



MONASH
University



**Continuing Professional Development
Program Evaluation
Focus Group Report**

October 2023

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support provided by Volunteering Victoria in undertaking this evaluation and for the collaborative nature in which they engaged with the research process.

We would also like to thank all the volunteer managers who participated in the focus group and contributed their time and thoughts to this study.

To cite this report

Tse, H. M. H., Kohyar, K., & Dalton, B. (2023). *Evaluation of the Volunteering Victoria CPD Program*. Monash Business School, Monash University.

Disclaimer

This report has been prepared for Volunteering Victoria. The data contained in this report is strictly private, confidential, and should not be copied, distributed, or reproduced in whole or in part, nor passed to any third party.

The material in this report is subject to copyright. If any person wishes to use, reproduce, or adapt the material in this report, please contact the authors.

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction.....	4
Method.....	5
Theme 1: Focusing on professional development.....	6
Theme 2: Learning through connection.....	7
Theme 3: Leading more effectively	11
Theme 4: Recognising one’s professionalism and value	13
Recommendations for program improvements.....	14
Discussion.....	17

Executive Summary

Introduced in 2019 to enhance the Victorian volunteer leadership workforce, Volunteering Victoria's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program provides developmental pathways for volunteer managers and aims to increase recognition of the professionalism of these roles. Monash University Business School researchers were engaged to conduct an evaluation of this program involving a focus group discussion and a survey of existing and past program participants. This report presents the findings of the focus group discussion regarding Volunteering Victoria's CPD program.

A total of five volunteer managers who are currently undertaking the CPD program participated in the 90-minute focus group discussion. Participants were asked about their perceptions of the objectives of the CPD program; the skills they had developed as a result of the program; and what they thought were the strengths of the program. An analysis of the focus group data identified four key themes describing the outcome of the program. The CPD program encourages and supports volunteer managers to:

- Theme 1: Maintain a consistent focus on their professional development
- Theme 2: Learn through connection with other volunteer managers in the program
- Theme 3: Lead more effectively, particularly through advocacy and strategy
- Theme 4: Recognise their own professionalism and value

The focus group session concluded with an opportunity to provide ideas and suggestions for improvements to Volunteering Victoria's CPD program. Volunteer managers suggested that the program could provide more advanced learning opportunities for experienced volunteer managers; that the list of activities counted towards CPD program certification could be expanded; that additional strategies to increase organisational support and recognition of their role be developed; and that efforts towards simplifying the system for logging CPD points be continued.

The results presented in this report suggest that the Volunteering Victoria CPD program aligns with the developmental needs and interests of Victorian volunteer managers. The program's emphasis on connection, collaboration and knowledge sharing is highly valued and enjoyed by the program participants. Further, the CPD contributes to volunteer managers recognising and valuing the knowledge, skills, and abilities they bring to their roles as leaders of volunteers. The results from this first phase of the research will now be used to inform a second and more extensive survey-based evaluation of the program.

Introduction

In 2019, Volunteering Victoria introduced a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program for existing and aspiring professional leaders of volunteers. CPD is the practice of maintaining, improving, and broadening one's knowledge, skills and expertise within a current role, organisation, or sector. CPD is applied in many industries and can include formal training courses, seminars, workshops, conferences and events, webinars and sharing best practice techniques, thoughts, and ideas.

Volunteering Victoria has the strategic goal of supporting those who play a leadership role in volunteering to have the greatest impact they can.¹ The CPD was introduced to facilitate capacity and development pathways for volunteer leaders and managers, and to promote recognition of the professionalism of these roles. Volunteering Victoria wanted to provide a CPD program that met its memberships' needs and was affordable, flexible, scalable, and relevant to the local Australian context.²

At a cost of only \$50 for members, the CPD program requires that participants undertake a range of activities offered by both Volunteering Victoria and other organisations. To complete the CPD program, participants are required to accrue a total of 16 points that reflect their engagement in learning activities undertaken to advance their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Upon completion of the program, participants receive a formal certification awarding them the right to use the title 'Professional Leaders of Volunteers (PLV)' after their name.

The CPD program is now in its fifth year and Volunteering Victoria has undertaken the task of evaluating the effectiveness of this initiative. Monash University researchers were engaged to conduct this evaluation using a mixed method approach involving both qualitative data (focus group) and quantitative data (survey) to investigate whether the CPD program has been successful in meeting its objectives. The evaluation also seeks to investigate the impact of the program on broader perceptions of volunteer leadership as a defined skill set, and the ways in which the CPD program could be improved.

This report presents the results of the first stage of the investigation which involved conducting a focus group with current volunteer managers undertaking the CPD program at Volunteering Victoria. The findings of the focus group study will guide the scope and development of the second stage of the research which will involve a survey of existing

¹ Volunteering Victoria Strategic Plan 2022-2025. <https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2022-25-VV-Strategic-Plan-cover.pdf>

² Volunteering Victoria CPD Evaluation Brief

volunteer managers' perceptions and attitudes regarding the program. The results of the survey study will be presented in a detailed second report.

Method

Current volunteer managers were sent an invitation by Volunteering Victoria to participate in a focus group discussion which would provide them with the opportunity to contribute to an evaluation of the CPD program. Potential participants were informed that the focus group would be conducted by researchers from the Monash University Business School.

In consultation with Volunteering Victoria, the Monash researchers – Professors Herman Tse and Kohyar Kiazad – developed a semi-structured set of questions regarding participants' perceptions of the objectives of the CPD and whether these were being met by the program. The questions also covered the learning experiences and skill development occurring as a result of involvement in the CPD. The researchers also sought to elicit participants' perceptions of the strengths of the CPD program and areas for improvement.

Prior to the focus group, participants were asked to complete a consent form and indicate their agreement to the session being recorded and this information being used in a report and published findings. Participants were assured that any material gained from the focus group would not identify them.

Five volunteer managers currently undertaking the CPD program participated in the focus group session which ran for 90 minutes. Two Volunteering Victoria team members were also in attendance. Professors Tse and Kiazad conducted the session which was recorded, transcribed, and analysed for key themes using a qualitative software package (NVivo 14). To protect the identity of those involved in the focus group, participant quotes used in this report have been labelled using a numerical system.

Findings

In this section of the report, the key themes identified in the focus group data will be presented. These include the CPD program supporting volunteer managers to maintain a focus of their professional development; the ways in which the program facilitated learning through connection with other volunteer managers; leading more effectively because of the CPD program; and volunteer managers recognising the value and professionalism of their roles. Each of these themes is explored in more detail below.

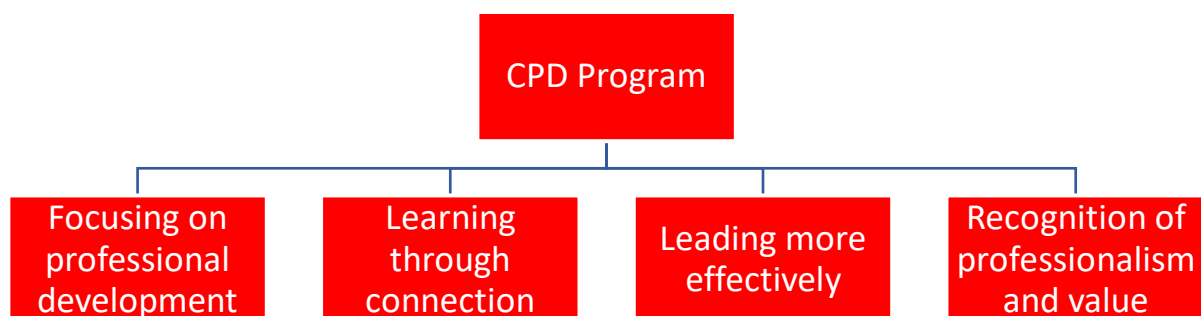


Figure 1: Key themes from focus group discussion

Theme 1: Focusing on professional development

Focus group participants reflected that the Volunteering Victoria CPD program helped volunteer managers maintain focus on their professional development. Participants spoke about the difficulties they typically encounter in developing their skills because of the high demands of their roles. Professional development was often pushed aside or left to be completed when there was spare time. They also noted that the organisations they worked for typically did not offer them professional development opportunities. Participants felt however, that the Volunteering Victoria CPD program filled a particular gap as it was created specifically for those in volunteer manager roles and addressed their specific learning needs.

I have never been so consistent about my professional development as I have now and I'm like 25 years in my working life or more . . . probably a lot more. But yeah, I've never been more consistent. It's always in my other jobs, no matter what level I was working at, it was always a thing that was put off. (Participant 5)

It [the CPD program] really helped me focus on, ". . . I've got to get this many points per month to meet my quota by the end of the year. What can I be doing this month to get my points?" So that might be making sure I'm reading the newsletter, looking around at what training was available, that sort of thing . . . it really helped focus me and keep that front of mind . . . (Participant 3)

The point system used in the CPD program was praised for motivating volunteer managers to focus on their development. Some participants used the word 'gamify' to describe the

point system and described the feeling of reward they got when accruing points towards their certification. Participants also liked the flexible way in which they could accrue points. Being able to engage in a wide range of professional development activities meant that volunteer managers could seek out what was most useful to them in their roles. The points system was applauded for not being prescriptive and for allowing volunteer managers to proactively seek out learning activities that meet their needs and interests.

... it has elements that lots of different people can identify with and actually achieve. So, it's not just something where you've got to do a whole lot of study, attend a whole lot of lectures and submit a whole lot of essays. There are small things that people can keep themselves up to date with the development. (Participant 4)

... it encourages not just going to 10 workshops but ... reading newsletters, listening to podcasts, participating in networking in other ways ... it's varied. (Participant 1)

Participants also appreciated how the CPD program accommodated a wide variety of learning styles and approaches. In addition to training workshops, points are awarded for networking activities, attending events, engaging with the National Standards for Volunteering, reading and/or writing articles, being mentored and other activities that are undertaken to advance volunteering within their organisations or the sector. They also appreciated that these activities could be undertaken both within Volunteering Victoria and within other organisations. Overall, the CPD program was described as helping volunteer managers to consistently maintain a focus on their own professional development.

Theme 2: Learning through connection

Another key theme of the focus group discussion was the value of connecting with other volunteer managers through the CPD program. Participants described how the emphasis on connection in the program reduced isolation, helped them build sector knowledge and created opportunities for meeting volunteer managers from different parts of Victoria. Each of these connection benefits will be discussed below.

Many of the activities undertaken to accrue points in the CPD program involve connecting with others in similar roles. Participants spoke about how volunteer managers often work in isolation and of the uniqueness of their positions as paid professionals managing unpaid

staff. Some participants noted that despite working in large organisations, there is no other volunteer department or volunteer manager, and it is difficult to find someone with whom to discuss volunteering issues. Being able to connect with and meet other volunteer managers at conferences, networking events and other group activities means that the CPD program makes them feel less isolated and more connected to the community of volunteer managers in the state.

... points are allocated just for attending a meeting. You don't have to present, you don't have to be the chairperson or whatever, because you may not have capacity for that, but simply attendance is valuable because, yeah, it's all of the connections we make when we're there. That's really valuable. (Participant 3)

I think that having a continual program that also recognises the fact that you need the support of people in similar roles in the industry is really, really great and important too. (Participant 2)

In addition to feeling more supported and less isolated, the CPD program activities that involve connection were commended for the way in which these expose participants to knowledge about the volunteering sector. Through conversations with other volunteer managers, participants described gaining access to and expanding their familiarity and awareness of the volunteering sector. Participants spoke about keeping up to date what's happening in the sector and learning about new ideas and strategies from other volunteer managers that they meet through the program.

... I think there are lots ... of people who generally work in isolation ... if they didn't do any professional development, their whole world would be ... looking after their own program and [they would] not get the exposure to hear about what else is going on in the sector and get ideas and get lots of value from the conversations and the workshops ... (Participant 4)

Because I think volunteer managers are often time-poor, they're not going to attend every event. But it meant that every event I attended, I met someone new, and I was getting a different perspective. It's really valuable ... it certainly extended my knowledge of the volunteer sector. (Participant 3)

... I was at a table with six other people. We all swapped email addresses. And then the number of times that I've got an email because someone's like, "Does anybody have a template for this thing?" And then everyone shoots through their templates, and I look and go, oh, that's really much more effective than the template I'm using, or I just put a call-out. Just that access to resources through people, just so, so valuable. And there's a real emphasis on that I feel in the CPD program is that sense of connection. (Participant 3)

Participants spoke about how valuable they found the emphasis on connection within the CPD program and of the multiplicity of perspectives they have access to when meeting other volunteer managers. Professional and personal relationships have been established and are maintained because of the program. Volunteer managers also spoke about the collaborative way in which they share information, strategies, and solutions for being more effective and efficient in their volunteer leadership roles.

Participants also appreciated that the CPD program involved volunteer managers from across the state of Victoria. This meant that the program provided opportunities to connect with volunteer managers outside of one's local area. Participants valued having a state body offer the CPD program because volunteer managers can share ideas, skills, and knowledge with a wide range of people.

... this central state-level body and particularly the CPD becomes more and more crucial as a point of contact, networking, skill development, knowledge, a place to go to find people and information. (Participant 5)

... we had contact from a volunteer leader ... they don't work on this side of town, they're from the other side of the city, but they need their CPD points ... they obviously need to attend a network meeting. So, they're coming along to our meeting next week. [It's a great] opportunity for them to meet some other people, volunteer coordinators and managers and bounce off their thoughts and ideas. (Participant 4)

Participants noted that having the opportunity to connect with other volunteer managers from across the state both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic was extremely helpful. Volunteer managers were able to support each other as they faced the challenges and changes presented by the pandemic. Volunteer managers shared information about what their organisations were experiencing which in turn, enabled them to set realistic projections about what they could expect in terms of volunteer numbers and engagement. The knowledge gained through connection provided valuable insights into broader patterns occurring across the sector.

. . . I think probably every organisation has seen a massive change in their volunteer body, whether that's an increase or a decrease or a change in the makeup of that. And I think for me, probably the most valuable thing in these last couple of years in particular has been the opportunity to talk to other people about where they're at . . . I'm fairly isolated . . . my role has been standalone. I don't have a team, I don't have anyone else in the organisation who knows anything professionally about volunteering . . . to be able to have conversations with other people in other organisations and say, "Oh, you're experiencing that thing too." (Participant 3)

Ironically, having to connect online during the pandemic for CPD program networking events meant that there was even more opportunity than normal to connect with volunteer managers who work and live far away. Being able to discuss the challenges faced in organisations across the state collectively meant that volunteer managers felt less alone and more equipped to deal with the challenges presented by COVID-19 to the volunteering sector.

In Volunteering Victoria's CPD program, volunteer managers can accrue points by being a mentee or a mentor to another volunteer manager. This component of the program was highly valued by participants. Being a mentee for example, provided opportunities to regularly meet with a more experienced colleague who was able to guide, inform and advise.

. . . the mentoring relationship was really important, so we met a number of times with our mentor over the course of the year . . . The mentoring was hugely important. Being able to talk to a more experienced volunteer manager and to run stuff past her and to produce things, and she was happy to have a look over drafts of stuff, was hugely beneficial. (Participant 3)

Overall, the Volunteering Victoria CPD program was seen as providing a range of opportunities for participants to connect with other volunteer managers and this component of the program is highly valued by participants. The cross-fertilisation of sector knowledge, the sharing of information and strategies and the opportunity to meet with those undertaking similar roles provide both an antidote to the isolation often experienced by volunteer managers and helped participants expand their KSAs.

Theme 3: Leading more effectively

Throughout the focus group, participants spoke of the ways in which the CPD program helped them to lead more effectively, particularly through advocacy. Participants described how their increased confidence and increased knowledge of the sector enabled them to be more proactive about advocating for volunteering within their organisations. Advocacy activities discussed by participants included sharing information with senior staff and colleagues regarding the role that volunteering can play, steering the direction of their volunteering programs and arguing for an organisation's further investment in volunteering.

Getting organisations to value volunteering and why it's worth investing in volunteering. I love the State of Volunteering Report . . . the number of times I used that to go to my organisation and say, "Hey, here's why we invest in volunteering because look at these hard numbers." That sort of stuff's really valuable, to be able to say to the people who are paying the bills, this is worth investing money and time and resources into is so valuable. (Participant 3)

. . . I work in an organisation that hasn't ever had a volunteer coordinator before . . . this big old health organisation which is doing all kinds of great stuff but has no idea about volunteers beyond people who knit and fundraise . . . [the CPD] gives you a platform to advocate within the organisation around the skills involved in managing, but also the diversity I think of what volunteering is and what's involved with nurturing it and making sure it reaches its full potential within the organisation . . . it also is an important way of . . . trying to nuance the understanding of volunteering within the organisation. If people don't think about it and if organisations don't think about it, it's a pretty flat two-dimensional picture of volunteering. (Participant 5)

Participant 5 above, notes that she has been challenging her organisation to think about the multiple ways in which volunteers could be utilised and of expanding people's understanding of what organisations could achieve through its volunteer workforce. Participant 3 now feels more confident about presenting a case about the value of investing time and resources into supporting volunteering within her organisation. Another participant spoke about how the CPD program legitimises the role of volunteer manager and how this encourages her to advocate for volunteering within her organisation.

Other participants spoke of how volunteers often exist outside of an organisation's people management systems. The CPD program, however, supports volunteer managers to advocate for processes that enhance the volunteering experience and to negotiate changes or introduce processes that are in line with good personnel management practices. The CPD program also provides volunteer managers with information on managing volunteers which in turn, helps volunteer managers educate other paid staff within the organisation on how to best to work with volunteers.

... my biggest challenge, I think, has been how do I educate staff, it's not just management, but just even anybody, staff. I work in a big organisation ... Lots of people are interested in having volunteers as part of their programs and working on ways of incorporating volunteering within various aspects, which is great. But I think there's some magical thinking that seems to go on that a volunteer just sort of magically turns up and magically does stuff and magically knows what to do. (Participant 5)

Participant 5 above, has observed that onboarding processes for volunteers are often inadequate in her organisation. While induction processes are available for paid staff, volunteers are sometimes left up to themselves to find their way around. As a volunteer manager undertaking the CPD program, she now feels more confident about advocating for processes, such as induction, to better support volunteers and improve volunteering outcomes for the organisation.

Focus group participants also spoke about becoming more strategic in their roles because of the Volunteering Victoria CPD program. As described above, many of the activities undertaken as part of the CPD program enable volunteer managers to gain a 'big picture' or wider awareness of what is happening across the sector. This information can then be used to think more strategically about volunteering within an organisation.

... both that professional reading I was doing, but also that networking was so valuable ... in creating strategies. So how do we approach volunteering in this post-COVID era? How do we think about how we recruit, but also how do we think about how we offer positions of volunteering? Maybe we need to think differently about that ... that strategic stuff is hugely important, and I could not have got that to the extent that I did without the CPD program. (Participant 3)

The CPD program creates an environment where volunteer managers are regularly exposed to information about the sector through conversations, presentations, mentoring and reading which all positively contribute to volunteer managers being able to have important conversations within their organisations about volunteering.

Theme 4: Recognising one's professionalism and value

A key outcome for CPD program participants is recognising that the work they do is important and of value to their organisations. Volunteer managers spoke of coming to understand, through involvement in the program, the KSAs they already have. They described feeling validated by the program for their professionalism. Participants spoke about how the program encourages you to not take your skills for granted and to appreciate that managing volunteers involves specific knowledge and competencies.

... having programs like the CPD program and Volunteering Victoria as a whole, just made it feel to me like this is real work. So, it really gave me a sense of the work I do is real. The work I do is important. It is worth investing in both from my personal time, but from the organisation's perspective as well. (Participant 3)

... You do this big picture think about the whole year and what was important ... And it's actually a really good process ... because again, it's about valuing what you've done and realising the complexity ... of the work that you've been doing ... The reflective piece makes you think about it in a more complex way, what you've been doing ... I think it's a really powerful little tool. (Participant 5)

The reflection activity completed at the end of the CPD program, where volunteer managers are asked to reflect on their volunteering leadership, was described as particularly effective in supporting volunteer managers to value themselves and the work that they do. Participants described this activity as empowering because it encourages them to take a broad overview of their achievements which in turn, helps them realise the complex nature of their roles. Other participants spoke about how the formal certification of 'Professional Leader of Volunteers' received at the end of the program also contributes to a sense of value and professionalism.

Recommendations for program improvements

In the previous section, participants identified the components of the program that they found valuable and positive. The following section of the report presents ideas and suggestions for improvements to Volunteering Victoria's CPD program offered by the participants during the focus group session. Four main suggestions were offered by participants and are discussed below.

1: More advanced learning activities for experienced volunteer managers

Participants in the focus group spoke about there being a need for learning activities targeted at those who have been in volunteer manager positions for a long time. Participants noted that those who are more experienced volunteer managers may want to engage in activities that are more challenging. They also suggested that some experienced volunteer managers may be attending workshops to accrue points rather than attending activities where new learning occurs.

... I don't even know that it would necessarily be years in the sector, but it might be just beginner, intermediate, advanced or whatever, where you might put yourself, because someone might have come in and out of the sector or someone might have worked in a very small organisation and they might've been there a long time, but really feel that there's still a lot of basic information they need because they haven't had exposure to a program like this. (Participant 3)

. . . I feel there's definitely been enough basic workshops for a new volunteer leader or someone who's new to the sector to address the standards and managing volunteers. . . I think that could be a little bit of a gap there, I think, for more long-term volunteer managers. I'm seeing some heads nods, so maybe some other people feel that same way. (Participant 4)

Other participants noted that there is wide variation in the volunteer manager position. Some may work in very small organisations while others in large organisation. Some volunteer managers are responsible for managing other volunteer managers while others work alone. Volunteer managers may also leave and return to the sector at different times. While there is a need for basic information for all volunteer managers, providing more advanced learning opportunities for those with more experience may address a gap in the program.

2: Expanding what counts as program points

While the CPD program offers many types of activities that can be counted as points, focus group participants suggested that this could be extended. Participants noted that they are often involved in or undertake training that is not directly related to volunteering, but which helps them in their volunteer manager role. This included mental health first aid courses, OHS training and marketing workshops. Participants spoke of wanting to have these activities acknowledged by the CPD program and valued for supporting their professional development.

I did a workshop which the council was offering about managing challenging customers. . . it was definitely part of a skillset required because we do face-to-face volunteer discussions and interviews. Obviously, in a lot of organisations managing conflict and customers is quite common. So, we put in a request to say, "Could that be accredited?" (Participant 4)

Some participants described feeling confident about approaching Volunteering Victoria and asking if activities currently not recognised by the CPD program can count towards points. Typically, they have received a positive response to this query. They acknowledged however, that others may not be so forthcoming or even know that they could do this. This then results in them participating in relevant and useful professional development activities but not having these counted as points.

3: Increasing organisational support for leaders of volunteers

Focus group participants described different organisational contexts within which they work. Some characterised their organisations and direct line managers as being very supportive of their role and appreciative of the value they bring to the organisation. Others however, described working in environments where they felt that they were undervalued by management and spoke about the struggles they face in gaining support for their work and the volunteers they lead.

If I could identify any gap, and this is very much based on the organisations I've been involved in, it would be providing opportunities for my direct line managers to be involved . . . the hardest part of my job was not the volunteers, and it was not the staff, it was management, always. Justifying my existence was the hardest part of my job.
(Participant 3)

Participants were unsure of the types of activities that could be put in place to help organisations and managers become more aware of what volunteer managers do, the value of their roles and the size and impact of the volunteering sector on organisations and the community. Participant 3 above, notes that the hardest part of her job has been to justify her position with management. Another participant noted that while managers are invited to alumni face-to-face events, they rarely attend because of demanding schedules. Participants wanted the CPD program to consider ways in which the profile of volunteer managers could be lifted to increase recognition of their role.

4: Simplifying the point logging system

Some participants characterised the system used to log points as still 'a bit complicated'. There was acknowledgement and gratefulness that the system had been improved but navigating the system still presented challenges for some. Coding or finding the categories to which your activities belong created difficulties for some participants.

. . . if you're like me, you're trying to update your points at seven o'clock at night or something and you can't find the little category and it's all too hard . . . if you're not seeing it and it's not easily recorded . . . then maybe that's a deterrent and people are doing something else instead. (Participant 4)

One participant spoke about not being able to go back into the system to edit your entries if you have made a mistake. Others spoke about leaving their logging of points until the end of the year and doing it in bulk because of the lack of ease of logging points. A program representative in the focus group stated that she would like program participants to have access to the system via their mobile phones to enhance the ease in which they can log their points.

Discussion

This report has presented the findings of a focus group session held with five volunteer managers currently enrolled in the CPD program at Volunteering Victoria. While the single session and small number of participants make it difficult to extrapolate from the findings, the detail captured in the discussion provides some information about what volunteer managers value about the program, what outcomes they've seen because of their participation and what improvements could be made to increase the impact of the program. These findings, therefore, contribute to the broader evaluation of the program currently being undertaken.

Volunteering Victoria aims to create capacity and development pathways for those in volunteer leadership positions. The focus group findings suggest that this goal has been achieved by the CPD program. Volunteer managers find the CPD program practical, relevant, and achievable despite often working in busy roles. The point system, the variety of activities one can undertake and the appreciation for different learning styles contribute to those participating being able to commit to and focus on their own professional development.

The strong emphasis on networking, connecting and collaboration within the CPD program provides ample opportunities for those who often work alone. Connected to a community of other volunteer managers, knowledge sharing and building is seen as one of the key outcomes of the program. This in turn, contributes to volunteer managers feeling more effective in their leadership roles. They are not only able to manage volunteers but also feel more skilled about advocating for and being more strategic about volunteering within their organisations. Program participants feel more empowered to argue for the worth of volunteers and highlight the contribution they make to organisations.

This report has found that the CPD program contributes to volunteer managers recognising and valuing the skills, knowledge, and abilities they bring to their roles as leaders of volunteers. Volunteer managers occupy the unique position of being paid to manage unpaid workers and the CPD program supports them to validate and acknowledge the professionalism required of their positions. The findings, however, suggest that being

recognised by others, particularly by managers and organisations, for the distinct skill set volunteer managers have remains a challenge.

The results from the focus group indicate that the Volunteering Victoria CPD program aligns with the developmental needs and interests of Victorian volunteer managers. The program's emphasis on connection, collaboration and knowledge sharing is valued and enjoyed by volunteer managers. These results will now be used to guide the development of a larger survey study of current and existing volunteer managers. The outcomes of both studies will then be used to provide evidence-based and practical recommendations to enhance the learning outcomes and effectiveness of Volunteering Victoria's CPD program.