

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: Support for practitioners

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians across all the lands on which we live and work, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise that these lands and waters have always been places of teaching, research and learning.

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Purpose of this document

This document is a companion to the Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint Strategic Framework (The Strategic Framework) and has been designed to support activities associated with the Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint Interim Action Plan[†] (The Interim Action Plan). Its aim is to provide a starting point for practitioners in connecting their organisational activities to the emergency management (EM) ecosystem and the different players and contexts it contains. The EM volunteering sector is now at a crossroads. EM organisations must choose to innovate and transform to accommodate these systemic needs or face the prospect of greatly reduced capacity and capability.

Background of The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint

The *Emergency management volunteering: more than just words* research project was funded by Natural Hazards Research Australia (NHRA) and undertaken by Victoria University (VU) in collaboration with the Australian and New Zealand Council for fire and emergency services (AFAC). Volunteering Management Technical Group (VMTG) and representatives from community and volunteering organisations.

This project was conceived with a clear goal in mind – to move the emergency management (EM) sector beyond discussing challenges for EM volunteering and the need for change in the sector, into practical, tangible action that addresses long-standing challenges.

The project's goal was to undertake a collaborative and iterative process that:

- > Reframes and reimagines historical EM volunteering challenges and opportunities in different ways to reveal new kinds of solutions.
- > Identifies and undertakes action research that supports volunteers and organisations to engage with, and learn from, many different perspectives and experiences, and to create opportunities to influence the sector as it moves toward investing in new, innovative and sustainable approaches.
- > Develops an Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint in which living documents can be adapted to changing circumstances and needs. Their purpose is to guide and support strategic, sector-wide collaborative action that supports EM volunteers (the people), volunteering (the activities), and volunteerism (the culture).

The Blueprint (Figure 1, overleaf) focuses on the state emergency services (SES) and state and territory fire services (Fire Services) in Australia and New Zealand and is comprised of 3 parts. These provide the evidence and structure needed to achieve the outcome of 'a sustainable and inclusive volunteering sector where volunteers are empowered, appreciated and valued'. The different components of The Blueprint link the theoretical evidence base, strategy and action to provide the connections and cohesion needed between these areas.

Key documents within The Blueprint are:

- > The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: The Strategic Framework (The Strategic Framework), and
- > The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: Interim Action Plan (The Interim Action Plan).

The VMTG is the champion for The Blueprint and steward of The Strategic Framework and The Interim Action Plan. As a living document, The Interim Action Plan can be adapted as required by the VMTG, other AFAC collaboration groups and individual EM organisations. Over time, this document can also support practitioners involved in progressing the sustainable volunteering agenda throughout the EM volunteering ecosystem.

[†] If you are seeking information regarding The Interim Action Plan, please contact your VMTG representative or AFAC.



The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint – more than just words

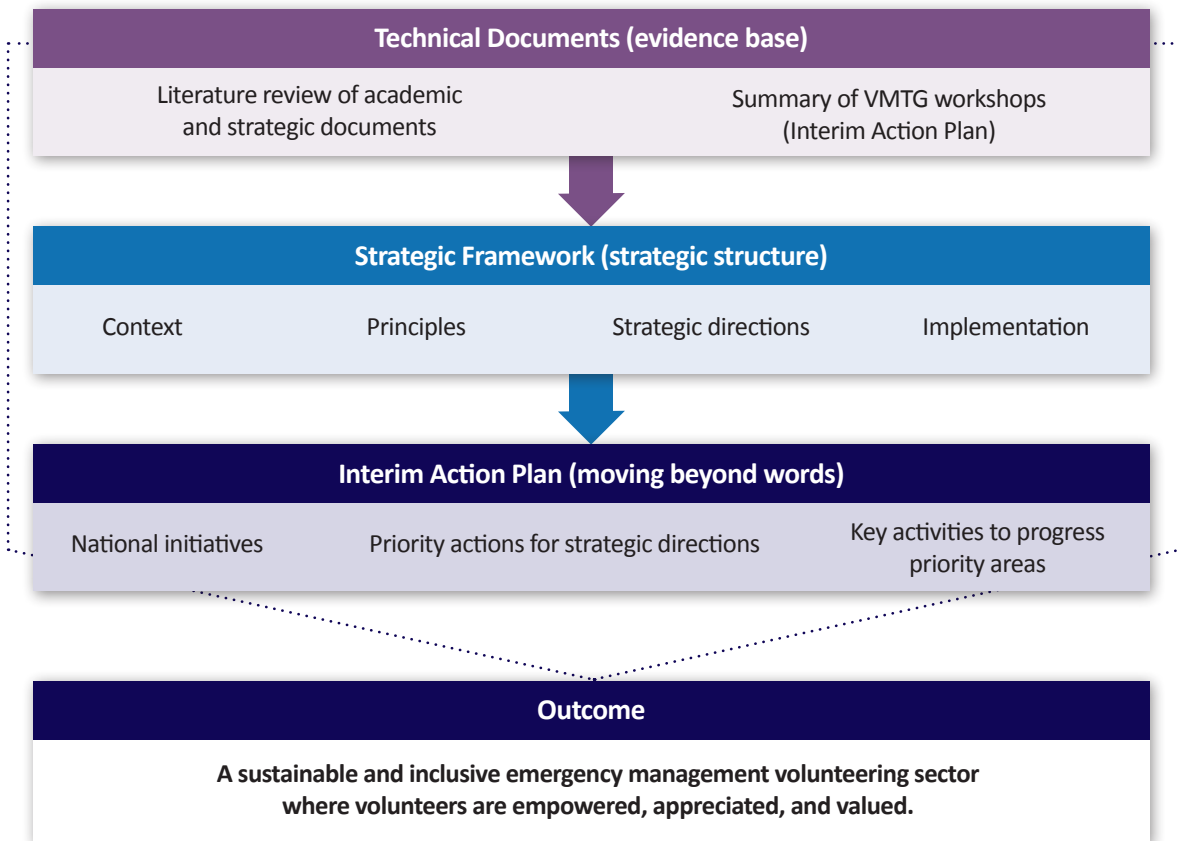


FIGURE 1: THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING BLUEPRINT

Key documents in The Blueprint for organisations

The Strategic Framework (Figure 2, overleaf) and The Interim Action Plan are designed to bring together strategic and organisational agendas as a foundation to support sector-wide action. As the issues to be addressed are entrenched and complex, they require long-term collaborative efforts that support organisational and social change.

There is currently a lack of enabling infrastructure to support actions at a national level and The Strategic Framework and The Interim Action Plan provide a starting point for sector-wide development of practical actions through the AFAC Collaboration Model.

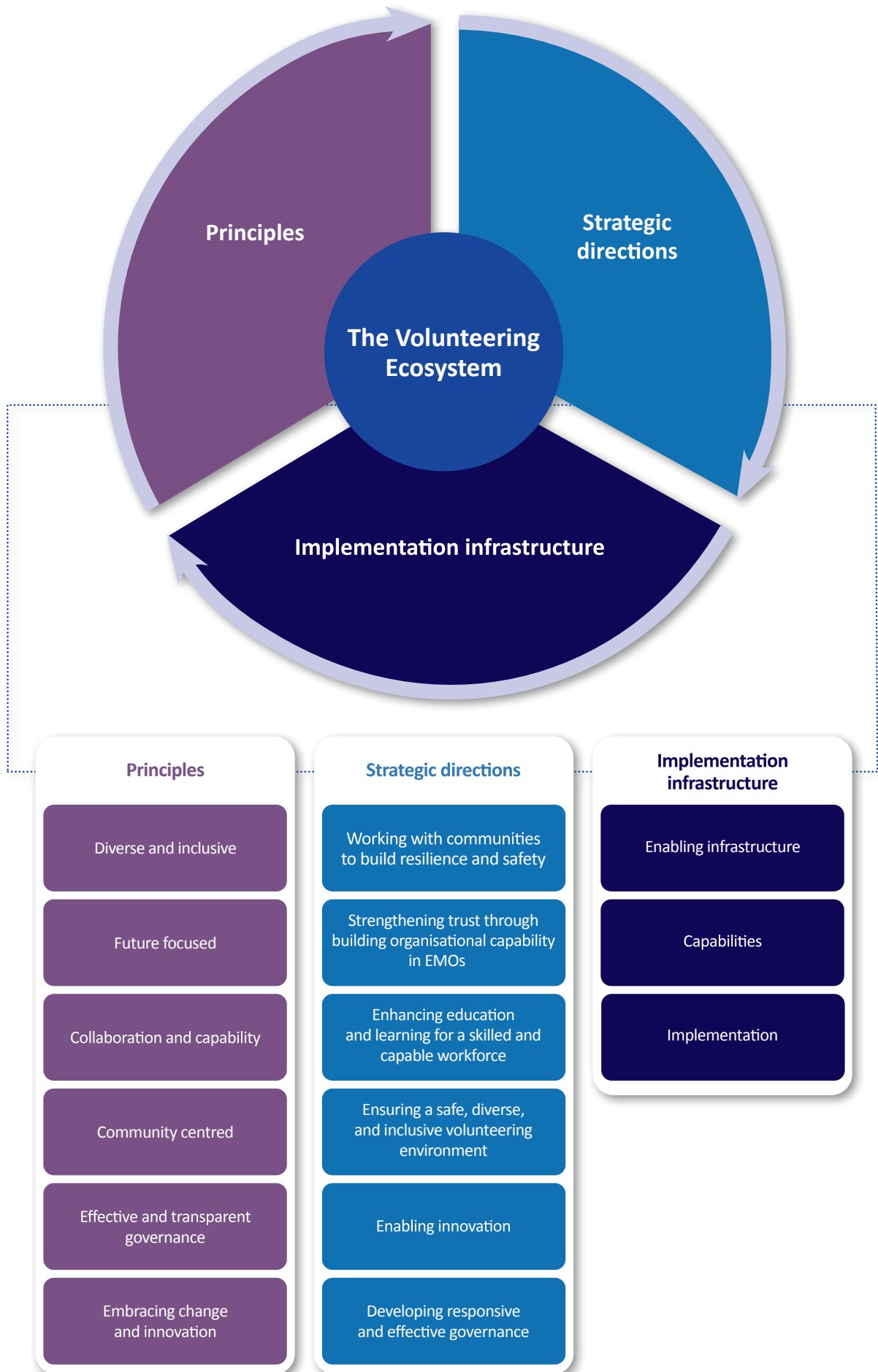


FIGURE 2: THE SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



The Strategic Framework is designed to assist sector-wide action by:

- > enabling change and building infrastructure nationally to better support volunteers and sustain volunteering (see 'Enabling infrastructure' on page 15)
- > ensuring that actions are focused and being managed for the longer term
- > supporting organisations to think beyond themselves and build new relationships with other teams, organisations, and the community to support sector-wide action, and
- > increasing the visibility of the progress being made by localised programs at a national level.

The Strategic Framework does this by providing:

- > an overarching framework designed to enable and guide sector-wide planning and implementation of activities that work towards improved support for volunteers that makes the value of volunteering visible
- > a focus for ongoing activities through 6 strategic directions aligned with current EM organisational sector priorities to support visibility, leveraging and program coordination
- > principles to guide how work should be undertaken, and
- > guidance and tools to assist organisations understand key considerations for implementation.

The Interim Action Plan is designed to support the VMTG's annual planning activities. It does this through 2 long-term key actions, and by mapping the potential tasks associated with each action over an 18-month period. Its purpose is to ensure that activities remain focused and achievable. It does this by supporting the VMTG to:

- > assess areas of focus and identify priority actions
- > ascertain what tasks and resources need to be developed first to support ongoing actions, and
- > identify potential owners and/or collaborators needed to support or participate in these actions.

The key focus areas for The Interim Action Plan are:

- > Enhancing and building on the current national education curricula to support volunteering skills pathways focusing on future capabilities needs and skills transferability.
- > A national initiative to assist organisations incorporate emergent and innovative models of volunteering and understanding where and how they can be applied across the prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (PPRR) spectrum.

These areas have been determined by the VMTG through a consensus process facilitated by the VU team.

The actions needed to take the sector forward need to occur concurrently at the community, policy, and organisational levels. As a result, some priorities may extend beyond the immediate focus of The Interim Action Plan as organisations will have different levels of maturity. While some organisations may lead, others may need to develop specific areas internally to enable ongoing innovation and education and learning.



Top tips for implementing The Strategic Framework's actions

- > **Understand the context** – the people you wish to communicate or engage with, and how they communicate.
- > **Make sure you are prepared** and have the necessary structures to ensure respectful interactions, and that these structures support active collaboration.
- > **Set clear expectations** around your activity so people understand what you want to achieve and how they can actively participate.
- > **Acknowledge issues** others may raise respectfully but keep the focus on key tasks and how they can be achieved.
- > **Ensure shared understandings are achieved** by reflecting participants' intentions back to them and allowing people to contribute to and shape activities with you.
- > **Be honest about what you can achieve**, what you can't, and the reasons why.
- > **Ensure active listening and negotiation** across the group and with your own interactions. Be aware of verbal and nonverbal cues, particularly with diverse cohorts.
- > **Encourage creative responses** as this empowers people to think beyond what they know and discover new possibilities.
- > **Don't overload people** with too much information at one time. Some of the ways of thinking and ideas will be new for participants, which means that they may need to be reiterated for them to be fully understood and accepted.
- > **Allocate enough time** up front for discussions, as rushing into action without a clear understanding can be counterproductive.
- > **Use short- and long-term thinking** to look at what you can do now and how this will contribute to the sustainable volunteering agenda in the longer term.
- > **Accommodate discomfort** as this will be part of the process as change is needed to take the sector forward.
- > **Make sustainable volunteering a standard agenda item** for your regular meetings
- > **Connect** with your organisation's VMTG member.



Unpacking The Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework focuses on supporting sector-wide action. A key aspect is developing the knowledge, systems, culture and environments within institutions and organisations needed to enhance the volunteering experience. This requires extensive collaboration and clarity around the different roles that individuals, teams, organisations and institutions can play. This is important, as it determines who can undertake and who is responsible for actions.

Institutions

Different institutions have different roles in relation to The Strategic Framework (Table 1). The information outlined in this table can assist you in understanding where you have agency to act and where you will need to collaborate or leverage other institutional areas.

TABLE 1: INDICATIVE INSTITUTIONAL ROLES

Institutions	Roles in relation to The Strategic Framework
Federal government	Funding provision, policy development, legislative frameworks, national oversight and coordination, and reporting on National Emergency Management Agency of Australia (NEMA) volunteering initiatives.
AFAC VMTG	Representing volunteering within EM organisations on behalf of AFAC. Facilitating and coordinating interjurisdictional collaborative actions, knowledge sharing, and reporting through AFAC. Stewardship of The Blueprint documents and The Interim Action Plan. Communication and, where appropriate, coordination with federal government agencies.
State government and agencies	Development and delivery of organisational activities and policy in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders including the community and volunteers. Knowledge sharing and capability building. State level coordination, legislative frameworks relating to EM, operational funding, and monitoring and evaluation of activities.
Volunteering advocacy bodies/ committees	Ensuring volunteers' voices and their concerns and needs are considered as part of decision-making processes. Supporting communication of The Blueprint's activities and outcomes throughout their membership.
Non-government organisations (NGOs) and not-for-profit organisations (NFPs), including boundary organisations and social enterprises at the community scale	Advising into and collaborating with agencies and communities to enable activities associated with The Blueprint.
Community	Advising and informing policy and programs and development and decision making. Source of volunteers, community-based volunteer support and, at times, coordination of activities. Collaboration with agencies and governments where relevant to deliver activities.



Organisational and community member roles

Roles within different levels of EM organisations (EMOs) and within communities vary widely (Table 2). Understanding these differences can assist you in defining the type of actions needed and who is best placed to undertake the tasks associated with these. Types of actions can include opportunities to:

- > advocate
- > collaborate
- > enable
- > influence
- > inform
- > lead, and
- > support.

TABLE 2: INDICATIVE ROLES OF ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Role	Activities in relation to The Blueprint
Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Endorsement, approval, accountability for and support of overarching activities and strategic directions. > Overarching resource allocation. > Advocating for action with other upper-level leaders, stakeholders, and funding bodies to support a whole-of-sector approach. > Leadership and behaviours – setting the tone, direction and expectations for organisations. > Accountability for a safe and inclusive working environment for volunteers. > Oversight of outcomes and progress.
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Approval, responsibility for and support of the development and implementation activities. > Listening to volunteers and advocating for their needs and ideas. > Development of actions with volunteers. > Ensuring resourcing of actions. > Responsibility for provision of a safe and inclusive working environment. > Appropriate project management, monitoring and evaluation and governance. > Coordination, engagement, and collaboration of key stakeholders internally and externally.
Employees (paid)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Working collaboratively with volunteers to deliver actions. > Listening to volunteers' concerns and ideas. > Providing insight, feedback, and ideas that enhance the volunteering experience and support the sustainability of volunteers.
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Providing insights and ideas from their lived experience as volunteers and community members. > Collaborating with organisations to develop actions. > Identifying and advocating for their needs with their managers. > Connecting with their community and sharing intelligence about their community with organisations.
Community members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Leadership within communities. > Advise, provide insights and collaborate with organisations. > Supporting volunteers through fundraising and advocating for community needs that support the sustainability of volunteering and build resilience.



Understanding your volunteering context

EM volunteers are part of the community they serve, so understanding your volunteering context by identifying specific influences, needs and opportunities is important. Key to understanding your volunteering context is knowing:

- > the organisational context in which the volunteers work
- > the community context in which they live and work, and
- > the intersections between these 2 contexts.

To determine what priority actions are needed, how they need to be undertaken, and who needs to be involved, identify:

- > what capabilities, projects and resources do you already have that relate to volunteering
- > where there are opportunities for development by addressing specific areas of need, and
- > who can help support and participate in proposed activities.

Understanding your organisational context

Volunteering activities involve multiple areas within organisations beyond the human resources department, and connecting with other areas can support a more holistic organisational overview. Relevant areas for volunteering include:

- > leadership and management
- > communication and marketing
- > data and knowledge management
- > governance
- > IT and digital technologies
- > skills and capabilities, and
- > training and education.

Identify up front who you might need to include in your planning and implementation stages to start to build the relationships and understandings you need to implement and sustain your activities.

Understanding the community context

As volunteers are drawn from the community, it is particularly important to understand the differing contexts within and between communities. This helps to ensure that the programs being developed provide mutual benefits without placing an undue burden on already stretched resources. It can also assist in identifying:

- > where community support programs may be needed to strengthen areas of different communities to ensure that everyone can participate in volunteering if they choose to
- > a picture of where the greatest opportunity and needs exist within communities in relation to existing and potential volunteers, and
- > the surrounding factors for volunteers such as families, economic circumstances, and employment context that are central to enabling their volunteering.

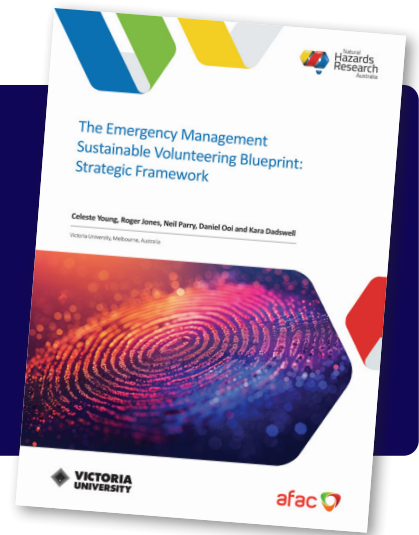
This can be achieved by developing community profiles that include information such as:

- > the current community demographics
- > the influences and drivers affecting these communities (e.g., their natural hazard risks, recent events, internal migration to or from areas, and the status of the local economy)
- > social structures of communities
- > the capabilities and skills in different communities
- > the capacity of the communities to volunteer, particularly in relation to socioeconomic wellbeing and resilience
- > the current resources available to different communities and the nature of these resources (e.g., grants, business and industry resources or charitable, NGOs or NFPs)
- > the existing volunteering programs in communities that are related to EM and what they do.

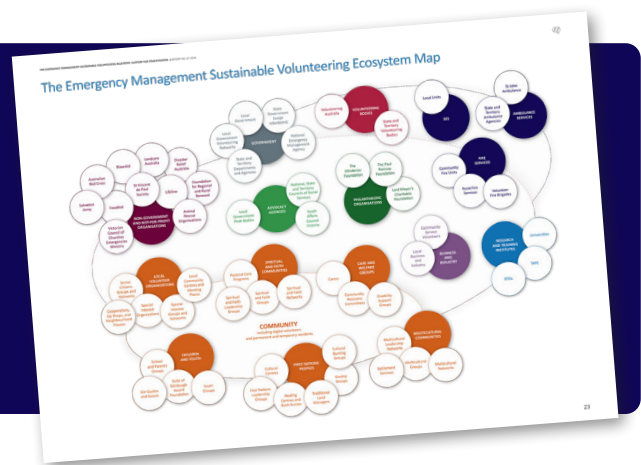
Local governments are a rich source of data relating to their communities. Some sources for this data are listed in the 'Useful resources' section on page 19.



The 12 group exercises on the following pages refer specifically to sections and their page numbers in *The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: Strategic Framework*. You can download the document here: <https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/resources/publications/report/emergency-management-sustainable-volunteering-blueprint-strategic>



The 12 group exercises on the following pages also refer specifically to diagrams, tools, and templates included as A3 pages at the end of this document (beginning on page 20), that you can print out to use.



Throughout the EM sector, a variety of different influences and drivers have shaped the current volunteering context. The first exercise can help you identify which of these are most prominent in your context and the challenges and opportunities that might arise as a result. For example, technological innovation is a new driver, and this might be an area that could assist you with data collation.

Exercise 1 Read pages 16–29 of *The Strategic Framework*. Incorporating the ‘Context diagram’ (p22 of this document), discuss with your team the drivers and influences for your organisational, team and/or community context. Consider and discuss:

- > the drivers and influences that present barriers, and
- > the drivers and influences that present opportunities.



The Blueprint principles for practice

The 6 principles outline the intention of The Strategic Framework and provide guidance as to how actions should be undertaken.

Diverse and inclusive

EMOs will provide an inclusive environment where all volunteers feel welcomed, respected, and valued. The sector will build upon current inclusion initiatives to develop the systems and processes that support and accommodate volunteers from diverse age groups, cultures, backgrounds and abilities, so they can meaningfully contribute to the workforce.

Future focused

Future volunteering challenges need to be understood and managed strategically and systemically. These activities require the development of robust data and evidence and strategic investment that maintains the current workforce whilst supporting the curation of the next generation of volunteers.

Collaboration and capability

EMOs will build capability by identifying and building upon existing strengths, capabilities, and skills within and across organisations and communities to support the necessary long-term change and innovation. This will be achieved through enhancing collaborative structures and building trusted long-term relationships within and across EMOs and communities.

Community centred

Community and volunteering knowledge and needs are central to EM workforce planning. EM volunteering activities will provide mutual benefits and opportunities for communities and EMOs. It will also ensure communities and volunteers have an active voice in decisions that pertain to them and their communities, and that community and volunteer concerns and needs are heard and responded to.

Effective and transparent governance

Working to ensure that structures and workplace culture are in place to ensure a safe and ethical workplace for volunteers. This requires the development of clear understandings of roles and responsibilities, and areas of accountability and liability across communities, organisations and those who volunteer. Building robust monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the value of volunteering contributions, the risks associated with volunteering, and the effectiveness of actions are made visible.

Embracing change and innovation

Developing and implementing new understandings and integrating change and innovation models into organisational frameworks. Building systems and ways of working that support continuous improvement and learning to enable effective adaptive responses is needed. This is particularly important due to the dynamic environment in which communities and EM volunteers live and work.

Exercise

2

Discuss the 6 principles above with your team, organisation, or community and ask the following questions:

- > What principles are currently applied in your current working practice?
- > What do you have now that can support working in line with these principles?
- > What might need to change to support working in line with these principles?

This is useful for building shared understandings as to what these principles mean and identifying areas for further development.



The strategic directions

The strategic directions are designed as key points of focus that relate to organisational strategic directions but also link to the AFAC Strategic Directions and the Volunteering Australia Strategic Plan. This is important to support greater visibility and connectivity in reporting of volunteering initiatives. They are designed to provide areas of focus nationally and support better coordination across the sector.

1. Working with communities to build resilience and safety

Objective: To empower communities to lead and effectively manage their natural hazard risks in collaboration with volunteering EMOs in a way that provides mutual benefits.

2. Strengthening trust through building organisational capability in volunteering EMOs

Objective: To ensure that volunteering EMOs are sustainable and have the capability to support and enable a positive volunteering experience.

3. Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable workforce

Objective: To build upon the current skills and capabilities through a pragmatic and strategic approach to ensure that volunteering EMOs have a skilled and capable workforce for the future.

4. Ensuring a safe, diverse, and inclusive volunteering environment

Objective: To ensure that volunteers work in a safe environment where they feel welcomed, valued, and their diverse needs are accommodated.

5. Enabling innovation

Objective: To build the understandings and infrastructure to support effective innovation throughout the EM sector.

6. Developing responsive and effective governance

Objective: The development of formal and informal governance and monitoring and evaluation that supports and enables a positive volunteering experience and ensures an accountable and ethical workforce culture.

Exercise

3

Using the 'Maturity matrix' (p24–26 of this document), discuss the 6 different strategic directions and map your organisation or team's maturity across the different phases. This can help you understand your current status and contextualise the different strategic directions, and assist you in identifying your priority areas for action.

See 'Self-assessment worksheet using the maturity matrix' (p27) and the 'Outcomes Evaluation Worksheet' (p28 of this document) for the exercise activity and accompanying worksheet.



Understanding the volunteering ecosystem

Volunteering exists in an ecosystem that encompasses all levels of government, the community, and EMOs. There are many stages during the planning and implementation process that require identification of different types of stakeholders, including:

- > understanding the context
- > socialising and building support for programs and activities
- > identifying potential actions and their priorities
- > resourcing of activities, and
- > ownership and implementation of activities.

The ecosystem map contained within The Strategic Framework can be used as a guide to map the following:

- > stakeholder groups that have a potential role in the activity you are undertaking (e.g., collaborator, expert, leader or spokesperson)
- > stakeholders who have existing programs that can be leveraged and/or learnt from, and
- > stakeholder groups that are relevant to your task (e.g., stakeholders who can contribute to or provide resources needed to deliver programs).

Exercise

4

Using the 'Ecosystem map' (p23 of this document), discuss the groups within the ecosystem in relation to your context. Are there other overarching bodies that could be included? Who are the most important groups for your organisation/team and what is their function?

Exercise

5

Map your local context by discussing the local subgroups. For example, looking at the multicultural communities area, discuss the subgroups listed (leadership networks, settlement services, groups and networks), and discuss the following: Are there any subgroups that should be added? Who are the specific stakeholders in your local area? Where do you have any pre-existing relationships with stakeholders in these groups? What are the cultural considerations you might need when you engage with these groups?

Implementation

Implementation of The Strategic Framework requires the practical application of its strategic aspects. This means that the enabling infrastructures, capabilities, and skills and areas of practice that exist can be built upon and others developed over time.

Enabling infrastructure

For this framework to succeed, enabling infrastructure to support long-term action and change is needed. This infrastructure comprises of the following components:

- > **Institutional infrastructure:** the formal and informal structures that shape the overarching environment in which volunteering EMOs and volunteers operate.
- > **Organisational infrastructure:** the formal and informal governance, operational, physical, cultural and social structures that volunteers work within and enable them to perform their roles.
- > **Social and human infrastructure:** the people, culture, capability and skills needed to effectively enact actions.
- > **Knowledge infrastructure:** the knowhow and data needed to enact actions.
- > **Resource infrastructure:** the financial, time and human resources needed to deliver programs.

Exercise

6

Discuss what infrastructure you have that enables action and what you might need to develop.



Capabilities and skills

Capabilities and skills to support and enable the long-term actions and sector-wide change will require capability development in the following areas:

- > systems-based approaches
- > management of complex change
- > data and measurement
- > networked and trusted relationships development
- > fit-for-purpose governance
- > leadership and inclusive practice
- > integration of new knowledge and skills, and
- > innovation.

Exercise

7

Using the capabilities and skills listed in the 'Capabilities' section of The Strategic Framework (p41–44), list the capabilities and skills your team/organisation has, and what areas might need to be developed. Where are the areas of strength that you can build on?

Practice areas

This section of the framework provides some high-level explanations and key consideration of the following specific practice areas:

- > measuring strategic progress
- > working with systemic issues
- > understanding innovation
- > integrating new knowledge
- > managing complex change
- > governance, and
- > building and maintaining trusted relationships.

Exercise

8

Discuss the practice areas and questions provided in the 'Implementation' section of The Strategic Framework (p45–53), and identify what challenges and the opportunities these areas present.

One of the largest gaps identified in the sustainable volunteering project was in the collection and reporting of data on volunteers, and measurement of outcomes and benefits of volunteer-related programs. This has resulted in volunteering being less visible than it should be, hampering understanding of the status of EM volunteering and the value of volunteering contributions.

It is important to consider upfront what data you need to collect to evaluate your progress in relation to the strategic directions to ensure that this is factored into programs.

Exercise

9

Using the 'Measuring strategic progress' section of The Strategic Framework (p45) and the 'Maturity matrix' (p24–26 of this document), discuss the questions in this section with your team and how they might apply to measurements across the different areas of the maturity matrix.



Developing actions

Developing and prioritising actions is often undertaken as a top-down exercise that can exclude volunteers and their communities. For these actions to work in the longer term, this process needs to be inclusive. As some areas can be contentious, consensus decision making approaches can be very helpful. It may also be useful to engage an external party to support parts of the process and any necessary negotiations.

Socialisation of key themes and needs is also central to early parts of this process, as building a shared vision and narrative underpins effective action over the longer term. In terms of the actions themselves, the following should be considered:

- > Actions need to be achievable within the timeframe committed to (it is better to do less successfully than overcommit and not deliver).
- > Establishing ownership of actions and associated tasks is important, particularly as more complex actions may have multiple owners.
- > How to develop clear outcomes that are aligned with the overarching organisational agendas and the strategic directions within The Strategic Framework.

Exercise

10

Using the 'Developing Actions Template' (p29 of this document), discuss and map your activities.

Connecting your actions to the national agenda

EM volunteering organisations and communities will have existing programs and actions as well as developing new actions and activities. EM volunteering organisations and communities will have existing programs and actions as well as developing new actions and activities. Education and capability and innovation are 2 key focus areas for national action.

Exercise

11

Education and capability Read the 'Education and learning' section of The Strategic Framework (p26–27) and reflect on the outcomes from Exercise 7. Discuss what activities might help you to build the skills and capabilities you will need. Consider what is possible at your local level and how it might connect to the AFAC Strategic Directions.

Exercise

12

Innovation Read the 'Innovation' section of The Strategic Framework (p24–25) and discuss the innovation case studies (p54–59), and look at what could be relevant to your context. Identify examples of innovation in your context, what type of innovation is it? (see section 'Understanding innovation', p47). Consider how these might contribute to the national AFAC volunteering agenda and document them to make them visible.



Securing an authorising environment and a mandate to operate

It is important to secure an authorising environment and a mandate to operate in the early stages of any project to ensure that there is:

- > leadership buy-in and support for what you wish to do
- > shared understandings across key stakeholders as to why and where change is needed, and
- > shared expectations as to what you intend to do.

The authorising environment provides the formal environment needed to support actions. The mandate to operate is underpinned by the psychological and social contracts between yourself and others and involves the broader circle of participants you wish to include, such as your volunteers and community. Understanding any informal agreements and unspoken rules is important to determining behaviours and what sort of governance might be needed. This can take time to establish and building trust is central to its effectiveness.

Communication and engagement

To undertake effective actions requires forward thinking that is future focused, and evidence-based decision making. How you communicate and engage throughout this process is pivotal. This makes facilitated conversation and events central to activities and requires skills such as active listening, negotiation, inclusive practice, and cultural awareness. Because it is highly dependent on collaboration from multiple parties, building and maintaining relationships for the longer term is critical.

This agenda can also be contentious and in some cases elicit strong emotional responses. This makes strategic and well-planned communication and engagement particularly important. Considerations for when developing activities throughout this process include:

- > the cultural and social context of the people you want to participate in your activity
- > awareness of political and personal agendas of participants and where these might align or need to be managed to avoid conflict or derailing of activities
- > understanding of where people are in relation to the agenda and/or activity you are proposing, and ascertaining whether there is a need for socialisation of your agenda or consensus decision making approaches, and
- > the use of inclusive practice, which is particularly useful as it provides processes and strategies that support group decision making.

Conclusion

The EM volunteering sector and the environment in which communities live, and volunteers operate, is changing rapidly. The Blueprint documents are the starting point for organisations and practitioners to build upon to enable sector-wide innovation and change. Organisations now need to work with each other and others in the volunteering ecosystem if they are to remain sustainable in the longer term. Central to this is recognising and making the contribution of those who volunteer visible and enhancing the volunteering experience.

As these are living documents, organisations are encouraged to work with the AFAC VMTG representatives to ensure that these documents are adapted and updated in line with emerging volunteering and community needs.



Useful resources

The AFAC Strategic Directions Report

<https://www.afac.com.au/resources/afac-strategic-directions-achievement-report-2025->

Volunteering Australia National Strategy

<https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/get-involved/national-strategy-for-volunteering/>

Boots on the ground: raising resilience

This report provides the key findings from The Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience, which was appointed by resolution of the Senate on 30 November 2022 to inquire into Australia's preparedness, response, and recovery workforce models, as well as alternative models to disaster recovery.

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Disaster_Resilience/DisasterResilience/Report

Volunteer Inclusion Guideline

This guideline supports the efforts of AFAC members and the AFAC office to create an inclusive 'way of doing things', where volunteers are engaged in decision making and their diverse opinions are valued and leveraged to derive mutually beneficial outcomes. By adopting an inclusive approach, there are positive flow-effects to the engagement and retention of volunteers and creation of a more diverse and sustainable volunteer workforce.

https://www.sasesva.org.au/docs/public/afac_doctrine_volunteer-inclusion-guideline_v0-120c7a691b1e86477b58fff00006709da.pdf

Consensus decision making: a short guide

This Seeds for Change report provides an overview and guidance in relation to how to work with consensus decision making.

<https://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/shortconsensus#:~:text=Start%20by%20introducing%20and%20clarifying,to%20address%20any%20remaining%20concerns>

Right Help, Right Time

Andrew McCullough was awarded a 2023 Churchill Fellowship to study the mobilisation of communities as spontaneous volunteers in the face of disaster and understand how governments can better prepare for spontaneous volunteers as part of disaster management arrangements. Andrew's report explores new approaches for mobilising communities during disasters and provides some useful innovation case studies.

<https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellow/andrew-mccullough-nsw-2023/>

Local government data sources include:

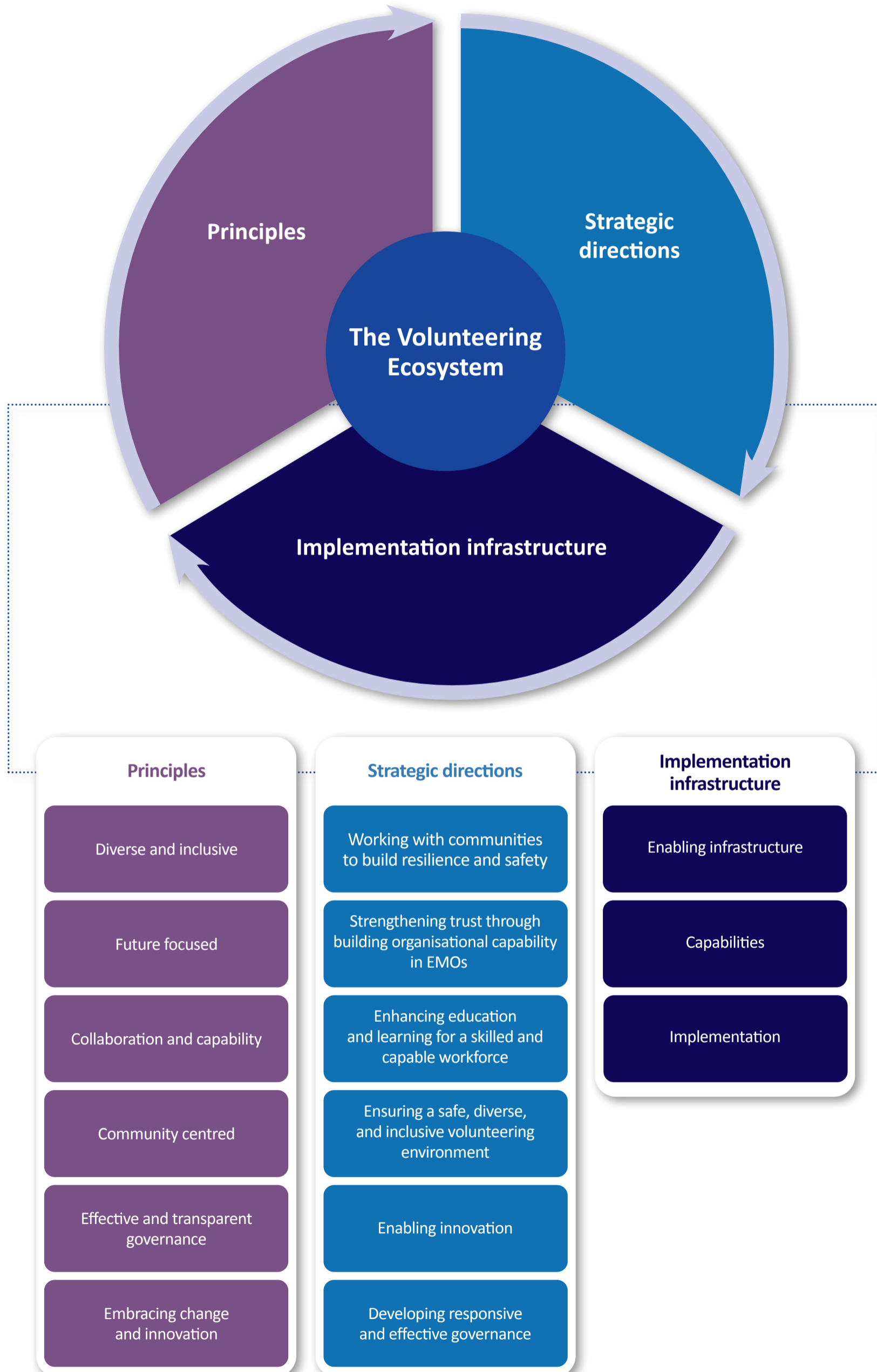
- > .idcommunity demographic resources: <https://forecast.id.com.au/>
- > Australian Bureau of Statistics data by region: <https://dbr.abs.gov.au/>
- > Fire and Emergency New Zealand's community mapping tool: <https://portal.fireandemergency.nz/notices-news-and-events/news/community-mapping-using-volunteer-knowledge-for-local-insight/>
- > your local government websites.

To learn more about Natural Hazards Research Australia's *Emergency management volunteering: more than just words* project visit <https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/research/research-projects/emergency-management-volunteering-more-just-words>



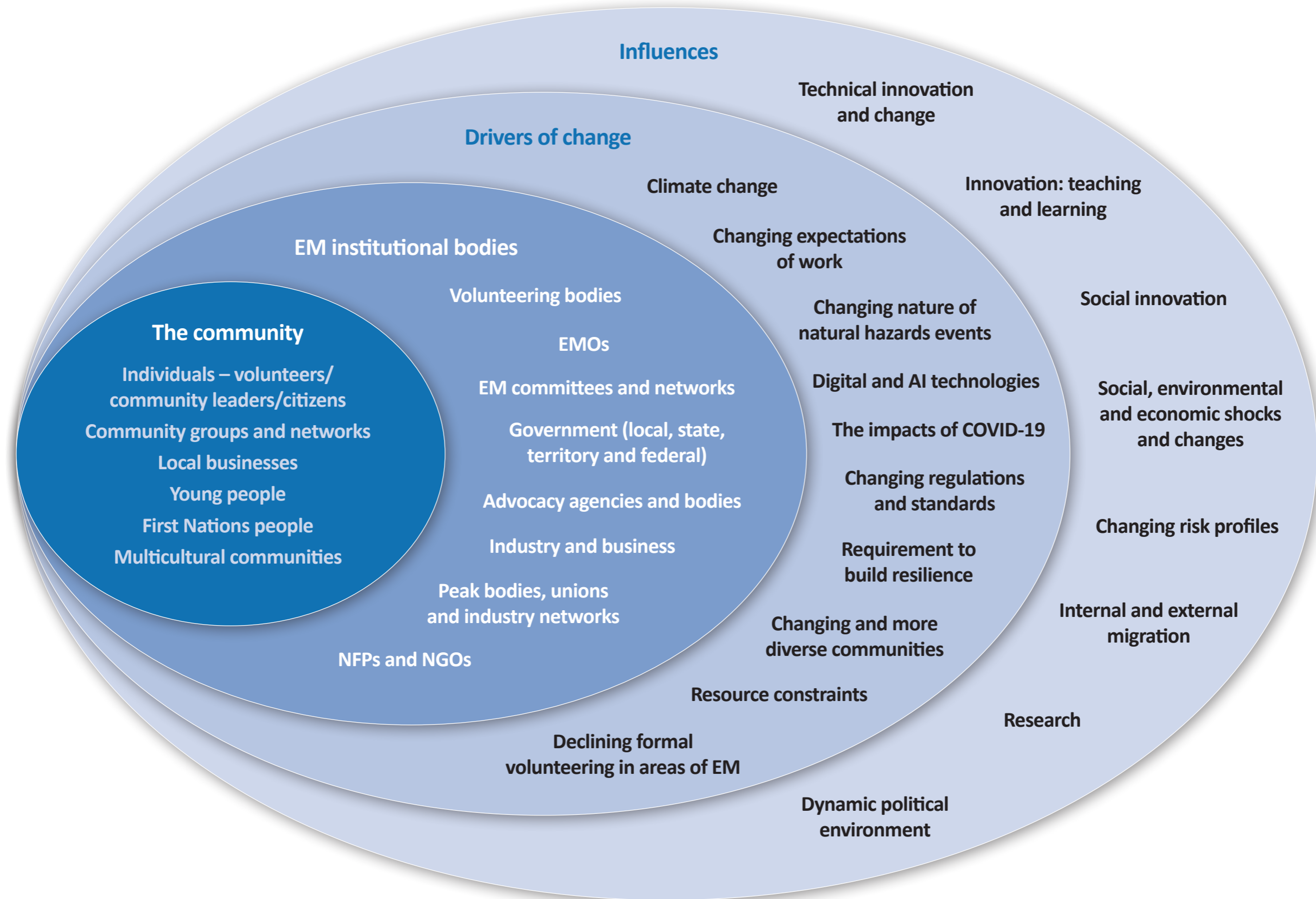
A3 diagrams, tools, and templates

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Strategic Framework



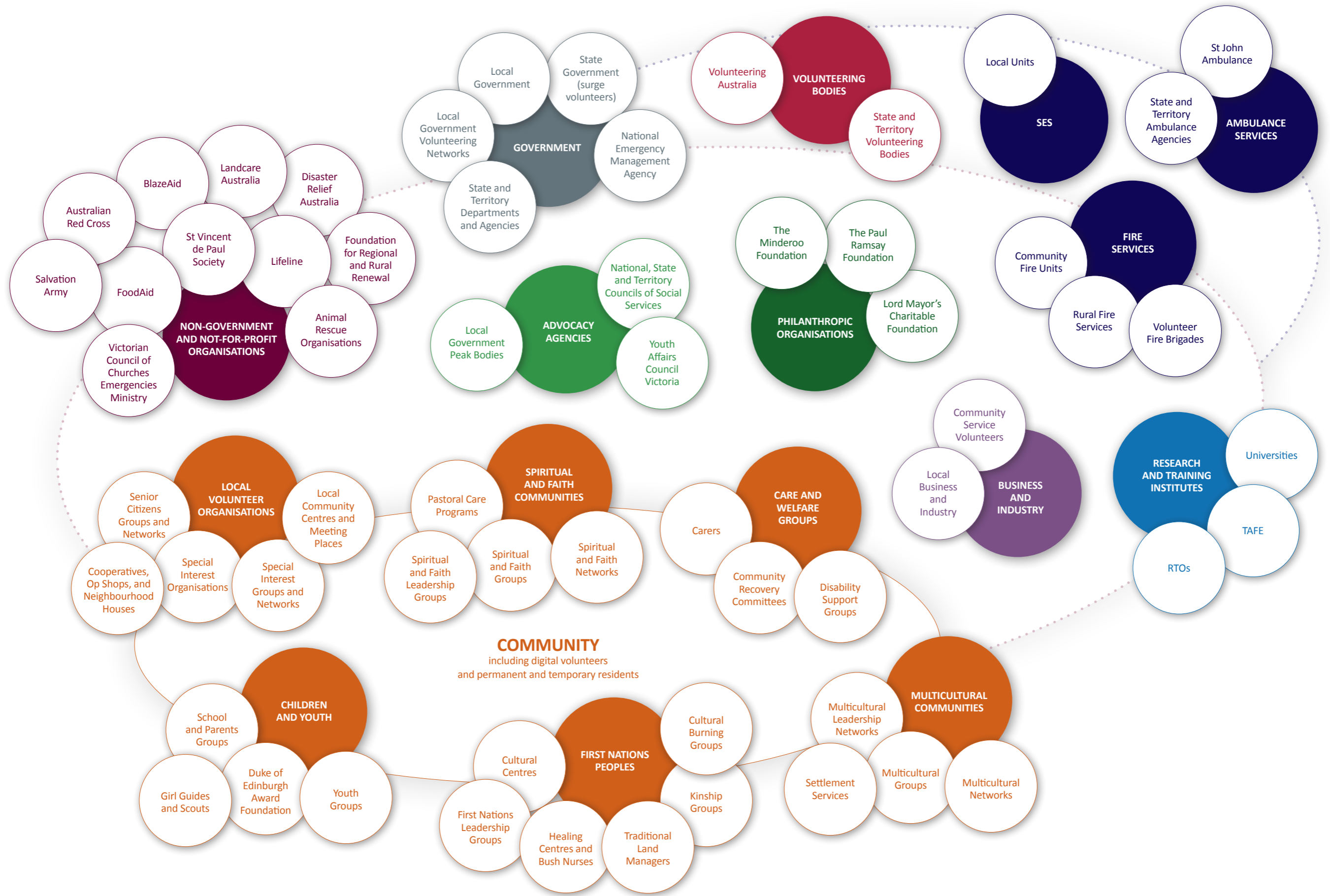


The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Context Diagram





The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Ecosystem Map





The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Maturity Matrix

Strategic direction	Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integrating and applying	Sustainable
1. Working with communities to build resilience and safety.	1. EMOs lead activities and community excluded from decision making.	1. Basic representation of community in some decision making areas and EMO programs.	1. EMOs undertake some collaborative, codesigned projects and programs with communities.	1. Sustained collaboration between communities and EMOs that have shared decision making and leadership of activities.
	2. Inconsistent understandings and expectations of volunteering.	2. Volunteering EMOs and communities define what constitutes volunteering.	2. The development of a shared narrative for EM volunteering.	2. A shared understanding of volunteering roles and expectations across the EM volunteering ecosystem.
	3. Transactional relationships between agencies and communities.	3. Consultation and negotiation between communities and volunteering EMOs.	3. Establishing relationships and meaningful dialogue between volunteering EMOs and communities.	3. Strong trusted and maintained relationships between communities and volunteering EMOs.
	4. Community risk literacy is ad hoc.	4. Communities are informed about the risks they face.	4. Communities understand their risks and what actions they can take.	4. Communities respect the risks they face and manage them proactively.
	5. Disempowered communities who are dependent on EMO service delivery.	5. Individuals and groups comply with their EM obligations, but the majority still feel that EMOs are primarily responsible for mitigating and managing the risk.	5. The community understand their roles and responsibilities but manage them primarily in response to being prompted by agencies.	5. The community accept their roles and responsibilities and proactively manage their risk as part of day-to-day activities.
	6. Volunteering EMOs define community vulnerabilities and manage them accordingly.	6. Communities define and articulate their vulnerabilities, capabilities and capacity.	6. Volunteering EMOs support communities to build their capabilities and capacities.	6. Communities have enhanced capabilities that underpin their resilience and surge needs.
	7. Inadequate funding and resourcing at community level to support risk management activities.	7. Limited funding and resourcing at community level available to support activities.	7. Accessible and responsive funding and resourcing at the community level to support activities.	7. Financial resilience and sustainable resourcing at the local level.
Strategic direction	Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integrating and applying	Sustainable
2. Strengthening trust through building organisational capability in volunteering EMOs.	1. Limited strategic planning.	1. Sector agreement and a commitment to strategic action and planning.	1. Nationally endorsed strategies and plans that are being enacted.	1. Ongoing coordinated activities across the volunteering ecosystem that are strategically managed using systems thinking.
	2. Volunteers do not trust organisations and feel undervalued.	2. Volunteers feel acknowledged but are still distrustful of their needs being addressed.	2. Volunteers are consulted with and have trust their needs will be addressed.	2. Volunteers trust EMOs and are confident that their concerns are being heard and addressed. Volunteers are included appropriately in decision making.
	3. Resourcing does not meet the needs of volunteering EMOs or their volunteers.	3. Resourcing and funding for some projects in EMOs to address volunteer needs.	3. Sector-wide funding and resources for volunteering EMOs to accommodate volunteer needs.	3. Appropriate and adequate funding and resources in volunteering EMOs actively meeting volunteering needs.
	4. Compliant and passive leadership.	4. Advocacy for change by sector and organisational leaders.	4. Volunteering EMO leaders and champions are proactively leading change.	4. Strong and proactive leadership at all levels that is responsive to volunteers' needs and changing context.
	5. Community skills and capabilities are not valued or considered relevant.	5. Community skills and nontechnical capabilities are understood and valued.	5. Integration of community and nontechnical capabilities across the PPRR spectrum with community and external stakeholders and are rewarded.	5. Enhanced volunteering EMO capacity and capability for surge capacity across the volunteering ecosystem.
	6. Organisational capabilities support traditional roles and operational models that maintain the status quo.	6. New organisational capabilities are emerging that promote change and new models for volunteering.	6. Organisational capabilities enable change and accept and support new models of volunteering.	6. Volunteering EMOs have strong continuous change and adaptive capabilities.
	7. Linear approaches and reactive solutions.	7. Systemic and strategic approaches to problem solving are being advocated for.	7. Systemic and strategic approaches are being applied in programs and decision making across EMOs.	7. Systemic and strategic approaches are business-as-usual in volunteering EMOs.
	8. Siloed and rigid structures.	8. Siloed and flexible structures.	8. Continuous improvement and flexible structures are developing.	8. Dynamic volunteering EMOs with established structures that enable adaptive responses.
	9. Limited evidence-based decision making, common wisdom prevails.	9. Knowledge of how to use evidence in decision making within volunteering EMOs.	9. Evidence-based decision making is established within volunteering EMOs.	9. Evidence-based decision making is expected and supported in volunteering EMOs.



Strategic direction	Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integrating and applying	Sustainable
3. Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable volunteering workforce.	1. Education and capability skills development is ad hoc and focuses on technical response skills.	1. Sector leadership understand the need to support education and learning to develop skills beyond response.	1. Sector leadership commitment and support for implementation of strategies and plans to enhance education, learning and skills development across the entire PPRR spectrum.	1. Robust development of volunteering workforce and community EM skills.
	2. Skills and capabilities are not transferable across jurisdictions.	2. Sector agreements to work towards transferability of skills and licence to operate.	2. National initiatives that address how to enable transferability of skills across jurisdictions.	2. Transferable skills across jurisdictions that create greater efficiencies.
	3. Limited knowledge and development of community capabilities and skills.	3. Nontechnical and community capabilities and skills gaps identified.	3. Community skills and capability development are supported by EMOs.	3. A skilled and capable volunteering workforce where community skills and non-traditional skills across the PPRR spectrum are an established part of workforce development.
	4. Nontechnical and community capabilities and skills are not invested in.	4. The value of nontechnical skills and community capabilities and skills is understood and accepted within EMOs.	4. Nontechnical and community skills are recognised and leveraged.	4. Nontechnical and community skills are valued and rewarded.
	5. Standard education and learning delivery and approaches.	5. Expansion of learning and education to include non-traditional and informal educational models (e.g., communities of practice).	5. Innovative models of education are recognised and valued, including those incorporating prior learning.	5. Lifelong and continuous learning embedded in EM volunteering organisations.
Strategic direction	Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integrating and applying	Sustainable
4. Ensuring a diverse, safe, and inclusive volunteering environment.	1. Difference is seen as threatening and actively discouraged.	1. Limited representation of diverse cohorts that creates discomfort.	1. Diverse cohorts are visible and tolerated.	1. Diverse cohorts and volunteers are accepted and celebrated and feel culturally, emotionally, and physically safe.
	2. Lack of representation of diverse volunteers and cohorts in decision making.	2. Tokenistic representation of diverse volunteers and cohorts in formal decision making.	2. Increased representation of diverse volunteers and cohorts in decision making.	2. Organisation-wide representation of diverse cohorts and volunteers in decision making.
	3. Volunteering EMOs decide how they will include and accommodate diverse cohorts and volunteers.	3. Volunteers and diverse cohorts are consulted as to how they would like to be included and supported.	3. The context and needs of different diverse individuals and cohorts are understood and accommodated.	3. Diverse cohorts' needs are accommodated and respected. Inclusive practice is part of business-as-usual.
	4. Inclusion skills are not valued or rewarded.	4. Inclusion skills and practice are being embedded in EMO.	4. Inclusion skills are being effectively applied.	4. Inclusion skills and practice are valued, rewarded, and integrated into all roles.
	5. Lack of leadership.	5. Interest in inclusive leadership.	5. Inclusive leadership is actively modelled.	5. Inclusive leadership is expected and rewarded.
	6. Inclusion benefits are anecdotal.	6. Inclusion benefits are documented and measured.	6. Inclusion practice actively invested in.	6. Comprehensive economic valuation of inclusion benefits.



Strategic direction	Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integrating and applying	Sustainable
5. Enabling innovation.	1. Innovation is driven by individuals or departments.	1. Volunteering EMO internally collaborate on innovation projects.	1. Collaborative sector-based innovation and emergence of innovation networks with some external partners.	1. Connected and cohesive innovative volunteering ecosystem with connections to like systems elsewhere.
	2. Knowledge of innovation process and practice is with individuals.	2. Organisational understanding of innovation and its application.	2. Embedding of innovation management frameworks and practice.	2. Effective management of innovation in EMOs.
	3. Lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E).	3. Innovation M&E reporting within organisations but not formalised. Some innovation risks may be listed on risk registers.	3. Formal M&E reporting in annual reports. All innovation risks on risk registers.	3. Formal sector reporting on M&E that tracks innovation progress across the EM sector.
	4. Organisational/institutional structures do not support innovation.	4. Organisational structures to support innovation are being developed.	4. Established organisational and institutional innovation structures.	4. Standards for EM volunteering innovation and reporting.
	5. Innovation is project-based and ad hoc.	5. Organisational innovation programs are developing, and new relationships and partnership are being established.	5. Sector-based innovation programs are established, with new relationships and partnerships growing.	5. A vibrant and active EM innovation ecosystem.
	6. Ad hoc formal funding.	6. Opportunistic leveraging of innovation funding.	6. Strategic planning of innovation funding.	6. Funding for innovation is ongoing and a budget line item in volunteering EMOs.
Strategic direction	Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integrating and applying	Sustainable
6. Developing responsive and effective governance.	1. Lack of clarity in relation to roles and responsibilities and accountabilities.	1. Roles and responsibilities and accountabilities are understood.	1. Ownership of roles and responsibilities are accepted.	1. Ownership of roles and responsibilities is proactively applied.
	2. Risk and liabilities are poorly delineated and lie primarily with the volunteer.	2. Risks and liabilities identified but lack of clarity as to who owns them.	2. Volunteering risks and liabilities are owned and managed by organisations.	2. Volunteering risks and liabilities are proactively managed by organisations and volunteers.
	3. Governance structures and culture are inflexible and inward focused.	3. Governance structures and culture have some areas of flexibility and have partnership arrangements in place.	3. Governance structures and culture are adaptive. Develop and support partnerships within organisations and institutions.	3. Governance structures and culture are adaptive and transparent, supporting collaborative and shared responsibility arrangements across the EM volunteering ecosystem.
	4. Fragmented M&E, patchy data and data hoarding.	4. Connected M&E areas, baseline data and data sharing within organisations.	4. Coordinated M&E areas, reliable data and data sharing between organisations.	4. Robust and accessible M&E areas and data, sector-wide data sharing.
	5. Informal governance is invisible and not considered.	5. Informal governance is acknowledged but given limited consideration in formal decision making.	5. Informal governance is recognised and considered in some formal decision making.	5. Informal governance is considered as part of all formal decision making.
	6. Rules are stated but not followed.	6. Rules are followed but seen as a burden.	6. Rules are accepted and mostly adhered to.	6. Rules are respected and adhered to.



Self-assessment worksheet using the maturity matrix

Work through each strategic direction one at a time. Each strategic direction has 4 different phases as part of a process to achieve a sustainable outcome:

- Limited awareness
- Aware and engaged
- Integrated and applying, and
- Sustainable.

Each phase contains a number of characteristic states describing a certain level of maturity. Identifying where you are, provides a measure of progress and can be used to plan actions for your next phase. As this is systemic, different aspects needed for sustainability often develop at different rates.

Group exercise

Materials

- > coloured dots
- > a printout of the maturity matrix (p24–26 of this document), and
- > a highlighter pen.

This can also be undertaken virtually using different platforms (such as MIRO), or sent out as a survey.

The exercise

- Using the maturity matrix, ask team members to allocate one coloured dot in each row that best represents to them the current state of your team/department/organisation.
- Then highlight where you have the most allocations across each row.
- As a group, discuss the following:
 - When you look at the diagram, where do you have the most maturity and where do you have the least?
 - What has enabled the areas of greater maturity and what has enabled this?
 - Where are the areas have the least maturity and what has contributed to this?
 - Looking at your current maturity, what area is the most important to focus on and why?
 - What sort of actions do you need to undertake to support forward progress?
 - What actions can you undertake to support forward progress?

Evaluating the outcomes

- Develop an indicative baseline by scoring the status on each line which has received the most allocations using the following point system:
 - Limited awareness = 1 point
 - Aware and engaged = 2 points
 - Integrated and applying = 3 points
 - Sustainable = 4 points.
- Ascertain your overall percentage for each of the strategic directions.

Measuring your progress

Repeat this exercise in 12 months and compare and evaluate the team's progress.

Strategic direction	Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integrating and applying	Sustainable
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	2. Inconsistent understandings and expectations of volunteering. 	2. Volunteering EMOs and communities define what constitutes volunteering. 	2. The development of a shared narrative for EM volunteering.	2. A shared understanding of volunteering roles and expectations across the EM volunteering ecosystem.
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	6. Volunteering EMOs define community vulnerabilities and manage them accordingly. 	6. Communities define and articulate their vulnerabilities, capabilities and capacity. 	6. Volunteering EMOs support communities to build their capabilities and capacities.	6. Communities have enhanced capabilities that underpin their resilience and surge needs.
	7. Inadequate funding and resourcing at community level to support risk management activities. 	7. Limited funding and resourcing at community level available to support activities. 	7. Accessible and responsive funding and resourcing at the community level to support activities.	7. Financial resilience and sustainable resourcing at the local level.

Strategic direction	Limited awareness (1)	Aware and engaged (2)	Integrating and applying (3)	Sustainable (4)
1. Working with communities to build resilience and safety.	1.1	2		
	1.2	1		
	1.3		2	
	1.4			3
	1.5		2	
	1.6	1		
	1.7		2	
Strategic Direction 1 score			13/28	46%



Maturity Matrix Outcomes Evaluation Worksheet

Strategic direction		Limited awareness (1)	Aware and engaged (2)	Integrating and applying (3)	Sustainable (4)
1. Working with communities to build resilience and safety.	1.1				
	1.2				
	1.3				
	1.4				
	1.5				
	1.6				
	1.7				
				Strategic Direction 1 score	

Strategic direction		Limited awareness (1)	Aware and engaged (2)	Integrating and applying (3)	Sustainable (4)
2. Strengthening trust through building organisational capability in volunteering EMOs.	1.1				
	1.2				
	1.3				
	1.4				
	1.5				
	1.6				
	1.7				
	1.8				
	1.9				
				Strategic Direction 2 score	

Strategic direction		Limited awareness (1)	Aware and engaged (2)	Integrating and applying (3)	Sustainable (4)
3. Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable volunteering workforce.	1.1				
	1.2				
	1.3				
	1.4				
	1.5				
				Strategic Direction 3 score	

Strategic direction		Limited awareness (1)	Aware and engaged (2)	Integrating and applying (3)	Sustainable (4)
4. Ensuring a diverse, safe, and inclusive volunteering environment.	1.1				
	1.2				
	1.3				
	1.4				
	1.5				
	1.6				
				Strategic Direction 4 score	

Strategic direction		Limited awareness (1)	Aware and engaged (2)	Integrating and applying (3)	Sustainable (4)
5. Enabling innovation.	1.1				
	1.2				
	1.3				
	1.4				
	1.5				
	1.6				
				Strategic Direction 5 score	

Strategic direction		Limited awareness (1)	Aware and engaged (2)	Integrating and applying (3)	Sustainable (4)
6. Developing responsive and effective governance.	1.1				
	1.2				
	1.3				
	1.4				
	1.5				
	1.6				
				Strategic Direction 6 score	



The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Developing Actions Template

Activity	Task(s)	Resources	Potential collaborators	Potential lead	0–6 months	6–12 months	12–18 months



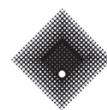
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