone identifying as Aboriginal, and that ‘they are welcome and would be included if they wished to participate’. Twenty-six organisations sited low demographics in their geographic area. Nineteen organisations expressed interest in better engaging with First Nations Peoples, had tried with no or little success and would appreciate assistance, while three organisations had previous volunteers/employees or engagement through projects but none currently, and three were supported through other partnerships. Two organisations suggested that Aboriginal people had their own organisations and preferred to work with them and their community. Several organisations also noted that they don’t collect demographic data that captures information about the inclusion of First Nations Peoples.

People living with a Disability

Of the 262 survey respondents, five identified that they had people living with a disability as members. Eleven organisations identified having clients with a disability participating in their programs but no volunteers. Forty organisations responded that people living with a disability would be welcome however there was no active recruitment. It was noted by one organisation that the definition of disability was somewhat subjective. Nine organisations identified that they would like to or intended to increase the number of people living with a disability volunteering with their organisation. Sixty-five organisations responded that they had people living with a disability that were able to volunteer in a limited capacity, a further 20 organisations actively supported people living with a disability to volunteer. Five organisations identified that they had partnerships or links with other organisations that supported or linked people living with a disability to volunteer with them—see *Figure 12 below*.

Figure 12: The extent to which organisations are engaging with people with a disability



Twenty-seven organisations identified barriers to participation including physical constraints in areas like Landcare or environmental volunteering, SES and Lifesaving organisations noted for safety reasons people with a disability could not volunteer in operational capacities but could participate in administrative roles. Organisations working with children and animals noted duty of care issues that prevented people with physical and intellectual disabilities from volunteering. Another barrier was the complexity of tasks which could involve both intellectual complexities, but also physical dexterity or strength related. Several organisations noted that providing support for people with disabilities to participate was difficult due to limited resources.

An example of an inclusion initiative is the Volunteering Victoria *Victoria ALIVE* (Abilities – Links – Inclusive – Volunteering – Everyday) Project which sought to improve accessibility and inclusion for volunteers living with a disability in VIOs in Victoria. Some VSO were also already connecting with volunteers with a disability within their states. Key findings of this project were that many of the recommended improvements were low costs or no cost initiatives that VIOs were encouraged to implement themselves. However, to continue the implementation of improvements beyond the project, the inclusion of people living with a disability needed to be front and centre for governments, VIOs and other services. It suggested that volunteer-wide structural improvements were likely to require further funding.

Recommendations arising from this project included:

- » Disability inclusive volunteer management training package.
- » Supported volunteer placement services for people with disability
- » Outreach to VIO organisations
- » Community engagement
- » More projects such as Victoria ALIVE project
- » Seed funding for regional or specialised networks
- » Strengthening governance and leadership through volunteering.²⁸

28 (Victoria Alive, October 2019)

VIOs and local stakeholders of The Victoria ALIVE project were also clear about the benefits of place-based volunteering and collaboration to meet local needs of people living with a disability. One recommendation arising from the project was about increasing community participation in providing inclusive volunteering opportunities. This included holding events in regions the Victoria ALIVE project did not engage – the north and south-east of metropolitan Melbourne, and rural and regional areas. It was suggested that developing a strategy for smaller and more targeted opportunities for volunteer-involving organisations and sectors that have not yet prioritised inclusive volunteering would be good next steps. This example highlights the importance of place-based work.²⁹

The message from the sector through surveys and consultations was strong— a broad-brush approach to understanding the needs of the three priority groups to engage with them cannot generate a granular analysis and is therefore not fit for purpose. A tailored needs analysis is required to capture the regional/local needs of the three priority groups and the value of volunteering to them, and how they can participate in volunteering programs.

An example of a needs analysis specific to volunteering is found in Volunteer West’s evaluation framework which has a strong focus on understanding individuals’ volunteering experience. It is designed to track changes in three thematic areas: wellbeing, employability, and volunteer confidence through a collective impact model. The mental health promotion model “5 Ways to Wellbeing” is used to measure the wellbeing part.

The question was also raised as to how impact and outcomes measurement could be undertaken to demonstrate engagement with the three priority groups; and what data could be collected and how. Further, should demonstrated experience with the priority groups be an indicator for funding?

Recommendation 5: Volunteering Victoria develop a needs analysis framework and data system to guide and enable consortia to capture volunteer program data specific to their region that can contribute to a state-wide volunteering needs analysis. The needs analysis should also capture service and funding gaps and areas for improvement.

Recommendation 6: The funding structure allow for discretionary funds to be used to help organisations engage with the three priority groups, e.g., payment of interpreters; and/or to address other region-specific issues.

Recommendation 7: The regional community governance structure comprising eight regional consortia include representations from the volunteering sector and the three priority groups.

Determining eligibility for funding

The mpconsulting review report suggested that an Outcomes Framework be established, and a Needs Analysis be developed to assist in determining the funding amounts for applications.³⁰ Determining who should be eligible for VMA5 funding pointed to a service structure with funded deliverables. This inquiry generated data and discussions about the type of structure that should be funded and the funding process.

29 (Victoria Alive, October 2019)

30 (Volunteer West, n.d.)

Service structure

Theoretically there are numerous organisations that could be eligible for funding and some organisations that have not previously received funding are now interested in this. Most of the organisations consulted received funding from multiple sources including the three levels of government and philanthropic grants. It is understood that long term funding helps organisations to stabilise and progress their goals.

Consultation and survey data indicated that organisations have a strong interest in collaborating with diverse organisations in their communities to reflect the interest and characteristics of their respective populations.

Organisations indicated that funding should weight for regional issues including distance, population demographics and socioeconomic factors, infrastructure, service system, digital connectivity; and that funding should focus on capacity building.

The following questions were also raised:

- » Should funding include dedicated positions for building engagement with the priority groups?
- » Could partnerships with diverse organisations provide expertise on capacity building, working online, engaging with priority groups, collecting data etc.?
- » Which organisations can/should lead regional/local initiatives?

It was generally agreed that the allocation of funds to a service structure comprising regional community governance through consortia was a good strategy for several reasons including but not limited to the following:

Consortia structure and composition—Volunteering Victoria can legally contract consortia to deliver VMA5. In addition, consortia can attract funding from a variety of sources.

Consortia can offer a flexible structure where member organisations could adopt different responsibilities depending on presenting issues. A lead organisation with governance capacity would be required to manage the complexities of the consortium. It was also agreed that a natural lead organisation would likely emerge from the process.

Each consortium should include a volunteering focused organisation, local government representation, and representatives of people living with a disability, New Migrants and First Nations Peoples. For disability organisations who are NDIS providers the need to meet billable hours may prohibit their involvement. The volunteering focused organisation should be a mandatory member of each consortium. Alternatively, criteria could be weighted to require in the consortium mix, (an) organisation (s) to be a member of Volunteering Victoria and their primary service to be volunteering. State-wide organisations with regional connections could be included in regional consortia. Regional consortia should ultimately comprise organisations that are strongly connected to their respective regions to deliver the VMA5 to reflect the local context.

It is expected that both the lead organisation and other members of the consortium will need time and the capacity to establish and continue effectively. This is a potential risk.

Consortia membership could include some of the following:

- » VIO
- » Local Government
- » First Nations organisation
- » New Migrants organisation
- » Disability advocate
- » Disability sport and recreation organisation
- » Health provider with volunteering program
- » Education provider with volunteering program
- » Employer with volunteering pathway program

Organisational diversity— the benefits of establishing regional consortia comprising a mix of organisations, including representation of the three priority groups was well understood. Such a structure could offer new opportunities and deliverables from different organisations working together and learning from each other. However, it was also emphasised that attracting voluntary members to a consortium could be difficult, especially from the three priority groups.

Regional volunteer planning— the development of regional volunteer plans developed by the regional consortia provides the opportunity for synergies that could help to share resources, learnings, create efficiencies and deliver community responsive programs. The involvement of local government would be particularly important in this activity given their community planning role. Further, the consortium could use its regional plan to attract funding from an extended range of sources. In the case of organisations representing the three priority groups who may be reluctant to become members of a consortium, this may be an enticement as it may generate funding, for example, to support First Nations volunteer programs delivered by First Nations organisations. This approach could lend itself to increasing First Nations Peoples' participation in volunteering in a culturally appropriate way.

Assessment of Consortia — a panel of peer assessors was considered an appropriate mechanism for the selection of consortia. The assessment of consortia should include a presentation to the panel with consortia member present to answer questions. It was agreed that this would show commitment and could examine consortia's' understanding and capacity. Peer assessors will bring expertise in the field and provide independence from Volunteering Victoria. However, this approach may also be subject to conflicts of interest and therefore requires Volunteering Victoria to identify and mitigate such risks as part of the process. Implementing this approach will enable Volunteering Victoria to be at arm's length from funding rounds within the context of fulfilling its new role.

Recommendation 8: The VMA5 service structure comprise regional consortia with which Volunteering Victoria can enter into a funding contract.

Recommendation 9: Volunteering Victoria develop a regional planning template to be used by consortia.

Recommendation 10: Volunteering Victoria assemble a panel of peer assessors with suitable experience of the volunteer sector to develop assessment criteria and assess Expressions of Interest through a documented and interview process. This approach should include a process for managing potential or actual conflicts of interest.

Determining funding amounts

The determination of funding amounts was considered in respect of the delivery of VMA5 across the state and in relation to meeting its objectives. All stakeholders have concurred that the funding available for the whole of Victoria significantly restricts regional volunteering initiatives and activities and emphasise the substantial consequential delivery gaps. The project reference group confirmed that annual funding less than \$60,000 is not viable for any organisation. It was generally agreed that an equal distribution of base funding to each consortium with an additional discretionary amount for region-specific activities is an appropriate strategy for meeting VMA5 objectives.

Recommendation 11: Volunteering Victoria use a funding formula to fund 8 regional consortia that demonstrates equal and equitable distribution of funds across Victoria.

Determining the distribution of funds and accountability

In answering the question of how funds should be distributed across Victoria, there was general agreement that funding should be distributed across the eight Emergency Management services Regions. This regional division across Victoria was generally considered a good fit by those consulted.

The Project Reference Group generally agreed that funding should include a base equal amount to each of the eight consortia as well as allocated discretionary amounts per consortium added to their base funding according to identified regional needs including the three priority groups. Once off funding should be provided for special projects and/or organisational development activities based on expressions of interest—see Table 2 below.

Recommendation 12: Funding be provided to eight voluntary consortia across Victoria, one for each of the eight regions. Consortia to include a lead organisation and other members representing the regional population including the three priority groups. Each consortium must include at least one volunteering focused organisation or a member of Volunteering Victoria with volunteering as their primary service.

The allocation of funding for the entire funding cycle to 2026 was considered a positive step by the project reference group in helping organisations to stabilise, experiment and learn. A mid-term performance review at the end of 2024 was also welcomed.

Recommendation 13: Volunteering Victoria fund consortia for the entire funding cycle to 2026 with a mid-term review at the end of 2024.

Recommendation 14: Funding to include expressions of interest for funds in addition to base funding for region-specific needs and projects.

Recommendation 15: Volunteering Victoria develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for program outcomes to be used upon the commencement of the VMA5 funding cycle, for the mid-term review and summative evaluation at the completion of the funding cycle in 2026.

The elements of the VMA5 framework and implementation process discussed above are summarised in Table 2 below.

Elements of a Victorian VMA5 Framework and Implementation Process

Table 2: Proposed elements of VMA5 Framework & Implementation Process

Principles	Funding Structure	Operational Structures and Processes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building whole of sector capabilities facilitated by online platforms and coordinated information exchange and expertise. 2. Community- focused governance across the 8 Victorian Emergency Management regions. 3. Focus on regional and local community contexts including the 3 priority group populations. 4. Funding based on equality and equity across 8 regions. 5. Shared learning, cross-pollination, cooperation, collaboration, and partnerships within and between regions across Victoria. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding distributed by Volunteering Victoria across the eight Emergency Management Regions of Victoria to 30 June 2026 with mid-term performance review at the end of 2024. 2. A consortium of organisations with a lead organisation in each of the 8 regions to receive, manage and acquit funds granted. 3. Funding to include a base equal amount to each of the 8 consortia. 4. Funding to include allocated discretionary amounts per consortium to be added to their base funding according to identified regional needs including the 3 priority groups. 5. Once off funding to be provided for special projects and/or organisational development activities based on expressions of interest. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Volunteering Victoria to invite expressions of interest for VMA5 funding from 8 regional consortia supporting volunteering organisations and communities in their respective region. 2. The composition of consortia needs to include a lead agency to represent the regional volunteering community including the three priority groups. 3. Annual funding of approximately \$750k is available based on equality and equity principles across the 8 regions, i.e., a base amount of equal funding across the 8 regions with an additional amount of discretionary funding to address identified specific regional issues or needs. 4. Once off funding (Feb- June 2022) of \$750k is allocated for special projects and/or organisational development activities to consortia as per their expression of interest. Some of this funding could be carried over into the 2022-2023 financial year. 5. Funding of successful applicants should be for the full funding cycle to 2026 with a mid-term performance review at end of 2024 for continued funding to 2026. 6. Centralised capacity building through Volunteering Victoria digital platforms and other systems and resources to support the work of the consortia, and reduce duplication e.g., data collection system, resource materials, training etc. 7. Integrated utilisation of local, regional and state-wide digital and other resources and expertise through representative consortia comprising members with diverse contributions.

Scenario Example

The following scenario is provided as an example of the process.

1. Volunteering Victoria develops relevant documents, materials, templates & processes to initiate VMA5 delivery.
2. Volunteering Victoria publicises widely that it is seeking expressions of interest from 8 regional consortia.
3. Volunteering Victoria Assembles a panel of peer assessors to develop assessment criteria and assess expressions of interest.
4. Volunteering Victoria Initiates support projects including:
 - » Online platform
 - » Data system
 - » Needs Analysis Framework
 - » Monitoring & Evaluation Framework
5. Consortia form in each of the 8 regions and indicate their interest and capacity to deliver the VMA5 program.
6. In region X the lead organisation is a VSO and the consortium comprises:
 - » VIO
 - » Local government
 - » First Nations organisation
 - » New Migrants organisation
 - » Disability sport and recreation organisation
 - » Employer with volunteering pathway program
7. The consortium has been successful and will be funded to deliver VMA5 to 2026 with base funding say \$73,000 plus an additional \$20,000 discretionary funds to address identified region-specific needs.
8. The consortium also applies for a once off grant monies available for special projects to specifically focus on inclusion to volunteering for First Nations Peoples, people living with a disability, new migrants and for consortium development.
9. The consortium employs a part time worker to support its activities and functions. The lead organisation is responsible for management of the worker.
10. The consortium develops a community volunteering plan that includes a program of activities that will enable it to address the VMA5 requirements and how funds will be allocated against these, including all activities and special projects.
11. The consortium uses the plan to attract additional funds through other funding sources.

12. Through a calendar of activities, the regional consortia meet with Volunteering Victoria on a regular basis to coordinate activities, e.g., online functions, training; and to report to each other on emerging issues and showcase achievements.
13. Consortia utilise the frameworks, tools and resources provided by Volunteering Victoria to conduct their work, including ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
14. Consortia successfully participate in a mid-term performance review at the end of 2024 and continue program delivery to 2026.

Conclusion

The VMA5 framework and implementation process project has involved a rapid research and consultations process which has generated extensive data validated by key stakeholders and Volunteering Victoria. The recommendations align with the aspirations of the Victorian Volunteering Strategy, the culture and ethos of the volunteering sector in Victoria and recognise the value of volunteering to the community.

Key stakeholders involved in the project understand that delivering the VMA5 in Victoria will not be easy and considerable changes will be required within the volunteer sector. Potential service gaps resulting from the VMA redesign need to be considered to ensure continued progress, innovation and integrated service delivery.

The service and funding structures proposed in the Victorian VMA5 framework and implementation process have been designed to meet the VMA5 objectives through state-wide integration and regional synergies, and the potential for diverse funding streams. As a new model to be tried across Victoria, Volunteering Victoria has an important role in supporting the sector and monitoring and evaluating progress.

List of Recommendations

1. Volunteering Victoria work with DSS to address and fund the gap issues at the national level through VMAC; and continue dialogue with DFFH in relation to aligning the VMA5 framework and implementation process with the Victorian Volunteer Strategy.
2. The VMAC and Volunteering Victoria monitor and report the risks identified for the recommended VMA5 framework and implementation process in Victoria.
3. Volunteering Victoria embed in the VMA5 framework and implementation process the following set of principles that reflect the values, culture, and ethos of volunteering in Victoria.
4. Volunteering Victoria supports the implementation of an online platform informed by the outcomes of the Commonwealth Government's investment in online service delivery. This should provide for both centralised and cross-regional access and input to promote collaborations and capability building across Victoria, and to identify region-specific IT needs that should be considered in future developments.
5. Volunteering Victoria develop a needs analysis framework and data system to guide and enable

consortia to capture volunteer program data specific to their region that can contribute to a state-wide volunteering needs analysis. The needs analysis should also capture service and funding gaps and areas for improvement.

6. The funding structure allow for discretionary funds to be used to help organisations engage with the three priority groups, e.g., payment of interpreters; and/or to address other region-specific issues.
7. The regional community governance structure comprising eight regional consortia include representations from the volunteering sector and the three priority groups.
8. The VMA5 service structure comprise regional consortia with which Volunteering Victoria can enter into a funding contract.
9. Volunteering Victoria develop a regional planning template to be used by consortia.
10. Volunteering Victoria assemble a panel of peer assessors with suitable experience of the volunteer sector to develop assessment criteria and assess Expressions of Interest through a documented and interview process. This approach should include a process for managing potential or actual conflicts of interest.
11. Volunteering Victoria use a funding formula to fund 8 regional consortia that demonstrates equal and equitable distribution of funds across Victoria.
12. Funding be provided to eight voluntary consortia across Victoria, one for each of the eight regions. Consortia to include a lead organisation and other members representing the regional population including the three priority groups. Each consortium must include at least one volunteering focused organisation or a member of Volunteering Victoria with volunteering as their primary service.
13. Volunteering Victoria fund consortia for the entire funding cycle to 2026 with a mid-term review at the end of 2024.
14. Funding to include expressions of interest for funds in addition to base funding for region-specific needs and projects.
15. Volunteering Victoria develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for program outcomes to be used upon the commencement of the VMA5 funding cycle, for the mid-term review and summative evaluation at the completion of the funding cycle in 2026.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Project Reference Group

Members

- » Tracey O'Neill – Brotherhood of St Laurence (resigned after the first meeting)
- » Nicole Battle – Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
- » Viv Cunningham Smith – Eastern Volunteers
- » Thu-Trang Tran – Volunteer West
- » Lisa Hasker – VicSport
- » Daniel Leighton – NDIA
- » Kylee Bates – Ardoch and also International Association for Volunteer Effort
- » Selba Gondoza Luka – Afri-Aus Care inc
- » Jan Bruce – Municipal Association of Victoria
- » Danny Vadasz - Health Issues Centre
- » Anthony Aitken – Councillor City of Geelong, and Board President of Volunteering Geelong

Reference Group Terms of Reference

Introduction

Volunteering Victoria has engaged the LDC Group to support Volunteering Victoria with its redesign of the federally funded Volunteer Management Activity by developing a framework and implementation process by mid-October 2021.

The new federal model designates volunteering peak bodies to develop and implement strategies to build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations, through online volunteer management services, and by breaking down barriers to volunteering for identified priority groups.

The project reference group is an important component of developing the framework and implementation process as it will provide information and guidance to the consultants, test ideas, findings and workshop recommendations, and provide open and honest feedback to the consultants.

The project

The revised Volunteer Management Activity (VMA5) replaced the Department of Social Services (DSS) Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) program on 1 July 2021. VMA5 requires Volunteering Victoria and its partners to focus on two primary areas:

1. Building the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) through online volunteer management services.
2. Breaking down barriers to volunteering for three identified priority groups:
 - a. First Nations.
 - b. New Migrants.
 - c. People living with a disability.

Refer here for further information: [VMA Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Purpose

The purpose of this project is for Volunteering Victoria to establish a process and model that can meet the aims of the Federal Government and Volunteering Victoria by engaging with a wide range of stakeholders across Victoria to ensure the success of the program.

Recruitment and composition of the reference group

A reference group comprising no less than 5 and no more than 9 people will be selected from the State Volunteer Strategy taskforce in the first instance. Preference will be given for one representative per 'sector' as outlined on the DFFH website.

A representative from the Taskforce Secretariat (i.e. DFFH) and two/three Volunteering Victoria representatives join in addition to the 5-9. Reference group membership will be determined by an EOI process managed by Volunteering Victoria (refer p3 below).

Responsibilities

Members of the reference group will be required to attend four meetings—see meetings schedule below. At these meetings the consultants will provide information and discussion points generated from consultations and other research. The project reference group will:

1. Positively promote the project to build engagement and participation in the project
2. Provide broad oversight and advice in the implementation of the project
3. Provide feedback and guidance on issues emerging from the project activities
4. Facilitate communication with key stakeholders

Conflicts of interest

It is expected that if in the course of discussions of the reference group, individual members identify any actual or potential conflicts of interest, that they will declare these for the reference group to address as appropriate.

Processes

The Reference Group shall be chaired by the Volunteering Victoria Manager: State Programs, with minutes to be taken and by Volunteering Victoria staff.

The proposed meetings are as follows:

1. Week beginning August 30th: Establishment meeting, 1.0 hours.
2. Week beginning September 13th: Progress meeting, 1.5 hours.
3. Week beginning September 27th: Overview of key findings and recommendations, 2.0
4. Week beginning October 11th: Consideration of Final draft report, 2.0 hours.

Expression of Interest

To submit your interest in joining this Reference Group, please email Sara Sterling <sara@volunteeringvictoria.org.au> by 5pm Tuesday 24 August confirming:

- » your identified sector (as listed on the DFFH website)
- » your best intentions to attend all four meetings
- » any potential conflicts of interest

Questions?

Please contact Sara on 0450 134 550

Appendix Two: Risks and Proposed Mitigation Strategies

In Victoria, the following risks have been identified in relation to the delivery of the VMA5 framework and implementation process recommended in this report.

- » The time frame has not allowed for a pilot of the VMA5 framework and implementation process, so the recommended approach has not been tested.

Mitigation: Establish a formative evaluation of the VMA5 in order to monitor the recommended approach and its effectiveness.

- » There may be the potential for communities to lose place-based skills and culture.

Mitigation: Work with local community organisations to identify ways to maintain place-based skills, as well as advocating to State and Territory Governments to fund service gaps at a local level.

- » Some regional consortia may find it difficult to identify a lead organisation.

Mitigation: Undertake consultation with regional consortia, VIOs and VSOs, at an early stage, to assist with the identification of a Lead Agency.

- » Attracting voluntary members to a consortium could be difficult, especially from the three priority groups

Mitigation: Develop guidelines and resource material for consortia and best practice approaches to working with the three priority groups in a productive manner.

- » Regions may be too large for consortia to operate effectively.

Mitigation: Develop frameworks for consortia to work effectively across large regions.

- » Lead organisations may not be able to find suitable organisations for involvement in consortia (especially First Nations Peoples organisations).

Mitigation: Develop guidelines and resource material for consortia and best practice approaches to working with the three priority groups in a productive manner.

- » The funded amounts of money may be insufficient to make meaningful differences to volunteering outcomes.

Mitigation: Work closely with consortia to identify priorities with the available funds; assist consortia to explore alternative funding sources.

Appendix Three: Survey Data

Section 1. Overview of the Victorian volunteer sector

This section provides an overview of the volunteering sector based on survey questions and the 262 responses provided by organisations participating in the survey. The volunteer sector is diverse and complex mix as illustrated in Diagram 1. The organisations responding to the survey interests and activities ranged from the CFA and SES, Surf lifesaving clubs, environmental groups with very specific interests such as supporting a local park, cemetery, or museum, to clubs or groups that support participation in art, cultural or sporting activities including theatre and musical groups, bowls, golf, football, softball etc.

Diagram 1. Volunteering involving organisations by Sector.

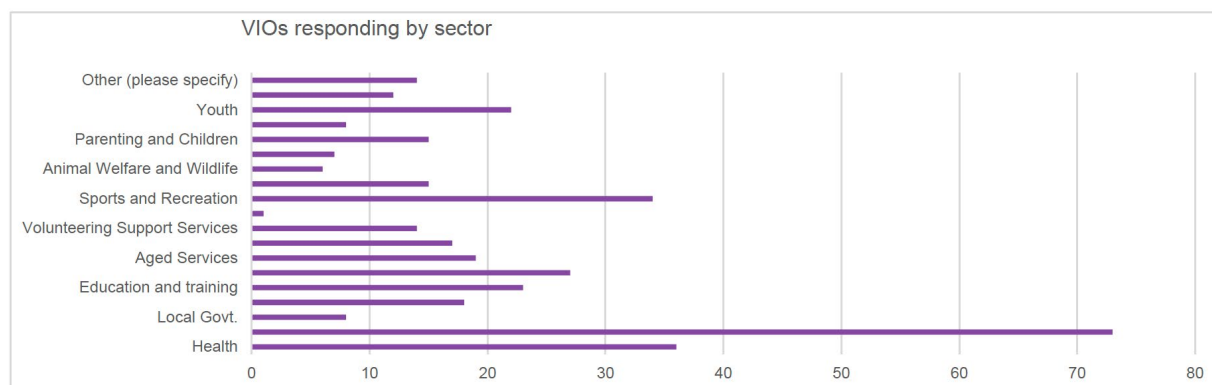
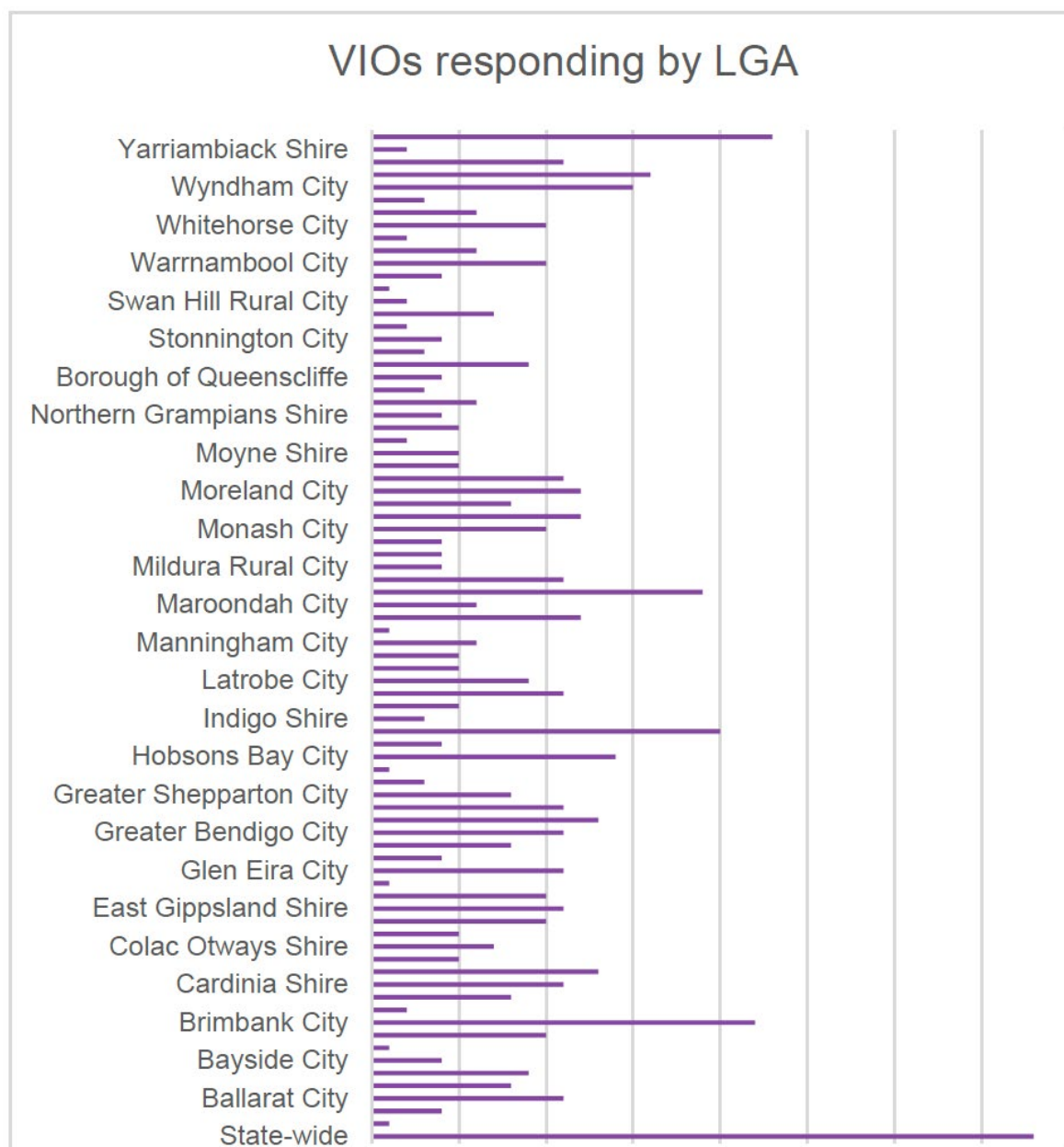


Diagram 2. Volunteering Organisations by LGA



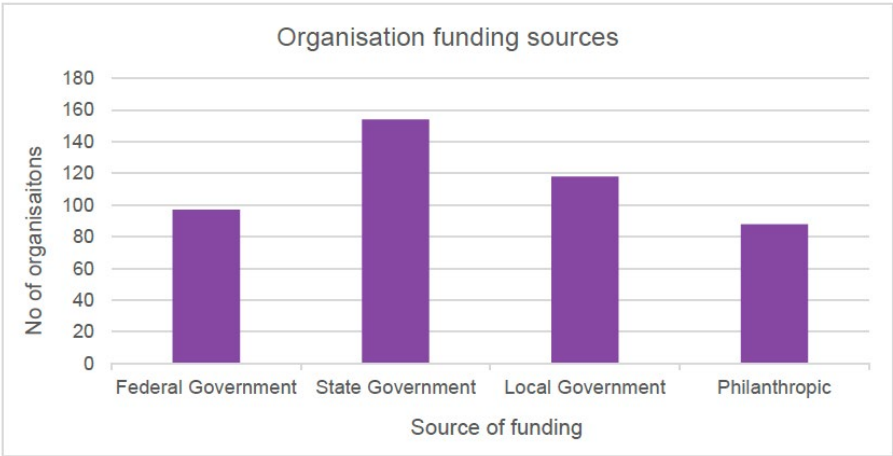
Those responding include well recognised organisations such as Red Cross and Oxfam, large health services such as Western Health and Royal Melbourne Hospital, community health organisations, local councils, neighbourhood houses in their many forms and other smaller local and interest specific community groups. There are also many organisations that are working to mitigate disadvantage across all aspects of society and to build social inclusion delivering a wide range of activities creating opportunities for connection, learning and inclusion. A number work within their own ethnic or indigenous group or local community.

How organisations are funded

Those responding to the survey commonly received funding from a variety of sources including multiple levels of government as well as philanthropic funding. Other funding sources identified included donations, community funding raising, sponsorship, and revenue generated from sales or hire and memberships. 22 organisations identified they receive funding from federal, state and local government as well as philanthropic funding, a further 23 were receiving funding from the 3 levels

of government with no philanthropic funding. 28 were receiving federal and state government and 10 of those were also receiving philanthropic funding. 40 organisations were receiving no regular government or philanthropic funding with revenue coming primarily from memberships, self-funding, sales, some grants or sponsorship. Funding, particularly grant funding, is often provided for specific purposes and are short term. This leaves the challenge of core funding to organisations to self-fund.

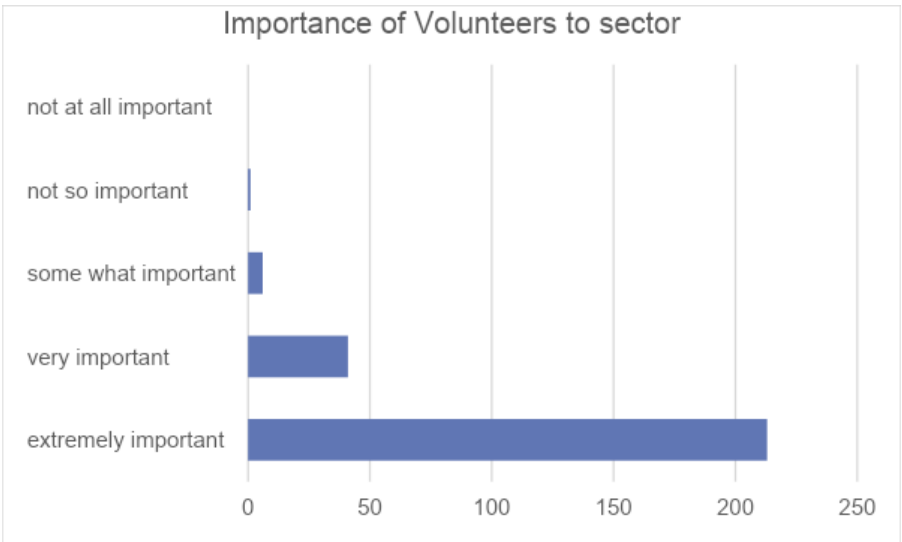
Diagram 3. Organisation Funding Sources



The importance of Volunteering to Organisations

Of the 262 responses 214 identified that volunteers were extremely important to their organisations as indicated in Diagram 4. below) Of those 214, 106 stated they wouldn’t exist without volunteers and a further 42 said without volunteers services would be significantly limited and less effective or engaging.

Diagram 4. The importance of volunteering across sectors



The number of volunteers and the difference that they make to communities is significant, providing emergency relief, enriching lives through companionship and enabling people to do or achieve things otherwise unimaginable. Volunteers extend the capacity of available services and increase community connection in organisations large and small across an incredibly diverse range of needs and interests. Activities include developing and maintaining rail trails, gardens, reserves, cemeteries, wilderness

areas, supporting theatres, museums, galleries. Many organisations including community radio stations, football and netball, golf, bowls, and tennis clubs only exist through volunteers, other organisations such as scouts and girl guides, emergency services, as well as community health and community houses are all reliant of volunteers. These volunteering activities are important because they:

- » Enhance and enrich community experiences and social cohesion
- » Offer direct and needed support to individuals and communities that require this
- » Expand educational, recreational, artistic, and cultural opportunities for children, young people and adults
- » Contribute to understanding about and helping to improve the environment
- » Support people with specific needs or in difficult circumstances
- » Balance out systemic injustices by supporting people who are disadvantaged

Quotes

- » with only 1.8 paid staff our organisation runs with over 80 volunteers without them we could not continue (neighbourhood house)
- » We rely on more than 1,000 active volunteers to run services like our meals program. More than half of the people running this service are volunteers & help serve more than 300 meals a day to people in need. (independent non-profit organisation)
- » Volunteers provide approximately 2,000 - 4,000 hours of support each year; supporting our Visitor Services staff in daily operations and Gallery invigilation (maintaining the security of our galleries), as well as enriching the visitor experience of our collection..... providing accessible guided tours and assisting with the delivery of key community public programs. Without volunteer support, the organisation would not have the resources required to deliver large scale programs and exhibitions that directly support the broader community through tourism and economic benefit. (regional art gallery)
- » Volunteers make up 40% of our work force. They allow for the organisation to add value to the medical and allied health services that we provide. Volunteers provide unique services, such as the Emergency Relief - Community Support Worker role; unique insight and contributions through individualized projects in Health Promotion, Dietetics, Environmental Management, etc.; addition support to clients in our NDIS and CHSP run programs; as well as a plethora of other roles. Volunteers contribute extensively to core business and provide added social connection and support for our clients and customers. (community health service)

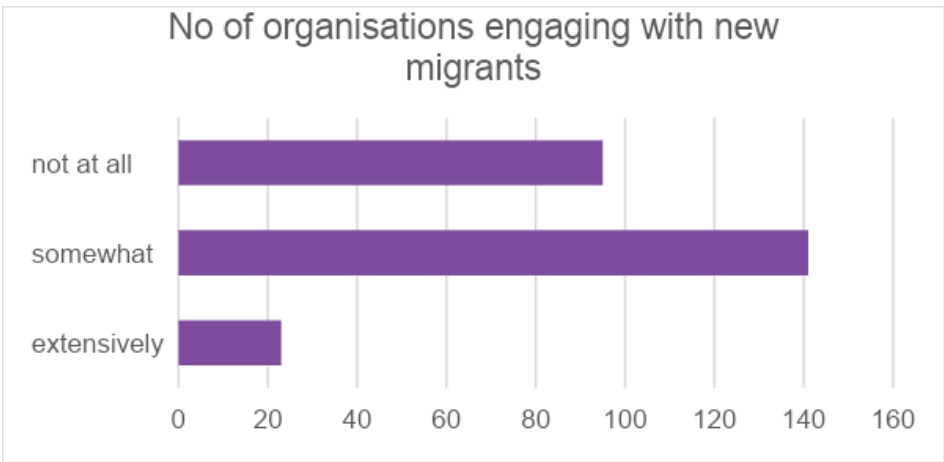
VIOs and VSOs currently work with the three priority groups

New migrants

262 organisations responded to the survey of these 24 identified that migrants are extensively involved in their teams and programs and 141 organisations responded that they somewhat involve new migrants. Of these working extensively with new migrants approximately 5 are run by and for specific migrant groups, a number were community development and community service organisations, several football clubs and health organisations both small and larger organisation such as of Brotherhood of St Laurence and Oxfam. The type activities included providing support for work, English language skills, engagement in community through sport or volunteering, and provision of emergency relief. There were several organisations focussed specifically on new migrants and

overseas students such as AMES Australia and Travellers aid providing opportunities for volunteering as well as benefiting from settlement support programs.

Diagram 5. The extent to which organisations are engaging with new migrants



95 organisations including health, sporting, arts and cultural organisations responded that they didn’t have any new migrants in teams or programs. 74 provided explanatory comments of these 17 indicated that there was no or few new migrants in their geographical area. Challenges and enablers to inclusion identified included:

- » The need for transport due to location
- » The need to build engagement and trust with local multicultural groups, limited funding so limited capacity for stakeholder development and engagement with people in these communities,
- » Language as a barrier for some migrants was mentioned by many and not having the resources to support and train.
- » Several organisations sited an apparent lack of interest or suggested that many needed to work and didn’t have time. Several organisations noted that new migrants wishing to volunteer usually do so to gain improve language skills and to get experience that will help them to gain employment.

While many organisations were open to involving new migrants, they were not actively targeting them. Others had multicultural engagement but not necessarily meeting the 5-year criteria. Some noted that requirements such as a criminal history check and working with children card (both are free to volunteers) can present barriers to some volunteers.

Quotes

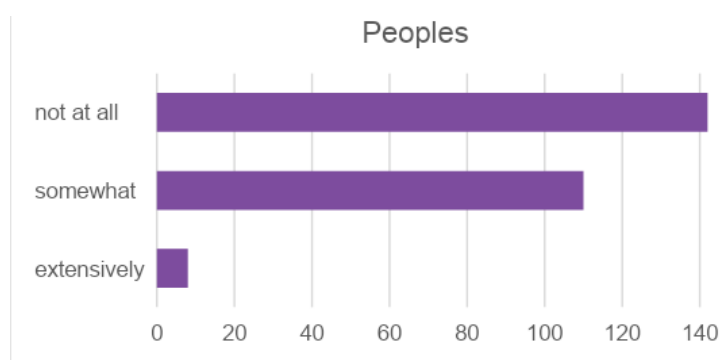
- » Mainly interest in volunteering from new migrants wanting to get admin experience to help them to get employment. We don’t have a lot of opportunities for admin support. Our volunteers in the ER program are required to complete a short course of a TAFE level subject which may be problematic for new migrants. (community support organisation)
- » members from the CALD communities where the Society works are very reluctant to become involved as they are looking for paid work opportunities. They represent at-risk and vulnerable communities including housing and income security issues, and are less likely to engage in volunteer activities. Based on the feedback we have had from CALD leadership

this is the primary reason why volunteering from CALD communities is challenging, and some incentives including food and petrol vouchers somewhat assist as a form of support for their involvement. They are more inclined to stay within their community and not engage in volunteering with existing services. (community service organisations, working with women and their families)

First Nations Peoples

8 organisations identified that they work extensively with first nations peoples, 110 have some engagement and 142 organisations identified that they have no engagement. Those that responded they work with extensively included areas such as community health, creating career paths, national parks and community gardens acknowledging First Nations Peoples history and culture.

Diagram 6. The extent to which organisations are engaging with new migrants



Of the 110 organisations that responded somewhat, 22 were open to and thought they might have some volunteers but weren't actively targeting or supporting. 33 organisations were working with indigenous groups in a small way or just beginning to and several had dedicated programs and staff. A further 8 organisations noted they would like to engage better and would appreciate support to do so, 5 sited low demographics and approximately 7 identified partnerships or links with indigenous groups/ organisations.

Of the 142 organisations that responded 'not at all' with First Nations Peoples 63 noted they were not aware of anyone identifying as aboriginal, they are welcome and would be included if they wished to participate. 26 organisations sited low demographics in their geographic area. 19 organisations expressed interest in better engaging with First Nations Peoples, had tried with no or little success and would appreciate assistance, 3 organisations had previous volunteers/employees or engagement through projects but none currently, 3 supported through other partnerships. 2 organisations suggested that aboriginal people had their own organisations and preferred to work with them and their community. Quite a number of organisations also noted that they don't collect demographic data to inform either way but many assume not.

Quotes

- » we have a specific ABTSI Unit - they have some volunteers that support specific committees – however, within the broad consumer advisor team – we have no first nations people. I think that this area of engagement needs to have specifically skilled paid staff to support the engagement and I would not like to see that this targeted group is only given as part of a token gesture - I think that this should be given to the organisations that already have the trust and links within this community (Health service)

- » Our organisation has a focus on First Nations Peoples however transport is an issue for them to participate as a volunteer. (Neighbourhood house)

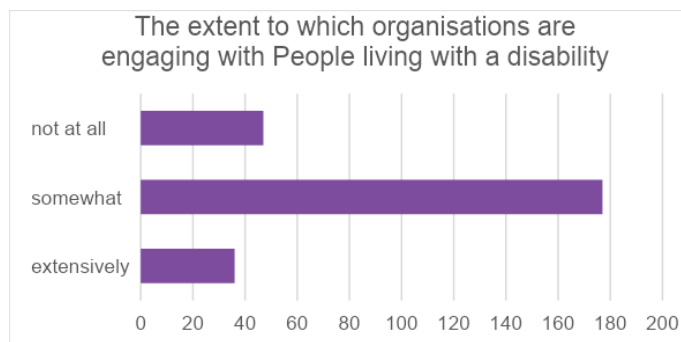
People living with a Disability

262 organisations responded to the survey of these 5 organisations identified that they had people living with a disability (PWD) as members. 11 organisations identified having client's with a disability participating in their programs but no volunteers. 40 organisations responded that PWD would be welcome however there was no active recruitment. It was noted by one organisation that the definition of disability was somewhat subjective. 9 organisations identified that they would like to or intended to increase the number of PWD volunteering with their organisation. 65 organisations responded that they had PWD were able to volunteer in a limited capacity, a further 20 organisations actively supported PWD to volunteer. 5 organisations identified that they had partnerships or links with other organisations that supported or linked PWD to volunteer with them.

Quotes

- » People with disabilities have always actively participated in all facets of our organisation, whether as volunteers, or participants in projects or programs. Many of our volunteers have or had a disability & have volunteered to re-engage with community & improve their wellbeing, going on to participate in other activities. For example, the Good Bugs Gardening Group volunteers have developed & maintained the flourishing community garden ...& many have gone on to participate in other programs, etc. (Community House).
- » historically the volunteer roles available have not been able to be adapted to meet the requirements of people with a disability. – (Regional Council)
- » We include the promotion of volunteer opportunities to local organisations that involve people living with a disability through our Aged & Disability team, however this is not direct targeting. We need to do better in this area of recruitment. (City Council).
- » All volunteers living with a disability are welcome into our programs. We have several volunteers who have a disability, some have come from our own supported independent living accommodation. We also have partnered with recruitment agencies who assist people living with a disability. (not for profit)
- » It is sometimes hard to place people with a disability if they don't have a support worker as many Non profits don't have the capacity to supervise. (Volunteer resource centre)

Diagram 7. The extent to which organisations are engaging with people with a disability



27 organisations identified barriers to participation including physical constraints in areas like land care or environmental volunteering, SES and Lifesaving organisations noted for safety reasons they could volunteer in operational capacities but could participate in administrative roles. Organisations working with children and animals noted duty of care issues that prevented people with physical and intellectual disabilities from volunteering. Another barrier was the complexity of tasks which could be both intellectual complexity, but also physical dexterity or strength related. Several organisations noted that providing support for PWD to participate was difficult due to limited resources.

Capture of data and information relating to the 3 priority groups

Survey participants were asked to identify if the collected data in relation to the 3 priority groups, 148 responded that they did not collect data, 109 responded yes and 5 left the question blank. Of those who answered no 63 provided reasons for not collected data these included:

- » Not relevant to what they do, no requirement or need to (32)
- » No capacity, resources to do so (13)
- » Some organisations consider asking this question is a barrier for some, others referred to preferring a more welcoming approach, other felt it wasn't respectful to ask and was encroaching on personal privacy (7)

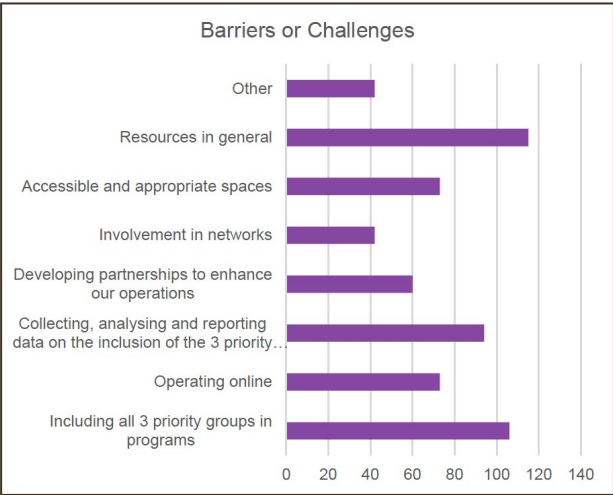
Of the 108 organisations that answered yes to this question many also noted they were unsure, or their answer was incomplete or unclear in relation to the data they collect. Some noted they ask what language is spoken at home or where they were born, some stated they collect demographic data other indicated they collect data about disabilities and migrants but not first nations people. Other noted that responding to demographic questions were optional or they considered data patchy for reasons to do with technology. A number mentioned the systems they use or that data is collected elsewhere.

Section 2. VMA5 and Sector Capacity and Capability

This next section provides an overview of VIO capability and capacity, as well as challenges and opportunities in relation to VMA5 priorities and the support and resourcing that would be needed to support VIOs to improve engagement with the priority groups and to shift more activities online.

Respondents were asked to identify which of the activities listed in Diagram 8 would present challenges or barriers for them.

Diagram 8 Barriers and Challenges for organisations relating to VMA5 priorities



The accompanying explanatory notes about why these were barriers identified a range of concerns, 35 organisations noted that their resources were already stretched with staff and were concerned staff wouldn't be able to provide the support required, particularly with the 3 priority groups likely to have different needs and support requirements. 13 organisations suggested that they would need new linkages and partnerships to engage the 3 groups as well assistance to better understand new migrant and First Nations cultures. A number raised the issue of online recruitment as a barrier to those with low literacy, poor proficiency in English and no or little access to digital devices (acknowledging this is not such an issue for young migrants) as well as some not wishing to undertake compliance training online. 13 cited the cost in administrative time as well as data management concerns as issues for data collection as well as concerns that people would find the questions intrusive and many not wishing to identify for a range of reasons. A few also noted that the demographic makeup of their communities did not include many migrants and First Nations People. Other issues raised included, wishing to remain inclusive to all groups and as well as concerns about reduced focus on other groups such as young people and the unemployed.

Capacity to undertake key activities online

To assess readiness and capability in relation to undertaking activities online survey participants were asked to rate their capacity to be involved in key areas. A small number noted most of their work is already online, for others Covid has found them adapting to the new online environment in a range of ways and with a range of success. Many noted they had good existing relationships and interest/ capacity to develop more and stronger networks, citing online as good for sharing and partnering, this was an area where most expressed a level of confidence and interest. A number noted that they already have online training and have their volunteers participate in online training offered elsewhere as well and appeared to be an area where there is already significant activity. An area where online was seen as less effective was recruitment of volunteers.

For many groups though online capacity and capability was limited for a range of reasons, competence with technology, language barriers, minimal and/or part-time staff, limited technology and equipment, online presence, and online expertise. Many organisations noted their volunteers were not comfortable with online learning or using computers. Rural communities particularly were likely to feel more isolated and under resourced. It was also noted that Covid has made home and online lives busy so there is competing access for time and equipment (home schooling, working from home). The nature of some programs precludes online participation or sharing, and some services are not suitable for any online component. The overall ratings of their capacity in each of the areas is summarised in the 4 diagrams on the following page.

Diagram 9. Online capacity to share resources, tools and information

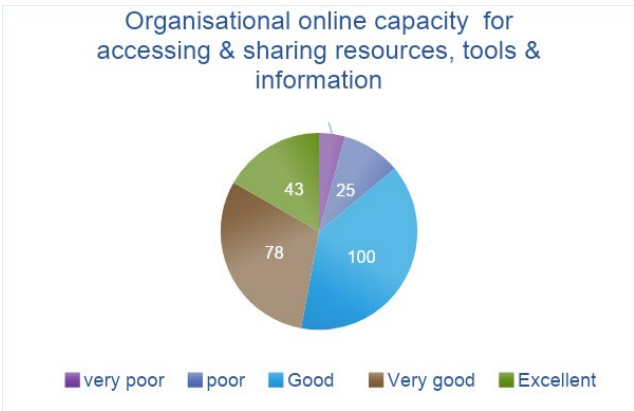


Diagram 10 capacity to participate in Online training and support



Diagram 11. Capacity for online volunteer recruitment & retention

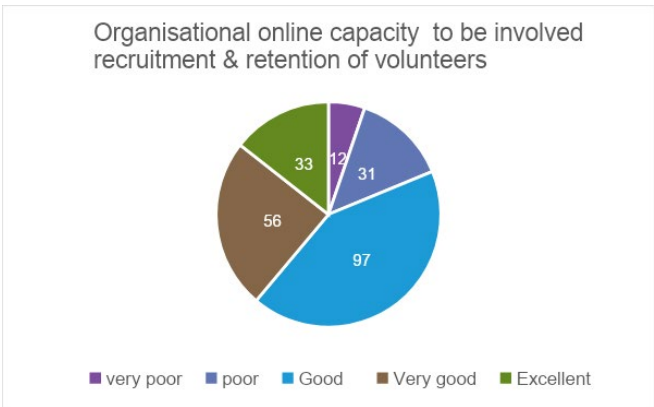
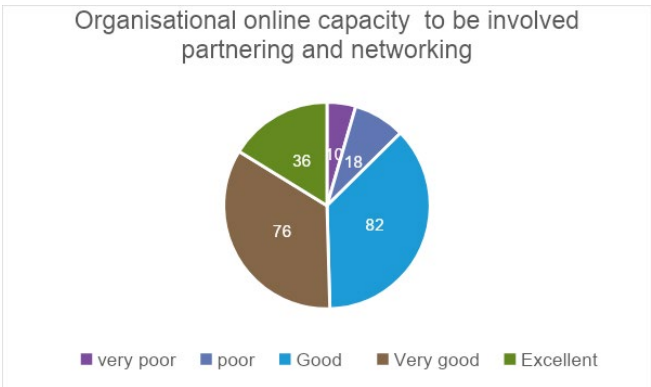


Diagram 12. Capacity to be involved in partnering and networking online



Many noted they had good existing relationships and interest/capacity in developing more and stronger networks, citing online is good for sharing and partnering.

Quotes

- » as a regional community and also at this time of Covid, networking via computers has become an everyday activity. WE have developed forums on aspects of life in Australia in language and then put these recordings onto you tube – Information about cars and driving, and information about finances We have also run some of our volunteer training session on line and are looking to develop more video resources for this purpose. Connection with

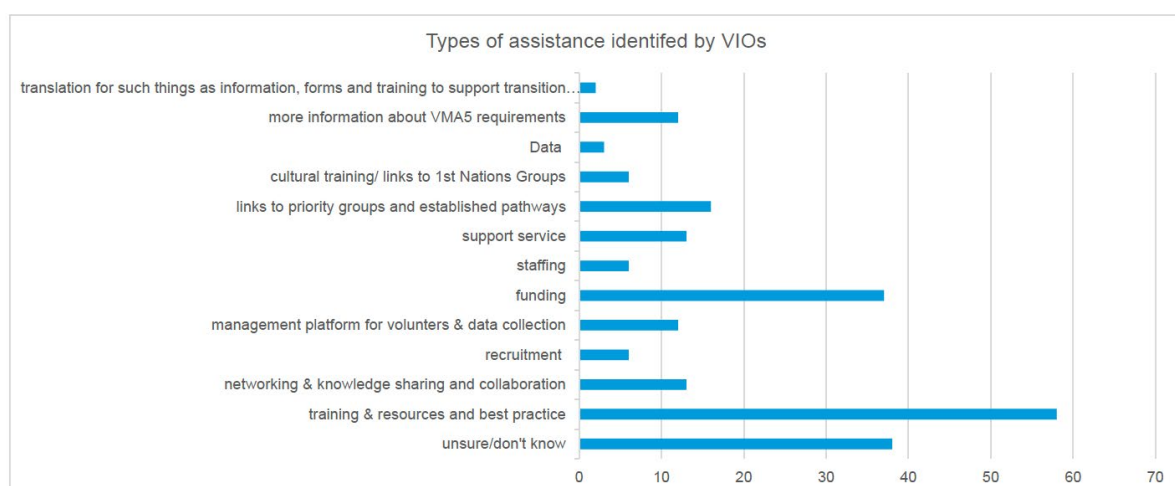
volunteers occurs through internet but recruitment tends to happen more often when there are face-to-face meetings \Networking with other organisations is, again related to Covid restrictions and so internet networking has proved invaluable as a resource in keeping in touch and maintaining a support system for new arrivals (not for profit supporting refugees)

- » Almost all of our members and volunteers have language barriers, old generation and lack of digital technology skills. – (ethnic specific Special Needs not for profit)
- » .. jumped aboard the zoom express at the beginning of the pandemic and has been successful at obtaining small funding contracts to teach those on the other side of the digital divide how to use smartphones, computers and devices. We also run online classes, take part in online staff meetings and complete PD online. We are concerned that the emphasis on new migrants will leave behind older migrants who may not have learned to speak English well, but are still keen to give back to their community. Our efforts this year in digital literacy have concentrated on this older CALD cohort, who have been more greatly impacted by COVID-19 and the move to online service delivery for things like Centrelink and My Gov. We also lack the recurrent funding to take up specific online volunteer management services that could further improve our capacity in this area. (Neighbourhood House)

The types of assistance that organisations considered they would need, and they thought were best placed to assist them.

Comments included the need for funding to; build capability to support volunteer management and coordination direct to organisation, access to training for volunteer management and for volunteers, online materials, translated in some cases, a scheduled program of online courses; networking opportunities with priority groups and links to organisations that would be willing to work with VIOs. Other support identified included a network for volunteer managers, regional expertise to support recruitment, information about the 3 priority groups, such as the barriers they experience, local data; shared resource library examples of roles; avenues to promote volunteering to newly arrived migrants, those living with disabilities and First Nations People.

Diagram 13. Types of assistance identified by VIOs

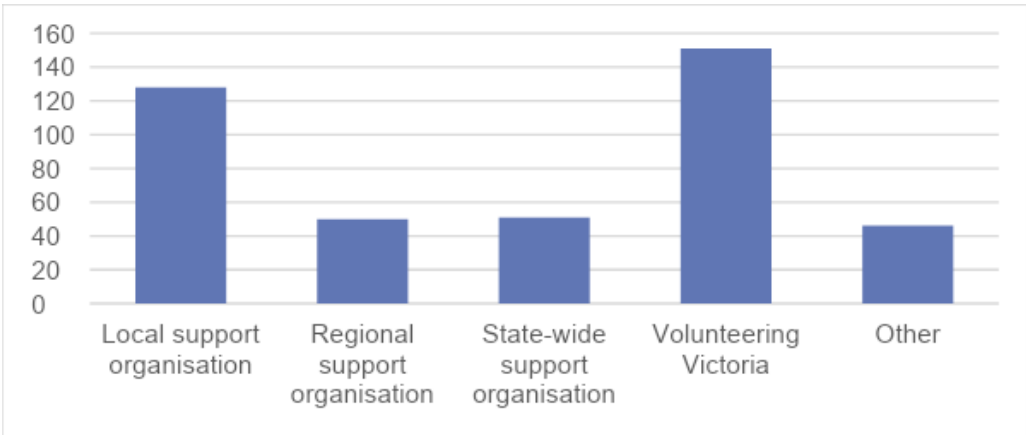


Other requests were for more information about VMA5, resources such as policy and procedures resources, updates on standards, information and templates, ideas for implementing; best practice information, access to information about data requirements and a database for recruitment and volunteer management Some organisations identified the need for a well-resourced local/regional volunteer support service (like Volunteer West.) and support with barriers to priority groups, including required checks(police, NDIS).

Quotes:

- » Best practice examples, connections to experts in the field, drawing links outside the sector so we learn beyond our field of scope. (community organisation)
- » Access to information and a database for recruitment, training, best practice. Links to organisations that would be willing to work with us. Increase our capacity building to recruit and train volunteers and have the facilities, equipment and policies in place (football club)
- » Advice about online platforms that assist with the management of volunteers, online PD, cultural training for working with Indigenous groups and individuals (Neighbourhood house)
- » Who respondents considered best place to support them
- » The diagram below shows which organisations were regarding as best placed to provide support to VIOs. A summary of the key reasons is provided below the next page.

Diagram 14. Organisations identified as best placed to provide support to VIOs



Organisations identified different combinations of support organisations, 40 identified local support organisation and Volunteering Victoria, 17 identified all 4 types of support organisation, 10 identified local support, state wide support organisation and Volunteering Victoria, 8 identified regional and local support organisation and Volunteering Victoria, 51 selected Volunteering Victoria only, 36 identified other only, 35 chose just local support organisation and a small number chose just state or regional support organisations

40 organisations who either left the question blank or chose other commented that they were unsure and didn’t know enough. 39 organisations referred to the importance of local support and partnerships citing a strong connection to the community, understanding local issues, some mentioned the importance of local government in this mix. 9 identified peak, national or state bodies as being most relevant to them. Many who spoke about the importance of local networks also cited the importance of past relationship, support and resources provided by Volunteering Victoria.

Quotes

In addition, many of the volunteers we support experience barriers such as language, transport, discrimination etc. so again safe local opportunities help reduce these barriers.

City of Boroondara and Town Hall resources, State and Commonwealth Gov resources to provide a resources for migrants, and persons in the community. (Community Radio)

I am currently members of all these organisations which all provide different levels of support. One is not more valuable than the other. (Rural Health Service)

Requires a strong push from all sectors to support small organisations in their capacity to recruit, train and retain volunteers. Growing pressure on small agencies to engage with volunteers to support programs traditionally created and supported by volunteers. (Charity supporting women, children and families)

Methodology

Data Collection

This survey was part of a series of consultations that took place during August, September, and October 2021 to assist in the design of a VMA5 framework and implementation process for Victoria. Those invited to complete the survey included volunteer involving organisations, organisations supporting new migrants, First Nations Peoples, and people living with a disability and volunteering support organisations.

The survey was publicised across Victoria. Organisation had approximately two weeks to complete the survey.

Data Analysis

The survey comprised 16 questions where participants were asked to identify statements or issues relevant to them and to provide explanatory comments. The free form comments were analysed qualitatively. The survey data was exported to excel to cleanse and sort data with each survey question presented on a separately. The analyst undertook a familiarisation process to develop an overall understanding of the data before undertaking a more intensive reading of the data. For each question themes were identified and categorised. Some categories were modified or expanded during the analysis process to better describe the particular theme as new data was included.

Direct quotes

Quotes from survey participants are included to highlight perspectives. These quotes are indented and italicized. Quotes have been de-identified with general organisational categories provided in brackets. Each quote under a given topic is from a specific organisation.

Limitations

Many survey respondents had a limited understanding of VMA5 purpose, priorities, associated funding and how it will be implemented therefore responses to some questions did not directly address the research questions. Volunteer involving organisations are very diverse and while their responses may suggest what other VIOs might say, they cannot be considered to be representative of the sector as a whole. They do however provide some insight into the interests, activities, value and challenges experienced by VIOs.

Appendix Four: Focus Group and Interview Data

Introduction and overview

LDC Group undertook six consultations with the following focus groups. Each focus group comprised 4-12 participants and represented a wide range of agencies in the following categories:

- » Metropolitan Volunteer Support Organisations (VSOs).
- » Regional VSOs.
- » Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs.)
- » Organisations involved with First Nations Peoples.
- » Organisations involved with new migrants.
- » Organisations involved with people living with a disability.

Three individual interviews were also conducted with representatives of:

- » A First Nations Peoples organisation
- » An immigrant and refugee women's organisation
- » Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

Interviews used the same questions as for focus groups.

A total of 64 people contributed to focus groups and individual interviews. All focus groups were asked similar questions although some varied in recognition of the fact that the specialist organisations representing the priority groups were not part of the sector and others occupied different roles within the sector, e.g., Volunteer Support Organisations.

The discussions revealed both themes that were held in common across the groups and other themes that were specific and relevant to the category of organisations participating in the respective focus group. The messages summarised here reflect these commonalities and detail the particular perspectives of those focussed on specific groups and communities or whose organisation play different roles in the volunteer sector.

Issues held in common across groups	Issues relevant to specific categories of organisations
Current focus on the three priority groups	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The VSOs reported that in general they had quite significant contact with and support for new migrant communities; much less so for people living with a disability, while, with some exceptions, there has been minimal contact with or focus on First Nations communities. » Some expressed a desire to strengthen their engagement with diverse communities generally and the priority groups, especially those they had struggled to engage with such as First Nations Peoples and people living with a disability. However, they felt they needed guidance as to how to do that appropriately. 	<p>Regional VSOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Some Councils and Shires have only recently begun to focus on First Nations communities. » Most contact is with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living with a disability, less so with First Nations Peoples. Some have done little work in this area. Requires the building of new relationships and involves a big learning curve for many and an investment of time. <p>Metro VSOs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Local government already have Aboriginal partnership teams and Disability and CALD plans however not much about volunteering - this can be worked on. » Some reported very diverse teams and others indicated they were seeking to reach out to their to extend their reach to disability and First Nations groups <p>First Nations Peoples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Fear by First Nations communities regarding privacy and inappropriate questions being asked. » Primarily have volunteers within their own community; many people have huge issues in their lives, if they do volunteer it will be within an Aboriginal context, as they will get support as well as giving through volunteering. » Most organisations have volunteers, but don't necessarily label it as such. <p>New Migrants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » English (or lack of it) is a key issue. Older age group tend to have the opportunity to volunteer more, although it is students/younger people who have the digital skills. » Neighbourhood Houses often have strong links with the priority groups. NHV and its Networks around the State would be in a solid position to assist. » Given the mandated definition of new migrants as the first five years -this is the very time that they are least likely to volunteer. Volunteering is differently understood by different migrant groups. The more formal approach currently dominant is more Anglo-Australian. » A number of new migrant groups already have a considerable number of volunteers, especially the Peak bodies. <p>People living with a disability Supporting people living with a disability to have choice, and inclusion in mainstream organisations is important.</p>

Transition to a digital/online platform

- » A number of VSOs have already made significant steps towards this transition (often forced to by COVID), especially in regard to recruitment and online training. But they reported being unsure about how much more can be done online.
- » Focus group participants reported that best practice resources are required for all agencies, to assist with online recruiting and training. Collaboration is crucial.
- » For some, especially smaller organisations, there are still considerable gaps, work required, and support needed.
- » There were concerns expressed about the loss of face-to-face contact and the loss of community relationships as a consequence.
- » The preference for and need for face-to-face contact was highlighted - many volunteer roles can only be done in person.
- » The digital divide is real for both volunteers and staff.
- » There is a fear that those not digitally competent will avoid accessing volunteering opportunities, especially older people and strategies are needed to address this.

Regional VSOs

- » Significant problems with infrastructure and connectivity - very restricted in some rural and regional areas.
- » Must think of people with disabilities – can't assume 'one size fits all', e.g. physical disability etc.

Metro/regional VSOs

- » Concerns were raised about the older generation accessing online resources and having issues with Internet access in general.
- » Smaller organisations will need additional support.
- » Great inconsistency among LGAs – need to tap into the best resource

Metro VSOs

- » Some already function effectively online such as recruitment, referral, management and support eg a Community of Practice
- » Being online is attracting a younger cohort of volunteers
- » Investment in a robust CRM system was seen as essential, although there were concerns as to the cost of this.
- » Concerns about the requirements for data collection - lack of information, time consuming, privacy issues, need standardization and flexibility

People living with a disability

- » Most have been doing this through Covid though acknowledge that face to face has been missed.

VMA5 Opportunities

- » Some real benefit in being auspiced by a large agency (e.g., Community Health Centre) as additional resources would be available.
- » Opportunity to work closer together with a real focus on Victoria as a whole - a more collective approach.
- » Opportunity for more innovation.
- » There is an opportunity to share learning.
- » Opportunity to get away from 1:1 reporting and look more broadly at community engagement.

Metro/regional VSOs

- » Continue to work in engaging diverse communities, share learnings re accessing Aboriginal and CALD communities, and learning their approaches to volunteering.
- » Create a more evidence-based approach to our work, influencing the data to be used (i.e., more meaningful data).

Regional VSOs

- » Able to get to 'hard to reach' communities, greater capacity and resources to assist.
- » Establishment of an integrated collaborative approach, moving away from silos, sharing resources and savings, and developing a consistent approach, potentially nationally.

VIOs

- » Opportunity to tap into the resources that the three priority groups will bring, especially by bringing them back in as volunteers post-COVID.
- » Have never really collected data on the three priority groups, never seen the reason to.

Regional VIOs

- » Investment in technology to aid funnelling in and out of accurate data - an easy-to-use system with meaningful data to share

New Migrants

- » Volunteering in the first few years can be a very useful integration component. It may help improve their English, which is the vital ingredient to integration.
- » People living with a disability
- » Build capacity and knowledge in mainstream organisations to promote opportunities for people living with a disability to meaningfully participate in roles that benefit the organisation as well as the individuals.
- » A policy or at least a desire within an organisation to include people living with a disability as part of its volunteer work force (make their work force more diverse and inclusive).

VMA5 Challenges

- » Loss of connection to people.
- » Many people want and need face to face contact, especially disadvantaged/homeless people (who are not technology savvy).
- » Loss of ability to tailor a volunteer assignment to an individual's needs.
- » Loss of volunteers; loss of paid jobs.
- » Losing local knowledge and expertise.
- » Loss of relevance because of focus on three priority groups.
- » VSOs may not have the breadth of skills to serve the three priority groups.
- » Limited resources to share learning.
- » Possible dissipation of place-based services.
- » Lack of clarity about data requirements for VMA5, Volunteering Victoria and how it will be used.
- » The particular challenges of rural and regional areas regarding infrastructure and connectivity.

First Nations

- » Increasing the volunteering infrastructure without making it too formal.
- » Transport can be a real barrier for volunteering.

New Migrants

- » Language a clear barrier, settlement issues. Many migrants are doing menial jobs even they may be highly qualified.
- » For many new migrants, they cannot think of volunteering in their first five years – they are focused on basic settlement issues. The only basis for volunteering in 1st 5 years is to build social capital, aiming at employment. Note: Five-year limit for English language classes has recently been removed.

VIOs

- » VIOs as organisations need to reflect their target populations in their own staffing.
- » Many VIOs don't have admin staff to do all the online work, done for them by the VSOs. What will happen if they don't get funded – how will they cope with the work?
- » Many migrants still have not settled even after 10 years, so how will they cope as volunteers within 5 years? Volunteering is not their priority in these first 5 years.
- » VIOs have tried assiduously to get support for working with First Nations organisations/communities – can't even get help to prepare a RAP.

Regional VIOs

- » Level of anxiety, loss of local expertise and knowledge and jobs, will have to retrain which costs.
- » Will be forced to focus on the 3 priority groups and won't be able to help others. Don't have the same diversity in regions.

Metro VSOs

- » Need to get the balance right between the face-to-face support many groups need and online platforms.

Metro/regional VSOs

- » Larger state-wide organisations coming in, without local knowledge.
- » People living with a disability
- » Organisations/people are “scared” to involve people living with a disability because of the “perceived” risks it may bring to the organisation.
- » Acceptance that PWD (intellectual or physical) do have something to offer – not just a nuisance or need too much help.

Factors impacting agencies' ability to include volunteers from the three priority Groups

- » Need to recognise unconscious barriers.
- » Training and support around inclusion and cultural safety is needed.
- » Concern regarding the relevance of VSOs – why would agencies running their own volunteer programs need us? This 'why' question has yet to be answered.
- » Resourcing is crucial (best practice approaches), have to have good relationships and invest in them especially when establishing partnerships.
- » Many agencies reported difficulties in accessing and building engagement with First Nations volunteers/communities. Also true to some extent with disability organisations. Less of a problem with CALD communities.

Metro/regional VSOs

- » VSOs have not generally been able to establish the links and relationships with First Nations agencies.
- » The time required for establishing these relationships has been a huge barrier.
- » Need training and education.
- » Need to use a variety of languages.
- » Lived experiences of priority groups is different according to the location, i.e. model needs to be adapted.

Metro VSOs

- » Inclusion training – needs to lead to more roles for people living with a disability. Not easy to get organisation to be inclusive.

Regional VSOs

- » Need to establish whether First Nations organisations see the need for working with VSOs, the why needs to be answered.
- » How do VSOs support the three priority groups when there are not many from those populations in their area?

New Migrants

- » Critical to ensure that there is a pathway for volunteering, i.e. option of leading to employment – this is very important for new migrants.

First Nations Peoples

- » Need funding for management support for volunteers. Volunteers are not a free resource. Training needed for volunteer Board members.
- » Aboriginal leaders are often asked to contribute to projects, Committees, Panels etc, with this being unpaid.
- » In partnering – Aboriginal community agencies often get treated poorly, not as partners, this is not self-determination. Needs to be equitable funding.

Organisational supports needed to assist the transition to online platforms and support the priority groups

- » Recognition of variability – some organisations are well resourced and have made the online transition, others much less so and need considerable support e.g., from VSO as has been the case until now.
- » Adequate resourcing to address the costs of the requirements of VMA5 e.g., building and upgrading online capability, developing relationships with priority group organisations, and monitoring and evaluation work.
- » Resourcing to support the establishment of engagement and relationships with priority groups especially First Nations Peoples and people living with a disability where the gaps are greatest.
- » Improved, simplified and easy to use data collection and reporting systems.
- » Improved digital literacy in agencies and for volunteers.
- » A willingness to share strategies and approaches amongst those working with priority groups e.g., new migrants and online.

VSOs

- » Need seed funding to employ persons from the priority groups, to encourage involvement.
- » Clarity and help needed regarding collecting data on 3 priority groups.
- » Vital to have local volunteer support continue.

Metro VSOs

- » Lack of resources to share our learnings between organisations, i.e., platform to immediately share learnings e.g., Community of Practice.
- » Development of a 'learning system' – need to assist people to navigate their way through training and development, especially for inclusive volunteering.

Regional VSOs

- » Trouble getting online at all - black holes and the cost of technical support which many cannot afford.
- » Availability of webinars online after events so people can continue to access.
- » Support for collaboration and best practice.

Metro/regional VSOs

- » Ask State Peaks to assist with access and relationships with three priority groups communities/groups.

First Nations Peoples

- » Online recruiting could be a significant barrier regarding volunteering.
- » People living with a disability
- » Training and support to understand what is possible, innovation and resources to engage and support volunteers.

People living with a disability

- » Training and support to understand what is possible, innovation and resources to engage and support volunteers.

Funding - issues, options and recommendations

- » Most participants saw the questions associated with this i.e., funding structures and approaches, as difficult to address as it was not in their area of expertise. They were more focussed on community and organisational needs and some high level, general principles to inform the funding required. Participants reported:
- » The need to have medium to long term funding – three years funding is best.
- » The need to look at the process of change, and to invest in this, e.g., funding community development, co-design.
- » The need to fund collaborative platforms.
- » Is there space for project work on partnerships, especially for long term funding?
- » Peak Bodies are in a good position to assist with this program, given their breadth of membership.

Regional VSOs

- » Volunteering in the regions is often the lifeblood in the community – funding needs to reflect this.
- » Funding needs to take account of the large distances in the regions.

Regional/Metro VSOs

- » Need minimum and medium to longer term funding to be sustainable e.g., 12-month funding is not feasible especially when partnering is involved. 3-year funding gives time to plan and rollout and time for evaluation. With 5 years can look at outcomes. Activity plan may be reviewed on annual basis

Metro VSOs

- » Need to invest in the process of change and the development of partnerships
- » Great merit in having a regional approach and significant support required across LGA's. Allow creative responses to the needs in 'your area' not just broad regional.

First Nations Peoples

- » Not interested in just a small bucket of money, not worth the effort.

People living with a Disability

Criteria for funding should consider the following:

- » the amount of time and effort that is focussed on the priority group, set a target for engaging, organisation that has knowledge and innovates in what they are doing for/with people living with a disability
- » the organisations reputation, and evidence of compliance with safety and regulatory requirements for working with people with a disability

Geographical Reach – Currently Funded Agencies

The state of Victoria is divided into 79 councils. According to the expression of interest submissions, the 16 currently funded Volunteer Resource Centres under VMA1 provide support across the following councils:

Ballarat Foundation

Moorabool Shire (Primary)

Hepburn Shire (Primary)

Golden Plains Shire (Primary)

Pyrenees Shire (Primary)

Ballarat City (Primary)

Bendigo Volunteer Resource Centre

Greater Bendigo City (Primary)

Loddon Shire (Secondary)

Central Goldfields Shire (Secondary)

Macedon Ranges Shire (Secondary)

Mount Alexander Shire (Secondary)

Buloke Shire (Secondary – Charlton Area)

Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre

Boroondara City (Primary)

Yarra City (Secondary)

Melbourne City (Secondary)

Stonnington City (Secondary)

Port Phillip City (Secondary)

Darebin City (Secondary)

Campaspe Primary Care Partnership

Campaspe Shire (Primary)

Centre for Participation

Horsham Rural City (Primary?)

Yarriambiack Shire (Primary?)

Hindmarsh Shire (Primary?)

West Wimmera Shire (Primary?)

Northern Grampians Shire (Primary?)

The Centre (Wangaratta)

Wangaratta Rural City (Primary)

Alpine Shire (Secondary)

Benalla Rural City (Secondary)

Greater Shepparton City (Secondary)
Moirā Shire (Secondary)
Indigo Shire (Secondary)
Strathbogie Shire (Secondary)
Towong Shire (Secondary)
Murrindindi Shire (Secondary)
Mitchell Shire (Secondary)
Mansfield Shire (Secondary)

Eastern Volunteers

Maroondah City (Primary)
Yarra Ranges Shire (Secondary)
Whitehorse City (Secondary)

South East Volunteers

Monash City (Primary)
Greater Dandenong City (Secondary)
Casey City (Secondary)
Cardinia Shire (Secondary)
Frankston City (Secondary)
Mornington Peninsula Shire (Secondary)
Kingston City (Secondary)
Knox City (Secondary)
Bass Coast Shire (Secondary)
Latrobe City (Secondary)
Wellington Shire (Secondary)

Volunteer Central Victoria

Macedon Ranges Shire (Primary – see also Bendigo)
Hume City (Primary - Sunbury)
Mount Alexander Shire (Secondary – see also Bendigo)
Heathcote (Secondary – see also Bendigo)
Moorabool Shire (Secondary – see also Ballarat)
Melton City (Secondary)

Volunteer Connect

Warrnambool City (Primary)
Moyne Shire (Secondary)
Glenelg Shire (Secondary)
Southern Grampians Shire (Secondary)
Corangamite Shire (Secondary)

Volunteer West

Brimbank City (Primary)

Hobsons Bay City (Primary)

Maribyrnong City (Primary)

Melton City (Primary – see also Volunteer Central)

Moonee Valley City (Primary)

Wyndham City (Primary)

Hume City (Secondary, with Whittlesea Community Connections – see also Volunteer Central)

Volunteer Geelong

Greater Geelong City (Primary)

Surf Coast Shire (Secondary)

Borough of Queenscliffe (Secondary)

Golden Plains Shire (Southern, secondary – see also Ballarat)

Colac Otway Shire (Geelong side, secondary)

Volunteering Victoria

Gippsland

East Gippsland Shire (Primary)

Wellington Shire (Secondary – see also South East Volunteers)

Baw Baw Shire (Secondary)

South Gippsland Shire (Secondary)

Latrobe City (Secondary – see also South East Volunteers)

Melbourne

Melbourne City (East Melbourne, Melbourne, North Melbourne, Parkville, Southbank, West Melbourne – see also Boroondara)

Yarra City (Fitzroy, Richmond – see also Boroondara)

Port Phillip City (South Melbourne – see also Boroondara)

Moonee Valley City (Flemington, Kensington – see also Volunteer West)

Volunteers in Banyule

Banyule City (Primary)

Nillumbik Shire (Secondary)

Darebin City (Secondary – see also Boroondara)

Glen Eira City (Secondary)

Whittlesea Community Connections

Whittlesea City (Primary)

Councils not covered

Ararat Rural City

Maybe could be added to responsibility of Volunteer Connect, The Centre for Participation, or Ballarat?

Bayside City – Maybe Volunteers in Banyule or South East Volunteers

Gannawarra Shire – Campaspe or Bendigo

Manningham City – Volunteers in Banyule

Mildura Rural City – New support services

Moreland City – VV under the Melbourne service delivery

Swan Hill Rural City – Ideally to be covered alongside Mildura

Wodonga City (NSW?) – Covered by Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Burea