MAKING YOUR M&E FRAMEWORK MORE INCLUSIVE

HOW SIMPLE DATA CAN IDENTIFY AND BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

BALLARAT FOUNDATION
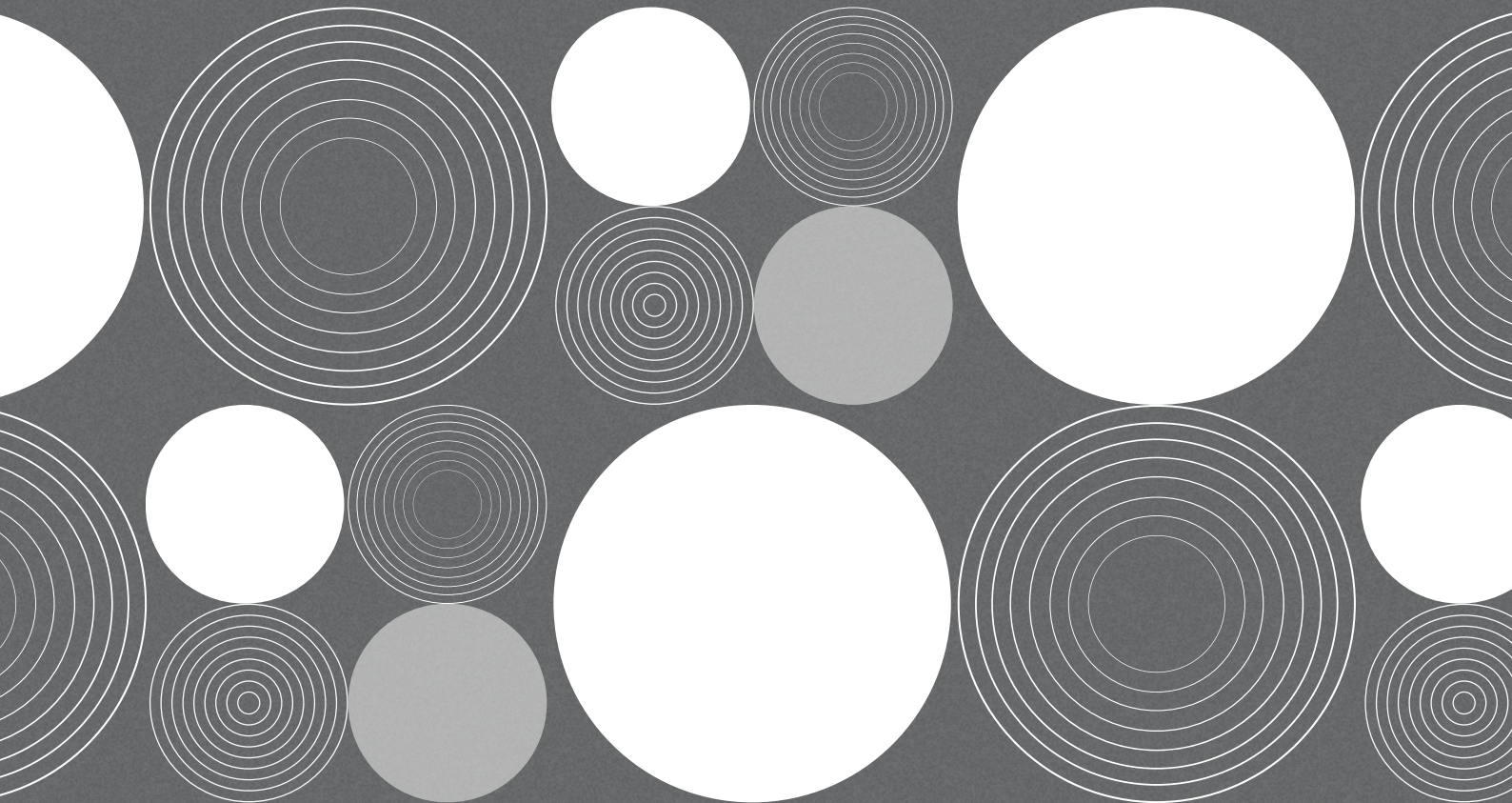
INTRODUCTION

Many volunteer-involved organisations (VIOs) want to attract more diverse, engaged, and long-term volunteers but barriers often get in the way. These might be practical (like transport or time), systemic (like inclusion or accessibility), or cultural (like not feeling welcome or represented). By adjusting your monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework and collecting the right data, VIOs can better understand:

WHO ? is and isn't engaging as a volunteer

WHAT ? is helping people get involved

WHAT ? is unintentionally excluding them

M&E isn't just about numbers but also learning how to make volunteering more inclusive, accessible and meaningful.

This practical guide will help volunteer organisations understand how measurement tools can be adjusted to help identify and breakdown barriers to volunteering. M&E doesn't need to be complicated. This guide suggests the use of simple tools to collect the right data.
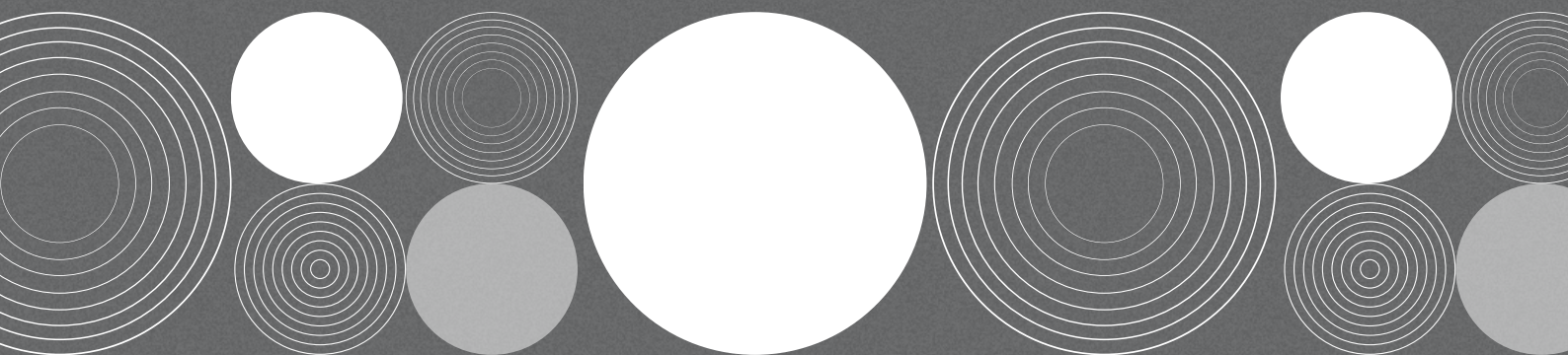
1 DEFINE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE

Start by identifying your goal around inclusive volunteering. Ask:

WHAT?   kind of volunteering experience do we want to offer?

WHO?   do we want to include that might be missing now?

WHAT?   barriers do you think exist?

Once you have done this, map it using a simple logic model:

IINPUTS: what inputs would you need to materialise this goal (time, people, resources)?
ACTIVITIES: what activities would you need to do for this to occur?
OUTPUTS: what would the expected tangible outputs be (volunteer hours, trainings undertaken)?
OUTCOMES: will these activities and outputs lead to the expected outcome of increased inclusion and better diversity?

Keep working the logic until you feel the planned activities would lead to the expected outcome.

EXAMPLE:

A sports club wanted more young women to volunteer as coaches. Their desired outcome was to remove gender-based barriers and increase female participation. After doing their logic modelling they planned a number of new activities as part of their work plan:
- targeted outreach and promotion to young women,
- information sessions in schools targeting women
- offered subsidies to women for coaching accreditation
- created a female-only training group
- did surveys to find out what women needed.

This lead to women feeling safe and welcomed and resulted in an increase of three women coaches in the club.
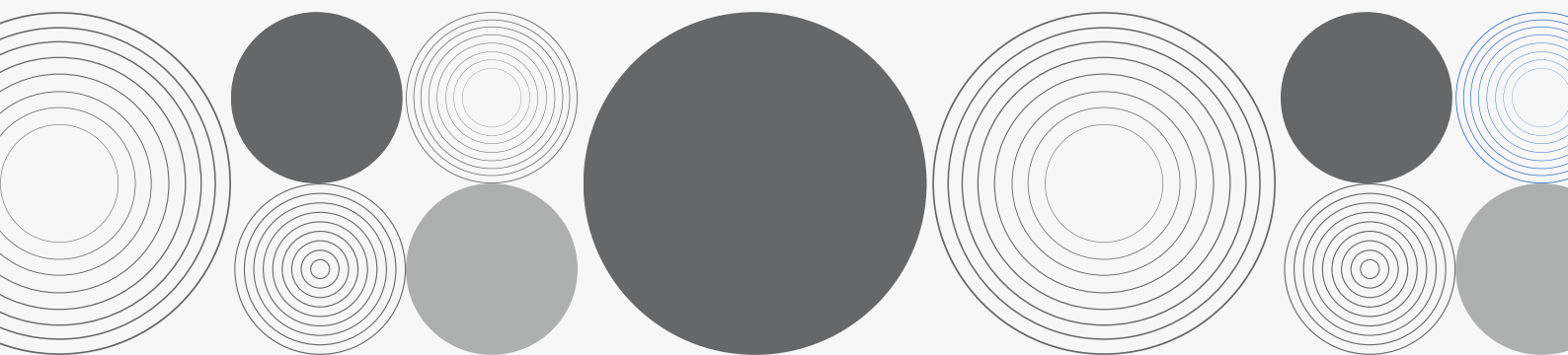
2 DECIDE WHAT TO MEASURE

Focus on data that tells you about *barriers and enablers.* This can include:

WHO?   is volunteering (age, background, location etc)

WHY?   people start - and stop- volunteering

HOW?   volunteers experience inclusion, access, and support in your organisation

Use a mix of:

QUANTITATIVE data: e.g. numbers of volunteers from underrepresented groups, attendance at training etc

QUALITATIVE data: e.g. feedback about feeling welcome, stories about access challenges etc

EXAMPLE:

A VIO in Ballarat introduced a simple question in their volunteer application form: "What might make it hard for you to volunteer with us?" By tracking this data they realised that access to public transport to the facility was difficult. After much thought the VIO arranged a car sharing roster for those volunteers with transport difficulties.
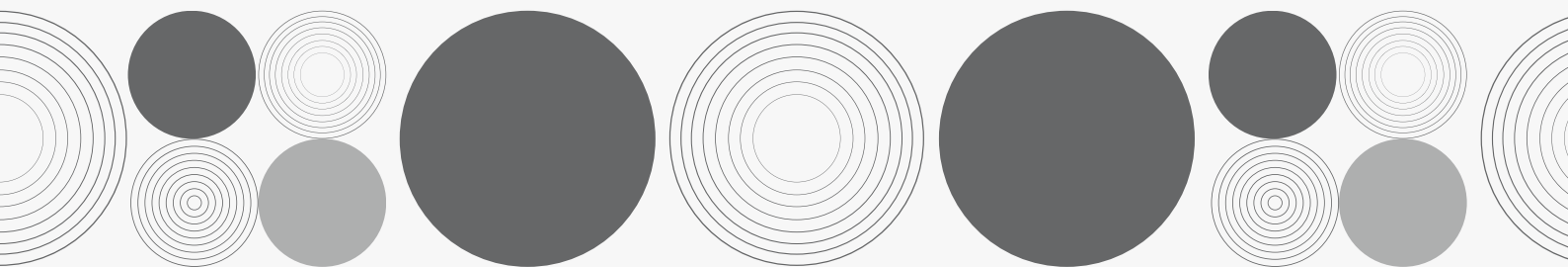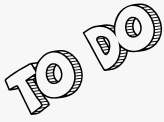
3 COLLECT MEANINGFUL DATA, SIMPLY

You don't need complex systems—start with small, thoughtful steps:

TO DO

- Include demographic questions in application forms (optional and respectful)

TO DO

- Run short surveys or exit interviews with questions on barriers
- Use suggestion boxes, check-in chats, or feedback story-telling
- Ask volunteers about their barriers and needs regularly

Make sure:

- People know why you're collecting data (to improve access and inclusion)
- Responses are anonymous or confidential
- You actually use what you learn

EXAMPLE:

A men's shed surveyed their inactive volunteers. They found that some of these volunteers used walkers and couldn't easily navigate the men's shed gardens used to cook communal meals. The men's shed sought a grant to put in concrete paths and this brought several volunteers with accessibility barriers back.

4 USE THE INSIGHTS TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

Once you have data, act on it. Use it to:

TO DO
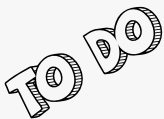
- Adjust recruitment and support strategies
- Improve communication and flexibility
- Change policies that unintentionally exclude people
- Share success stories about inclusion

EXAMPLE:

A neighbourhood house found that single mothers wanted to volunteer but couldn't commit to fixed times. They introduced 'micro-volunteering' tasks that could be done from home or casually, and saw a rise in participation.
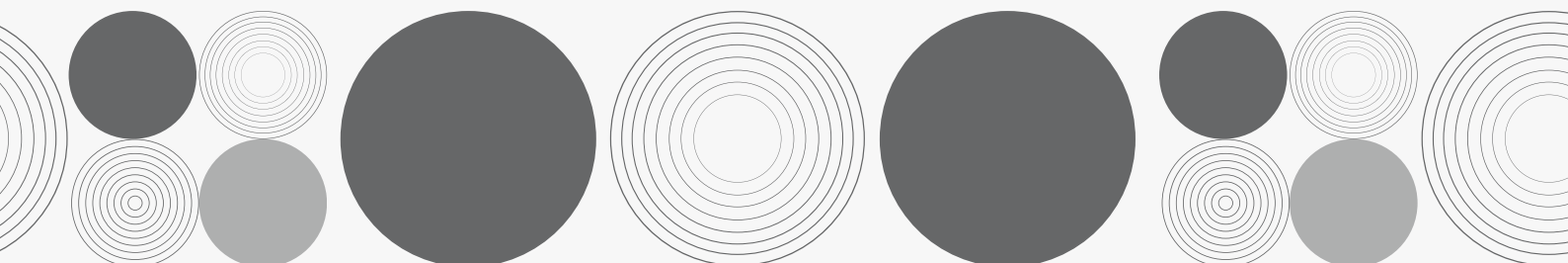
5 KEEP LISTENING AND IMPROVING

Creating inclusive volunteer pathways is ongoing. Keep your measurement light but regular:

WHO ? stays involved over time and find out why

**HOW ?** easy was it for new volunteers to join. Make sure you ask this

WHEN ? will you review and reflect on inclusion and diversity. Annually is a good measure

EXAMPLE:

A VIO sends out a one-question survey each year to their volunteers: "What could we have done to make volunteering easier or more welcoming for you?" Most data pointed to the on-boarding process and they were able to make some easy-fix changes.

CONCLUSION

Measuring your impact can help reveal what's really working and what's getting in the way. With even small efforts, data becomes a powerful tool to make volunteering open and accessible to all.
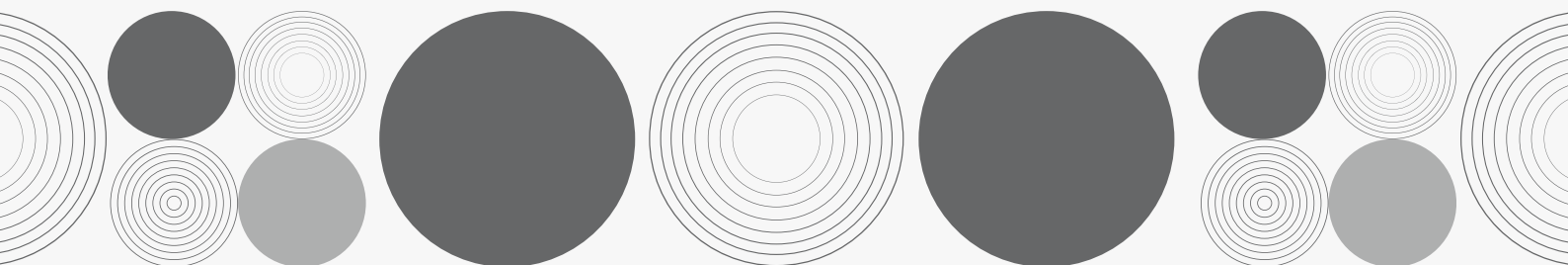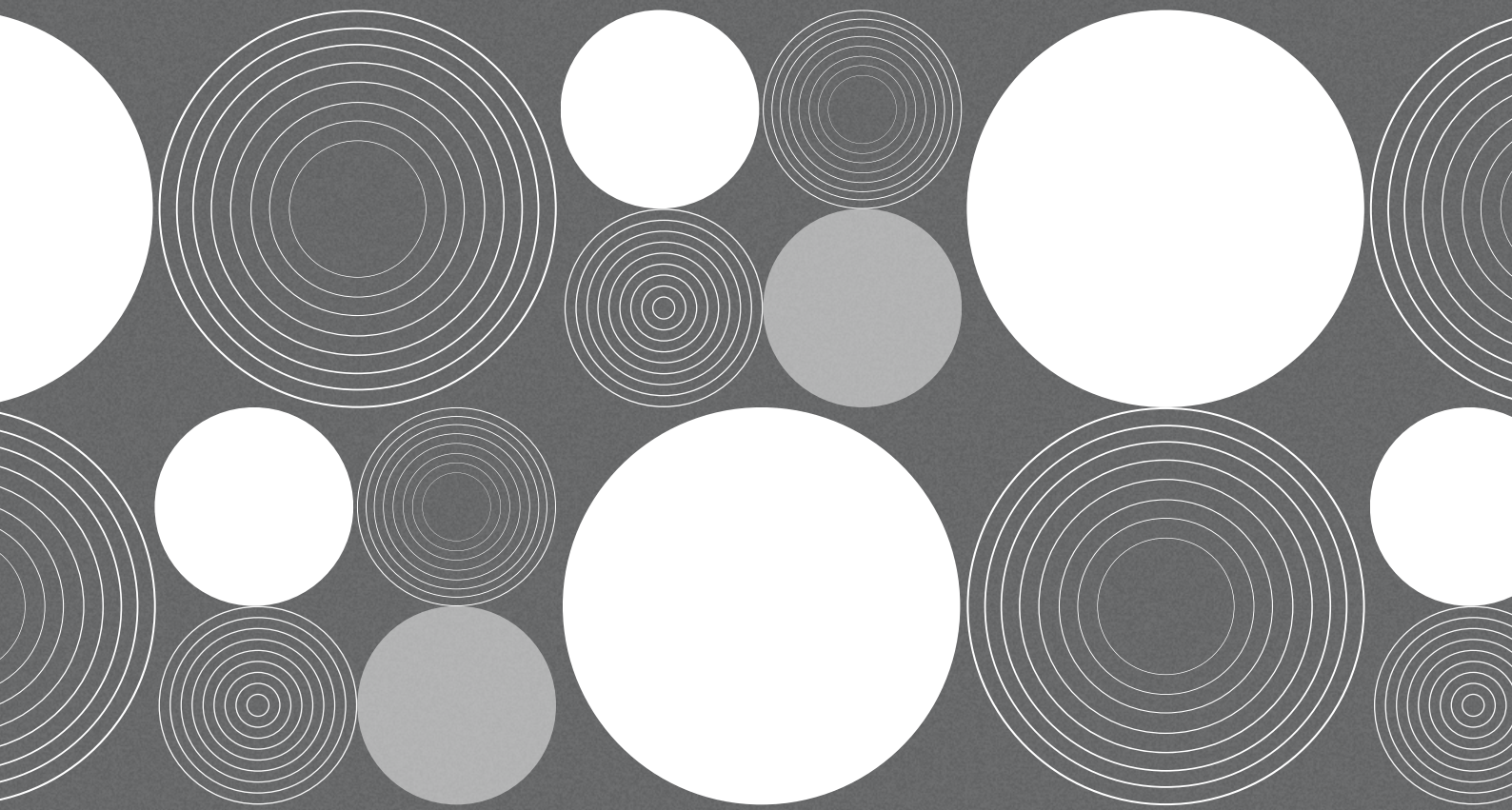
The Ballarat Foundation acknowledges the Wadawurrung people, the traditional owners of the lands and waterways in our region. We recognise their diversity, resilience, and the ongoing place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold in our communities.

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