Natural Hazards Research Australia

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: Strategic Framework

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Acknowledgement of Country

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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Glossary

Emergency management: The management of risks to communities and the environment is the core business of emergency services, and every individual and organisation has a part to play. The focus of emergency management is prevention, preparedness, response and recovery in relation to natural hazards and other emergencies.

Psychological contract: the often-unspoken set of expectations and assumptions that two parties (employees and the organisation, its leaders and managers) have about each other in relation to such things as how they will behave and act (Oxford Review Briefings, n.d.).

Psychosocial risks are interactions involving the work environment, job content, organisational conditions, and the workers' skills, needs, culture and personal considerations outside of their job. These interactions can affect health, work performance and job satisfaction through the workers' perceptions and experiences (International Labour Office, 1986).

Social contract is an implicit agreement between the people and their government about what each side provides to the other. The terms of the agreement can vary widely. While notions of the social contract have historically tended to focus on things like security, employment opportunities and forms of social welfare, it can also include agreements on how communal relations and community safety are managed (Shah, 2022).

Strategic decision making: Decision making with a focus on the long-term, which involves continuous improvement.

Strategic planning: A systematic process of envisioning a desired future and translating that vision into broadly defined goals or objectives and a sequence of steps to achieve them. In contrast to long-term planning (which begins with the current status and lays down a path to meet estimated future needs), strategic planning begins with the desired end and works backward to the current status.

Systemic risk (general): The probability of loss or failure common to all members of a class, group, or an entire system.

Transformation management compares the present with the future, identifying new opportunities and risks, and devising a plan to help organisations adapt to changing external environments or market demands. Successful transformation requires foresight, strong decision making skills, and effective change management (Consultancy-me.com, 2022).

Technological innovation: The process of developing and implementing new technologies to address societal challenges. It involves the creation and improvement of products, services and processes that contribute to the advancement of society (Science Direct, 2025).

Volunteering ecosystem: The volunteering ecosystem encompasses a diversity of volunteers across emergency management organisations, communities, not-for-profit organisations, non-government organisations, and public and private spheres. It is a network of organisations and people that enable and benefit from volunteering.

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Executive summary

"Our change in thinking has come from an understanding of where the national and international trends are going around sustainable volunteerism models and the emergence of new volunteerism groups and what makes them attractive. You look at that and go, 'Okay, here's what we're up against'. Our traditional models will not survive in this area." — Manager, EM Volunteering (McLennan, 2019)

The emergency management (EM) volunteering sector is ripe for change. An ageing but dedicated workforce is slowly declining in numbers, while the demand for their services is at an all-time high. The number of informal volunteers who gather spontaneously when emergencies occur has increased, while those who wish to volunteer formally have decreased. This is challenging traditional notions of what EM volunteering is and does.

The risks being managed by the EM sector are also changing due the increased frequency and evolving nature of natural hazards. In locations where repeated disasters have taken place, this has led to an open and ongoing discussion about the lack of time to recover and the need to increase resilience. This is changing the social contract between communities and the EM sector, as community roles and responsibilities and EMOs service models evolve in response to these factors. It has also led to an expansion of the roles of volunteers and communities beyond response to longer-term recovery and resilience building.

A large part of the services provided by emergency management organisations (EMOs) rely upon volunteer contributions. Although volunteers are part of the EM workforce, they are not paid employees. This places them in a unique position within the EM ecosystem, which cannot function effectively without them. However, due to a lack of standardised reporting and patchy data and measurement, their contributions are often underreported and undervalued.

The context in which EMOs and their communities exist is rapidly changing. This is being driven by a number of factors including:

- new technologies
- diversification of communities and increasing socioeconomic pressures
- the changing nature of work
- constrained resources
- professionalisation of the volunteering workforce, and
- increased competition for volunteers.

These factors are amplifying existing issues and creating new risks that are influencing:

- how people wish to volunteer
- their expectations of the organisations they volunteer with
- the roles they are willing to undertake, and
- the psychological contract they wish to have with EMOs.

There is also a critical need to address long-standing issues such as the administration burden and cost to those who volunteer, if future EM volunteering is to be sustained. The above factors are creating compression points, which although they increase pressure on community members and EMOs, also offer opportunities for change. They also highlight the interdependent nature of EMOs and their communities, and the need for EMOs to strengthen trust internally and more widely.

Although existing strategies for attraction and retention have met with some success, the systemic nature of the solutions needed to address the above issues cannot be managed using a 'predict-and-act' approach. The following challenges have also hampered action:

- lack of strategic structure and cohesion with other national initiatives and strategies to enable national action(s)
- solutions are systemic in nature, resulting in action paralysis due to 'overchoice'
- solutions have tended to focus on symptoms rather than root causes, with long-standing issues being left unaddressed
- a need for strategic and inclusive leadership across the sector
- a need for wider collaboration across the EM volunteering sector, and
- a lack of a comprehensive national picture of volunteering and what volunteers do within the system.

Effective actions require strategic approaches that consider the entire EM ecosystem and the different players and contexts it contains. The EM volunteering sector is now at a crossroads. Participants must choose to innovate and transform to accommodate these systemic needs or face the prospect of greatly reduced capacity and capability.

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: The Strategic Framework (The Strategic Framework) uses a systems-based approach to extend volunteering beyond organisations to being national in scope. It integrates key areas of focus that support volunteering EMOs to act collectively. By focusing on innovation and education and learning to support broader changes in State Emergency Services (SES) and State and Territory Fire Agencies (Fire Services) in Australia and New Zealand, it provides tangible pathways towards a sustainable and inclusive volunteering sector where volunteers are empowered, appreciated and valued.

The pathway towards such transformation is complex. It requires building new structures, capabilities and ways of working, whilst maintaining functionality. Long-standing issues need to be addressed whilst enhancing the experience for existing volunteers so they are retained. Understanding the motivations for volunteering and the evolving psychological contract between volunteers and their EMOs underpins this. The challenge for the EM sector is to navigate its way through these challenges in a principled and informed way. It needs to do so in partnership with communities, who are the source of volunteers, and whose safety their volunteers take responsibility for.

This will require:

- broad collaboration beyond EMOs and proactive modelling by EMOs of 'working with the community'
- reviewing current arrangements, and
- appropriate resourcing, commitment and leadership to support the long-term actions needed to achieve sustainable outcomes.

Developing robust national data sets that provide a more comprehensive picture of EM volunteering is critical. It is also central to ensuring that progress of the strategic directions in this framework are being achieved and that the value of volunteers and the work they do is visible and measurable.

The Strategic Framework is part of The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint (The Blueprint) initiated by the AFAC Volunteering Management Technical Group (VMTG) and funded by Natural Hazards Research Australia (NHRA). Its aim is to provide the foundation for the strategic infrastructure to support implementation of actions across the EM sector to progress the sustainable volunteering agenda.

This document is structured in four sections:

- **Section 1: Introduction**
  This section introduces The Blueprint and The Strategic Framework.
- **Section 2: The current context**
  This section describes the overarching context in which EM volunteering exists and the pathway forward.
- **Section 3: The Strategic Framework**
  The Strategic Framework has four major components – The Principles, Strategic Directions, Implementation Infrastructure, and the Volunteering Ecosystem. Each component is described, with particular emphasis given to implementation, where the strategic directions are linked to on ground action.
- **Section 4: Innovation case studies**
  These case studies show examples of different types of innovation associated with volunteering across the Australian and New Zealand EM sector.

Section 1
Introduction

Introduction

"The greatest challenge now facing volunteer-based emergency services is a need to embrace prevailing change and establish priorities for action." (Reinholtd, 2000)

Ensuring the sustainability of EM volunteering has been a focus of the Australian EM sector for decades. Despite ongoing efforts focusing on management, policy and research, the challenges and barriers identified 20 years ago persist today. The number, types, and complexity of issues affecting sustainable EM volunteering have intensified and outweighed the ability of traditional approaches to overcome them.

To move beyond the established models applied within the EM sector, a paradigm shift is needed. This is a long-term prospect, and EM sector volunteers and EMOs cannot create and sustain this shift alone. Additional support and expertise from within the sector and beyond will be required to explore and collaboratively develop a new vision that applies to a wide range of different approaches. The sector will need to seek inspiration, experience, and input from beyond its traditional boundaries while integrating with the wider volunteering ecosystem.

This would be a significant change for the EM sector and the communities they serve. It will require an honest and open conversation about the limits of current structures, the lack of diversity and inclusion across much of the sector, and the return on investment (ROI) for volunteers, organisations, and the community. Infrastructure to support and enable implementation – such as the social, governance, financial, and knowledge systems that surround the EM sector and its volunteers – is particularly important. These different levels of infrastructure (institutional, organisational, group and individual) have largely developed organically, and this framework provides the opportunity to review them and ensure they are fit-for-purpose. Understanding who has agency to act and who is best positioned to lead will be central to the collaborative ownership of the strategy and the actions within it.

- **Communities** and community members make up a diverse social and cultural infrastructure that contributes directly to the volunteer workforce and can support EMOs more broadly.
- **Organisations** have direct agency to act on initiatives that are within their current strategic frameworks and the resources supporting them.
- **Institutions** formally shape and influence the authorising environment for EMOs through policy and funding. Institutions more broadly consist of written and unwritten rules that influence all levels, so determining where these have influence, and the nature of that influence, is an important task.

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint

The 'Emergency management volunteering: more than just words' project was funded by NHRA. This project was conceived with a clear goal in mind – to move the 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.

This project is being undertaken in two phases:

- **Phase One:** The development of a national Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint for emergency management agencies. This has been undertaken by Victoria University (VU) in collaboration with AFAC, members of the VMTG, and representatives from across the broader volunteering ecosystem.
- **Phase Two:** This will conduct action-based research in response to the findings identified in Phase One and continue to develop the scope of The Blueprint as needed.

The Blueprint considers volunteering in its many different contexts, ensuring that solutions and proposed changes are relevant for local and regional characteristics, which can vary considerably. The project goal was to undertake a collaborative and iterative process that:

- Reframes and reimagines EM volunteering challenges and opportunities in different ways to the past 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 toward investing in new, innovative, and sustainable approaches.

- Develops an Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint comprising of living documents that 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 focuses on the SES and Fire Services in Australia and New Zealand and comprises of three 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' (Figure 1). The different components of The Blueprint link the theoretical evidence base, strategy, and action to provide the connections and cohesion needed between these areas.

The high level of risk that EM volunteers work with places them in a different category to other volunteers. This, and the inclusion of Australia and New Zealand, differentiates The Blueprint from the *National Strategy for Volunteering 2023–2033* (Volunteering Australia, 2023).

Although the focus of The Blueprint is volunteers within the SES and Fire Services, it also considers the broader volunteering ecosystem that interacts with these agencies and their communities before, during, and after incidents.

The Blueprint comprises of three components:

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

The AFAC VMTG is the champion for The Blueprint and steward of The Strategic Framework and The Interim Action Plan.

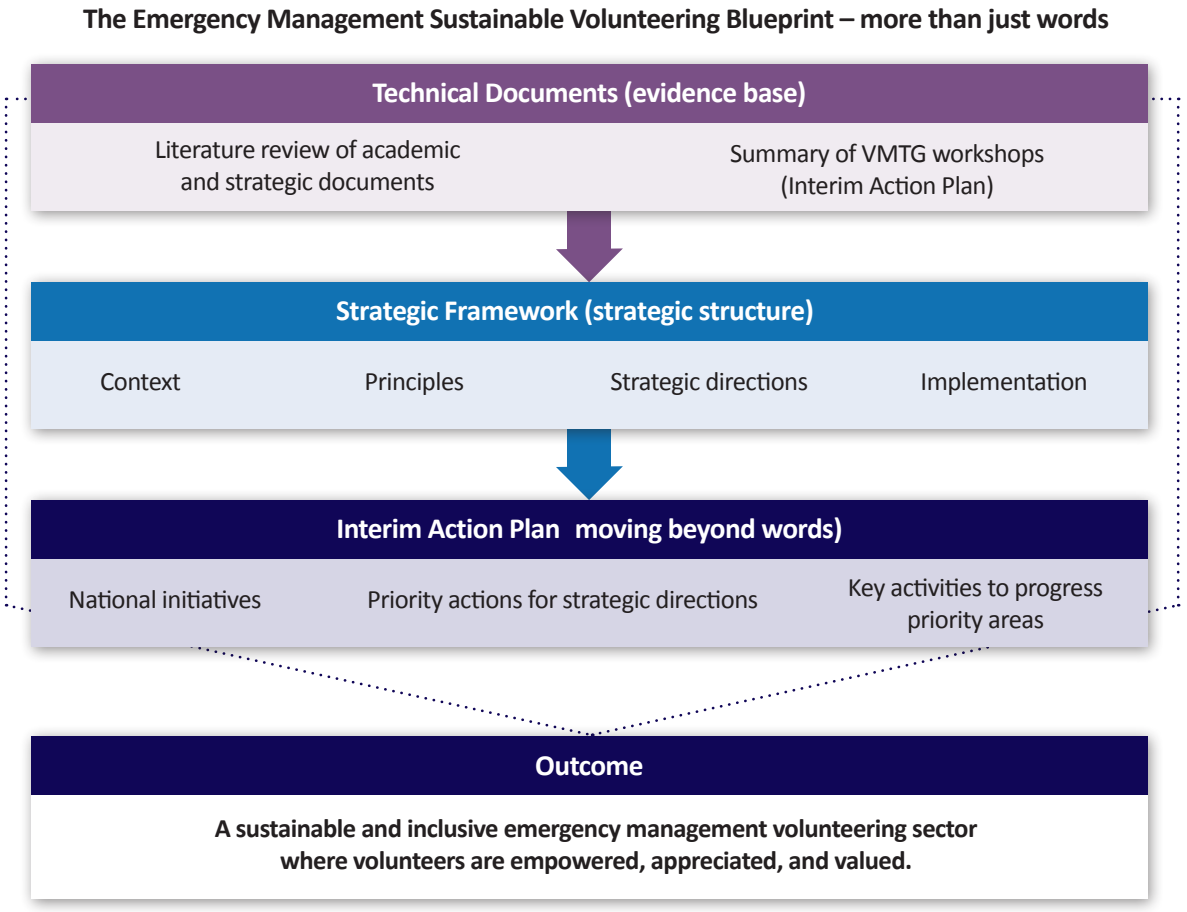


FIGURE 1: THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING BLUEPRINT

The Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework is guided by a set of principles that inform the ethical implementation of actions, and support collaboration, value learning, community, and connectedness (Figure 2, overleaf). The strategic directions have been developed from existing EMO strategies and are consistent with Volunteering Australia's *National Strategy for Volunteering 2023–2033*, and AFAC's *Volunteer Inclusion Guideline* and AFAC *Strategic Directions 2022–2026* (see Attachment A).

Two directions are seen as a focus for almost all ongoing actions:

- **Enabling innovation:** taking well-informed and calculated risks for greater reward, which is essential when engaging in transformative change, and
- **Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable workforce:** a continuous process that supports innovation and change through experiences and the development of new knowledge. This will also support a wider recognition of volunteers' skills and capabilities.

The objective of The Strategic Framework

The objective of The Strategic Framework is to provide a structure for the long-term transformational actions needed across the sector to secure the sustainability of EM volunteering. It does this by providing:

- an overarching structure designed to strengthen strategic planning, standardisation, and the measurement of actions needed to progress the sustainable volunteering agenda, and
- key areas of focus to improve effectiveness and visibility of actions and progression of the sustainable volunteering agenda.

The strategic directions within this framework provide the strategic focus and are aligned with current strategic plans. These are supported by principles to guide how the resulting actions (such as undertaking key activities to progress priority areas) will be undertaken, and high-level guidance in relation to implementation.

The Strategic Framework has been developed with the understanding of the need to work within current institutional and organisational settings but also to grow beyond these. The overarching structure enables flexibility so the diverse and changeable contexts of agencies, communities, and the wider stakeholder group can build on current settings.

The Strategic Framework is intended to be a living document, and it is recommended that:

- overarching strategic directions are assessed every three years, and
- potential actions are reviewed by members of the VMTG in line with their annual planning activities.

This review process will ensure that the focus actions remain salient to emerging EM volunteering sector needs, but can also capitalise on opportunities to progress the sustainable volunteering agenda as they arise.

Enabling The Strategic Framework

Factors that are needed to enable this framework and the successful implementation of the resulting actions include:

- a shared understanding of what EM volunteering is and does between organisations and communities
- responsive and flexible structures that support learning and continuous improvement and adaptive responses
- inclusion of community volunteers and other related organisations, where appropriate, in the development of programs and decision making of actions associated with this framework and other plans that may emerge from this
- appropriate resourcing at local and agency levels
- stories and narratives of successes, and collaborative narratives that illustrate the value of actions
- new ways of valuing and evaluating the contribution of volunteers and volunteering programs
- strong strategic and inclusive leadership across the sector, agencies and communities to support and drive actions
- trusted and maintained relationships, and
- sector-wide collaboration (government, organisations and community).

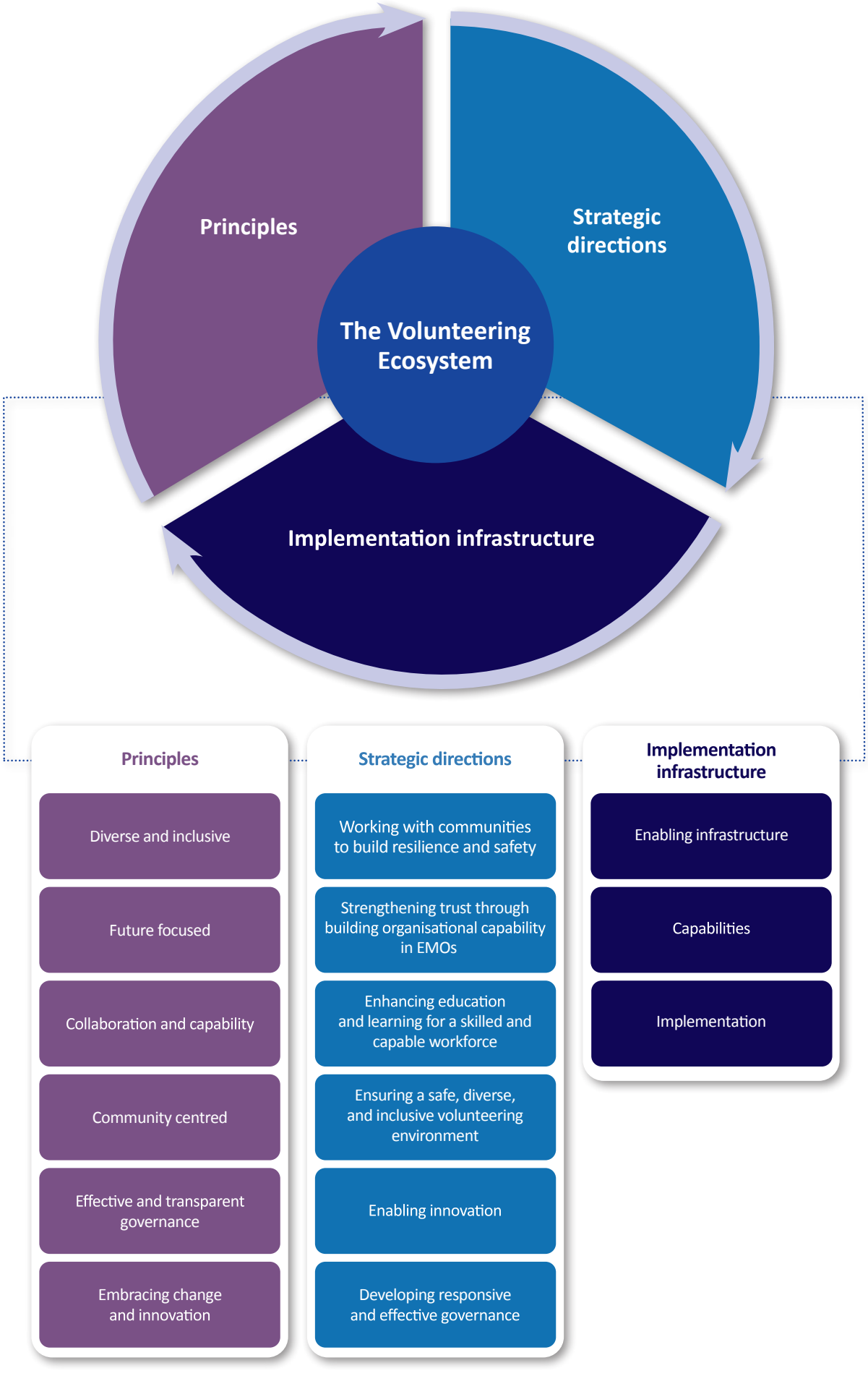


FIGURE 2: THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING BLUEPRINT: THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

An authorising environment and a mandate to operate are also essential for the forward progression of The Strategic Framework, requiring:

- endorsement from sector leaders
- buy-in from participating organisations, and
- continued auspicing of actions by relevant AFAC committees and agencies.

A proposed process to achieve this is illustrated in Figure 3.

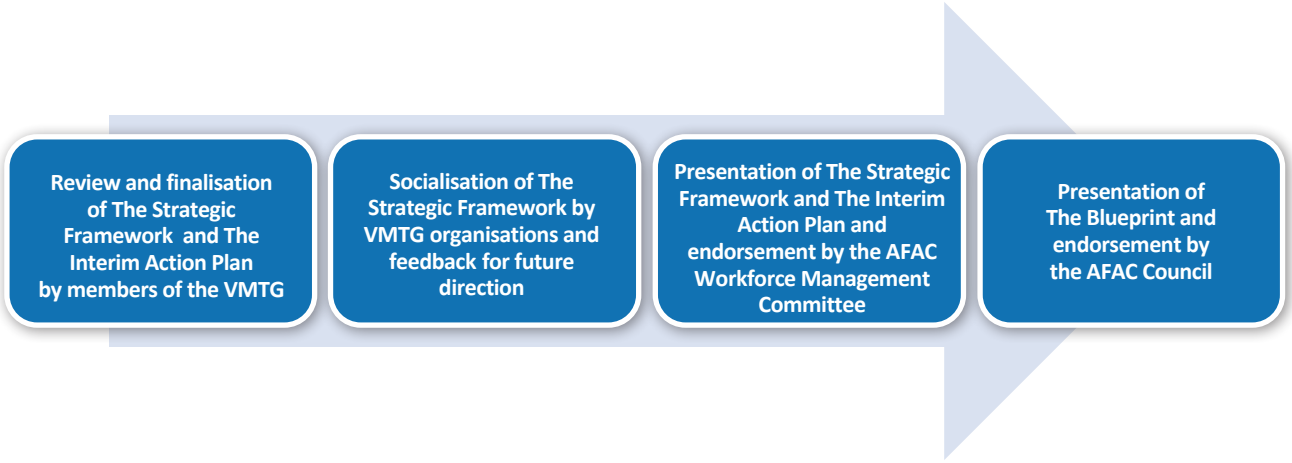


FIGURE 3: A PROPOSED PROCESS FOR THE BLUEPRINT ENDORSEMENT

Section 2
The current context

The current emergency management context

The critical role that volunteers within EMO workforces is widely acknowledged across the sector. The Productivity Commission estimates there were 24,357 SES and 189,041 Fire Agency volunteers in the workforce in the 2023–24 financial year (SCRGSP, 2025). For State and Territory Emergency and Rural Fire Services across Australia, volunteers make up much of their workforce. The last decade has seen considerable change in not only the physical environment in which EM volunteers operate, but also in how communities and individuals choose to live and work. The current context is highly dynamic and shaped by numerous drivers and influences (Figure 4).

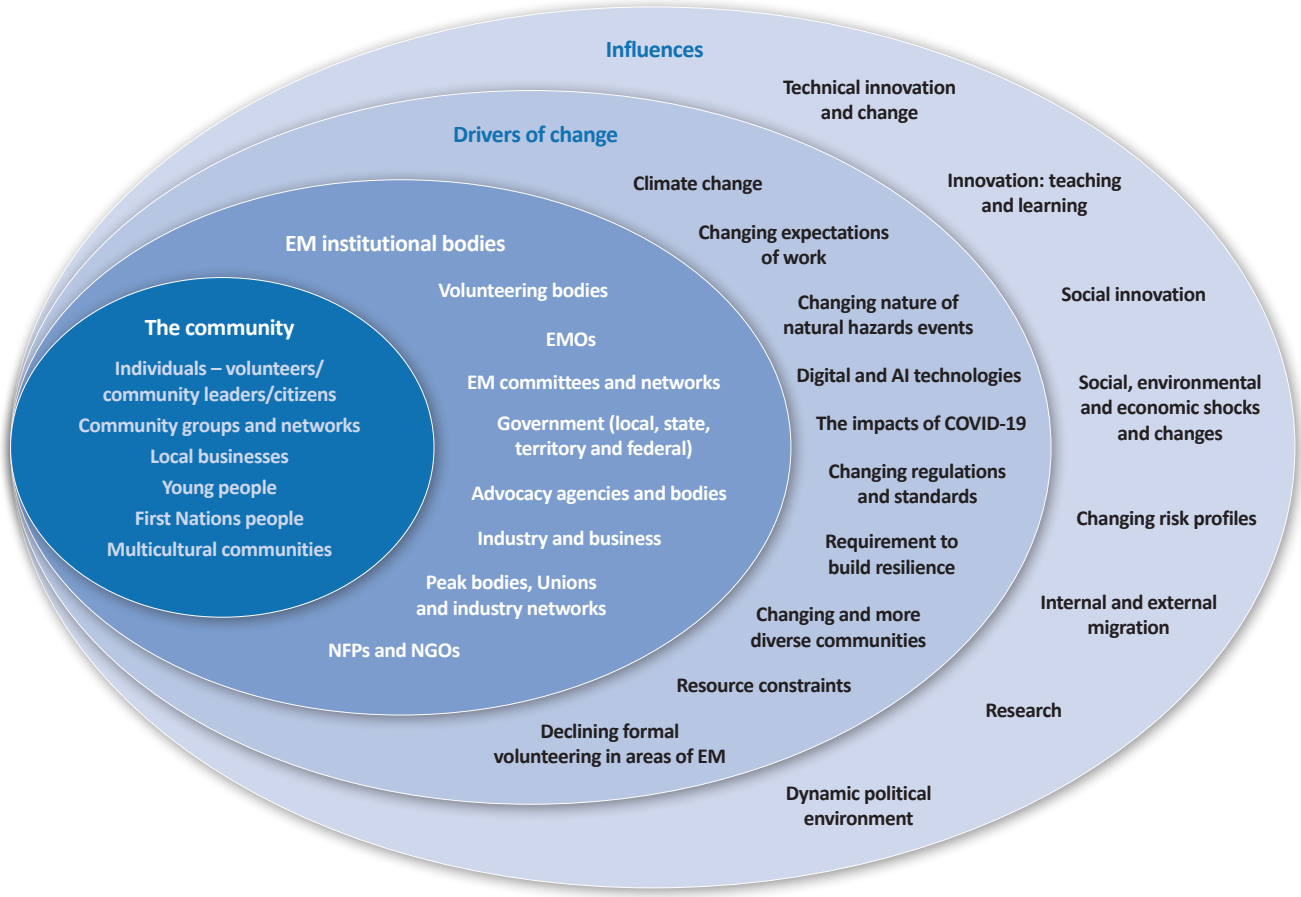


FIGURE 4: THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEERING CONTEXT

The effects of these drivers and influences have impacted EM volunteering in EMOs in multiple ways, including:

- the need for investment to transform in an environment of constrained resources and increasing service demands
- the emergence of new volunteering models – particularly in communities (e.g., digital volunteering, spontaneous and fluid volunteering) – and the need for coordination between them
- different social contracts with regard to the changing roles and responsibilities that communities have in relation to natural hazard mitigation and management and the service EMOs offer to communities.
- shorter time for recovery due to cascading and more frequent events, combined with the longer-term and more intense nature of events and recovery, which can erode resilience within EMOs and communities
- increased competition between different organisations more generally for volunteers in communities, and
- declining numbers of formal volunteers in some areas of EM.

Several widely acknowledged issues associated with the volunteering workforce throughout the EM sector have been documented in the literature (e.g., McLennan et al., 2004; McLennan et al., 2016; and McLennan et al., 2022). The nature of the drivers and how they intersect with EMOs and their volunteer workforce is amplifying their impacts and has resulted in the following needs:

- for greater inclusion to diversify the EM workforce so it better reflects the changing demographics of their communities
- to change the service model to work *with* communities rather than *for* them
- for longer-term strategic and systemic solutions and approaches to manage the complexity of highly uncertain and dynamic environment in which EMOs and volunteers operate
- to develop inclusive, flexible, and adaptive organisations and structures that can actively address volunteer's concerns and needs, and
- to upskill volunteers in response to new technologies and the changing nature of the risks they are dealing with.

  (SSCADR, 2024; NSW Gov, 2024; Lawrence et al., 2023; Young et al., 2018 and 2021; McLennan et al., 2022; O'Halloran and Davies, 2020; and Pyke, 2018)

These factors are also creating new risks for EMOs, communities, and volunteers, making them more vulnerable to decreased resilience and reduced capability and capacity. They have also highlighted the crucial role communities play in volunteering, and the need for EMOs to work more closely with them if they are to have future sustainability. This has brought the sector to a critical junction where they must now find innovative solutions to the acknowledged long-standing issues that are impacting them or face the prospect of reduced service capacity and effectiveness. To address this challenge, the sector will need to transform, which will require:

- a commitment by the sector to support and resource these actions
- strong leadership in EMOs and communities to support and drive actions
- strategic approaches that address the systemic nature of these issues, and
- sector-wide collaboration with communities and the building of trusted relationships.

The status of volunteering

> "I feel that there's a steady drip of pressure on volunteers to do more. And yet, it's often hard, particularly in rural areas, to sustain numbers in volunteer brigades, both SES and volunteer fire brigades."
> — Mr Walker, ABC Online, 28 February 2023

Formal volunteering decreased nationally from 2006–2020, while informal volunteering held steady (Figure 5, overleaf). Productivity Commission data suggests that volunteering in State and Territory Emergency Services have been stable since 2013–14 but has declined by 30,000 nationally in the Fire Services (SCRGSP, 2025). The decline during the COVID-19 pandemic made up one-third of this decline. This is mirrored in a study that surveyed volunteerism between 2021–2022 (Biddle and Gray, 2023). It suggested a fall nationally in volunteering rates of over 25% between late 2019 and April 2021 during the pandemic. They also found that volunteering rates had risen in a 'small but significant' way but were still below the pre-pandemic rates. There is little data available to indicate whether this is a permanent or temporary state.

The current distribution of the population also presents challenges, with small towns, rural and remote communities, who are the most vulnerable to fire and flood, having the smallest populations and the least growth (Figure 6, overleaf).

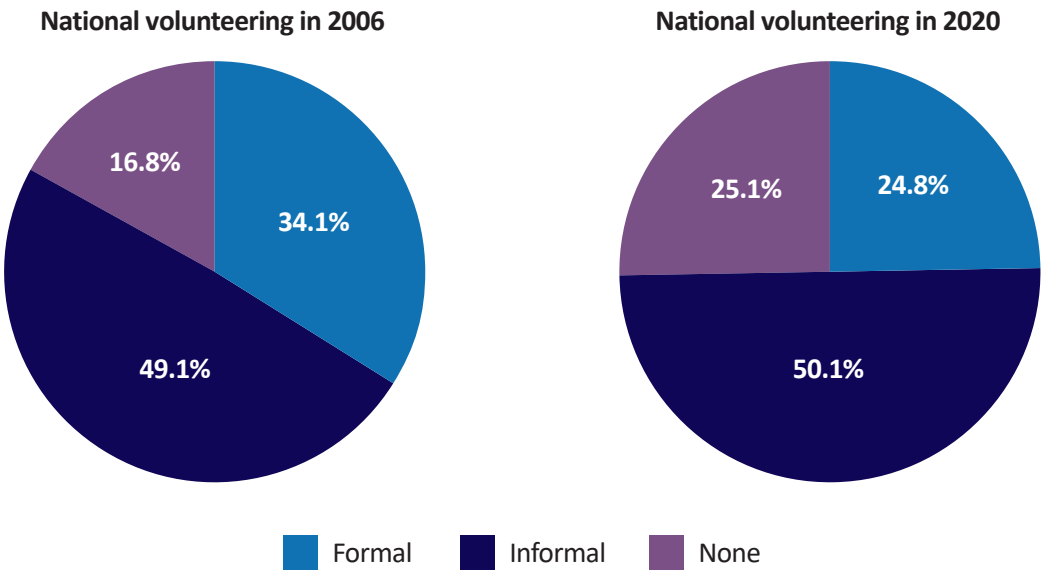


FIGURE 5: NATIONAL VOLUNTEERING IN 2006 AND 2020 (SOURCE: ABS)

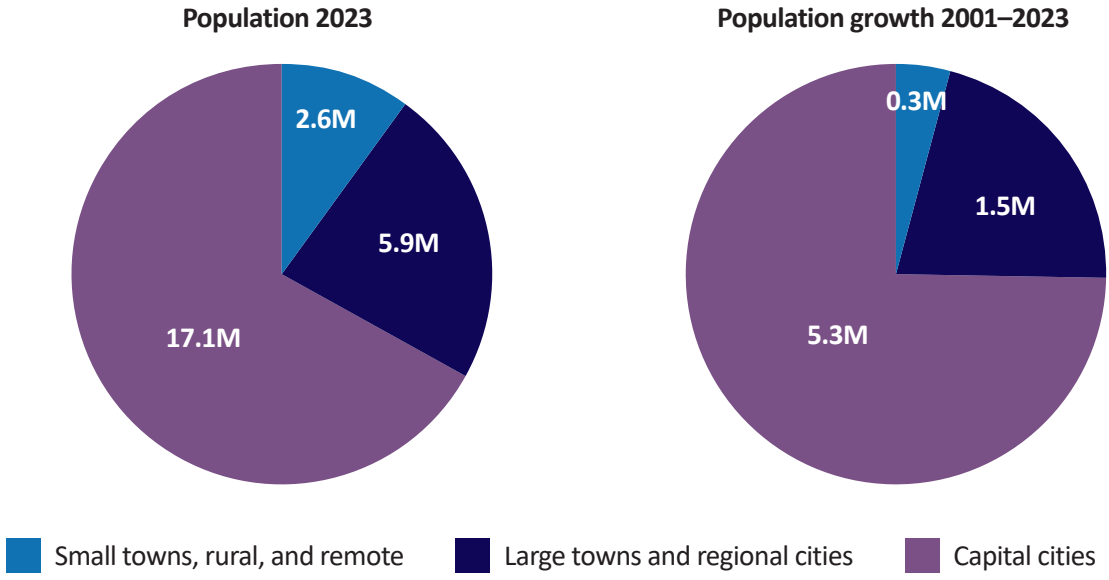


FIGURE 6: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION 2023 AND CHANGE 2001–2023 (SOURCE: ABS)

The lack of a robust data and a cohesive national picture of the status of volunteering makes it difficult for decision makers and funders to ascertain what sort of funding is needed and where it can be most efficiently and effectively directed. It also creates a level of invisibility of:

> those who volunteer and the value of the work they do, and
> the benefits generated by volunteering, such as increased resilience and connectivity.

Our review of publicly available strategic plans and annual reports published by Fire Services and the SES in Australia and New Zealand found that only 50 percent of annual reports reported fully against strategic measurements from their volunteering strategies, and 43 percent reported less than 25 percent. It was also notable that what was measured varied greatly between organisations, and data was often embedded in case studies or poorly articulated. In some cases, volunteering data was represented as part of the overall workforce. The only consistent measurement was the number of volunteers and whether that number had increased or decreased. There was extremely limited reporting of longitudinal progress found in other measurements. It was also found that thematically, EMOs' strategies had more in common than difference. This commonality was used as a foundation for the development of the strategic directions in this framework.

The changing volunteering landscape

How people chose to volunteer, and their expectations of volunteering are also changing.

There has been a fundamental shift in relation to how people work and their expectations of the workplace. This has been influenced by the:

- impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
- lessening of permanent jobs available and the emergence of the 'gig economy'
- increasing number of women in the workforce and the emergence of inclusion as a key agenda
- inclusion of 'psychosocial risk' as a requirement of occupational health and safety (OHS)
- changing social norms in relation to what is acceptable in the workplace
- new technologies (such as artificial intelligence [AI] and digital technologies), which require new skills and changes to the ways in which people work
- different expectations of work, particularly within younger cohorts, and
- the emergence of working from home arrangements.

These changes are influencing changes in the psychological contract and expectations that volunteers have with agencies in relation how they wish to participate and be treated in the workplace. A recent survey has also indicated a fundamental shift more generally in volunteering preferences from longer-term to shorter-term commitments, and an increase in informal volunteering (NSW Gov, 2024). This has ramifications for volunteering organisations who will have to balance how they accommodate the growing preference for shorter-term commitments with the need to maintain a consistent service and the safety of their volunteers.

Other factors impacting volunteers include:

- increasing financial stress and time constraints
- the change of focus to community-led initiatives in the resilience and recovery areas, many of which rely on volunteers
- costs incurred by individuals and their families because of volunteering
- the need to improve the standard of equipment and care provided to volunteers by some organisations
- the professionalisation of the volunteering workforce and an increased administrative burden on volunteers, and
- increased trauma and fatigue and reduced resilience in some communities.

  (NSW Gov, 2024; McLennan et al., 2019 and 2022; Dawson, 2022; Young et al., 2018 and 2021; Volunteering Victoria, 2020; Kruger and McLennan, 2019; Esmond, 2009; and McLennan et al., 2004)

As volunteers are not obligated to their role, negative experiences and unfulfilled motivational needs can result in volunteers leaving (Prytz et al., 2023). Anecdotally, there is evidence that some volunteers feel unappreciated and that they are being exploited by being asked to fulfil roles which should be paid positions.

Lantz and Runefors' (2021) systematic review of volunteer literature found a number of important individual, group, organisational, and societal factors (e.g., social networks, belonging, and training satisfaction) related to attraction and retention. Many of these factors aligned to Self-Determination Theory and the three key psychological needs that foster intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2017):

- **autonomy** – the need to feel ownership over one's actions and decisions
- **competence** – the need to feel effective in one's activities and capable of achieving desired outcomes, and
- **relatedness** – the need to experience a sense of connection and belonging with others.

This highlights the need for:

- greater understanding as to what motivates different cohorts to volunteer, and what volunteers consider to be a meaningful contribution, and
- to make visible the benefits of volunteering such as friendship, increased confidence, and new skills.

"Looking after the mental health of the first responders and volunteers supporting communities is critical for the sustainability and success of any volunteer framework." (SSCADR, 2024)

Increasing awareness of the importance of wellbeing of volunteers has resulted in a need to manage trauma and reduce the potential for burnout, particularly amongst volunteers. According to a report undertaken by Curtin University in 2023 following the 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires, an estimated 2,700 EMO volunteers had probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following the fires (Lawrence et al., 2023). Young responders have also been found to be particularly vulnerable, with one report finding that if they were not appropriately supported that they "may be placed at heightened risk for developing debilitating and career-limiting mental health concerns" (Taylor et al., 2023).

The expansion of the volunteering role in EM has also amplified the above issues and challenges historical notions of who EM volunteers are and what they do. Historically, volunteers in EMOs have focused on response, however the requirement to support resilience building and recovery has resulted in an expansion in roles that volunteers in EMOs undertake (Figure 7). It has also highlighted the need to attribute equal value and reward to roles that are not directly related to response.

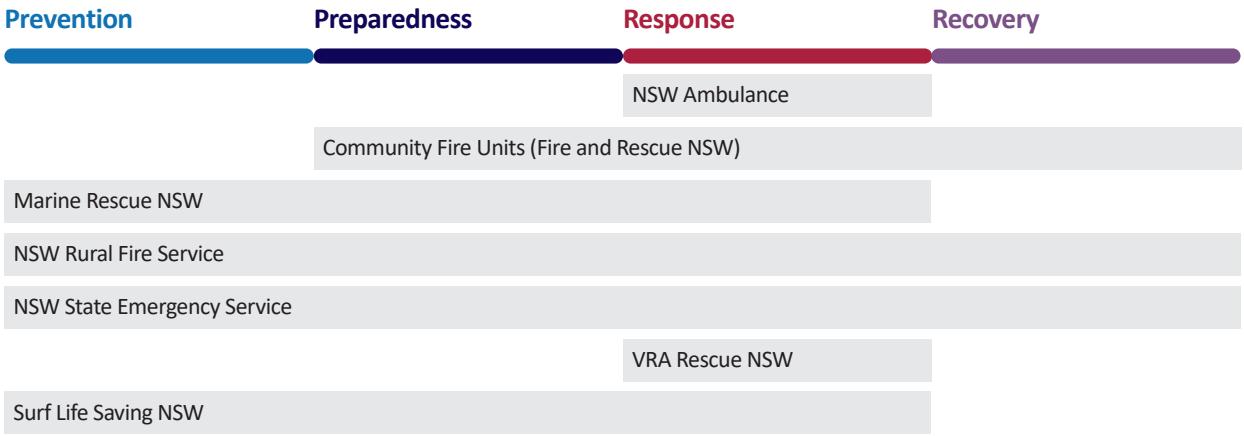


FIGURE 7: OVERVIEW OF THE EXPANSION OF PPRR PHASES BY VOLUNTEERS AND THEIR EMO (NSW GOV, 2024, p5)

New technologies and changes in society are shaping how volunteers can and do participate. Digital platforms have enabled groups to mobilise and exchange information more effectively. These factors have seen the emergence and uptake of less conventional volunteering models such as spontaneous volunteering, digital volunteering, and fluid volunteering (McLennan et al., 2015; McClennan et al., 2022; and NSW Gov, 2024).

The new generation of volunteers often form around communities of interest or practice that span place-based and virtual communities, which can exist at local to international scales. These communities may include special interest groups, care givers, local business networks, social enterprises, business networks, faith-based groups, and multicultural and First Nations communities. This is broadening out traditional notions of EM volunteering. It has also created the need for greater coordination to ensure that innovative volunteering models can be safely and effectively leveraged (SSCAD, 2024).

Our changing communities

The community are our volunteers, and our volunteers are our community.

Due to the interconnected nature of communities and volunteering, what communities experience can have a direct impact on volunteering EMOs. The demographic, social, and cultural characteristics of communities across Australia have changed significantly. These include the five changes already identified in the early blueprint scoping document (McLennan, 2021) as follows:

- rural ageing and depopulation
- ageing and increasing Australian population
- urbanisation and urban sprawl
- greater mobility and transience, and
- greater social and cultural diversity within and between communities.

Additionally, the important social and cultural changes include:

- decreasing household size and increased cost-of-living and working hours
- internal migration and changing social structures in communities (e.g., increases in large commercial farms that reduces the number of volunteers available locally in rural areas)
- significant growth of renting as a form of housing tenure, resulting in lower attachment to locality
- augmentation of personal, education, work, and commercial relationships online, resulting in lower association with geographic neighbours
- cultural changes (attitudes to community, inclusion, participation in organised religion and sports, and communication), and
- higher levels of formal education (greater opportunities to incorporate volunteering into post-secondary education).

Currently, there are knowledge gaps as to how these changes in communities may be impacting recruitment and retention throughout the EM volunteering workforce. Communities that have not been heavily involved in EM are also being sought, however issues associated with trust and perception can present challenges. As a result, there is a need to build a greater understanding of how to effectively engage with, build trust, and meet the needs of diverse cohorts who volunteer. It also requires inclusive leadership and management across the sector.

"We need to make volunteering feel like something that belongs to everyone, regardless of background, lifestyle or circumstance." (Haghani, 2025)

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities have been an increased area of focus. They have strong religious and cultural motivations that support volunteering (Alzaareer and Abdalla, 2023), however this volunteering may not always be understood in the traditional ways. For example, Peucker (2020) states that the 2011 Census found lower rates of formal volunteering from the Muslim community (9.2% vs 17.9% for the general population), while Dunn et al (2015) found considerably higher rates (36% for volunteering in faith-based organisations and 14% in sporting organisations) based on 500 qualitative interviews in Sydney. This occurred because many Muslims were engaging in volunteering work through their religious organisations, rather than those regarded as 'traditional' volunteer organisations.

How to safely and effectively include youth in the EM volunteer workforce needs consideration, particularly as this large cohort often have different expectations and understandings particularly in relation to inclusion and how they would like to volunteer. For example, Nursey-Bray et al (2022) found youth to be more interested in 'event-based, one-off' activities for volunteering than the more traditional group-based work. Due to the higher vulnerability and the potential long-term impacts of psychosocial risks on this cohort, it is particularly important for age-appropriate structures and support to be in place to ensure their wellbeing and emotional safety.

Inclusion of First Nations communities and Traditional Owners requires the development of specific knowledge and skills that include:

- culturally informed and appropriate engagement with First Nations people and Traditional Owners
- place-based approaches that build trust and mutual respect
- understanding of the importance of caring for Country, and
- respectful conduct in relation to traditional knowledge related to EM.

Challenges to effective actions at a national level

> "It has just felt like Groundhog Day. We keep doing things and nothing seems to change."
> — Volunteering EMO Manager

Considerable work has been undertaken by EMOs and the sector to address long-standing issues in areas such as recruitment and retention, increasing representation of women, and awareness of the importance of wellbeing. However, forward progress of the volunteering agenda at the sector level has been hampered by well-documented factors including:

- resource constraints and increasing service demands
- inconsistent data and knowledge across the sector
- lack of infrastructure to support national collaborative long-term actions of this nature that require innovation
- competing priorities across the sector and a lack of consensus about what is important
- a disconnect between those who volunteer and those who lead the sector
- a lack of visibility of the value and the benefits of volunteering contributions
- resistance to change in some levels of EMOs and an entrenched para-military culture
- distrust between EMOs, communities, and government authorities
- a pervasive hierarchical, command and control culture that can be exclusionary
- pre-existing and entrenched views of what EM volunteering is, and
- the historically-based response focus and risk adverse culture of EMOs.

(NSW Gov, 2024; McLennan et al., 2022 and 2015; Dibley et al., 2019; and Young et al., 2018)

The systemic nature of the issues has also resulted in 'overchoice', where organisations have been faced with multiple options, resulting in a sense of being overwhelmed. The lack of an overarching strategic framework for the sector, and resultant lack of coordination and focus, has exacerbated this. It has also meant that other sectoral initiatives have not been well leveraged or connected to the overarching volunteering agenda.

Previous national actions, such as attraction and retention, were also found to focus primarily on visible issues rather than the more erosive root causes. These are often less visible and complex, requiring strategic approaches over the longer term to achieve effective outcomes.

The role of institutions in enabling sector-wide change

Volunteering, especially in the emergency services, is a well-recognised national institution with particularly Australian characteristics. Less well-recognised is the role of social institutions in understanding and managing complex social, economic and environmental issues.

An 'institution' can be understood formally as a set of laws, policies, or procedures, or informally as norms, standard operating practices, or habits (Crawford and Ostrom, 1995; and Polski and Ostrom, 1999). These can be broadly grouped under written and unwritten rules. Each institution has a set of common behaviours and procedures that involve formal and informal coordination amongst individuals or group.

In the EM context, volunteering can be considered as a distinct institution, to which other institutions – such as government, communities, industry, non-government organisations (NGOs), and not-for-profit organisations (NFPs) – contribute. This complex array requires multi-level governance arrangements, with a supporting infrastructure to sustain it.

The sustainable volunteering agenda requires broad collaboration across these institutions, which can challenge established EM structures, culture, operational focus, and ownership of risk and management systems. However, a clearer understanding of EM volunteering as its own institution can help implement a change agenda. As a result, clarifying the role of different institutions in the volunteering ecosystem is important. Other areas for consideration include:

- How collective actions of volunteers manage the common resources and assets (including communities who provide the individuals and human resources that contribute to volunteering). Who owns which risks and who is responsible for outcomes?
- What is needed to best manage the interdisciplinary nature of activities to achieve effective insights and outcomes?
- How to coordinate polycentric actions across multiple scales and locations, and how institutional arrangements can influence these.
- How to make visible the collective value and benefits generated by volunteering (which are mostly non-market and intangible).
- What types of measurement and evaluation are needed to measure effectiveness of actions and their benefits, and where can be these effectively applied?

The way forward – future national pathways

> "You've got to think about big things while you're doing small things, so that all the small things go in the right direction." — Alvin Toffler

There is growing appetite for change to find new pathways to support and ensure the future of EM volunteering. This is reflected in the recent Senate Select Committee on Australia's Disaster Resilience's inquiry report (SSCADR, 2024), which highlights the importance of addressing the changing conditions surrounding volunteering and the long-standing issues affecting volunteers. The report made the following specific recommendations to the Federal Government in relation to wellbeing:

- undertake the development of a national disaster mental health hub
- design and implement consistent national trauma-informed care principles, ensuring that first responders – professional and volunteer – receive training and support in these national principles, and
- convene a disaster resilience mental health summit.

In relation to potential future volunteering models, the report identified the need for more flexibility and to expand the pool of community volunteers through education and training. National volunteering models proposed within this report included:

- Disaster Resilience Corps – which is based on existing programs overseas such as AmeriCorps and Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Corps (Minderoo Foundation).
- National Emergency Responder Corps (Youth Program) – which would target school leavers of 18 years and over to opt in to train and engage in emergency services work for a minimum of two years (Duke of Edinburgh Awards – Australia).
- The Student Volunteer Army in New Zealand – which was established following the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes and focuses on facilitating community action through youth engagement, preparing for disasters, and service. (See Attachment 3 for a Summary Case Study.)
- A Volunteer Ready Reserve where volunteers are 'trained, equipped, and held in reserve to be deployed into areas when required'.
- Youth cadet and internship programs targeted at school age students from ages 11 to 18 (CFA Victoria).
- An expansion of the SES volunteering model.
- A nationally funded training and equipment program modelled on the UK Government's former New Dimension program to improve access to equipment.

Key opportunities outlined in the report included:

- to incentivise volunteering through areas such as legislated employment and financial incentives
- greater support, recognition, and incentives for the employers to make the release of volunteers easier or less impactful on business
- reduce cost and administrative burden on volunteers
- building capacity of the community sector to respond to disasters
- improvement of volunteering coordination across the sector, and
- increasing organisational support for volunteers.

There are existing national initiatives that can also be leveraged including:

- Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience – Volunteering Leadership Program, Emergency Management Volunteering Forum
- Volunteering Australia – CPD Program for Professional Leaders of Volunteers
- Volunteering Australia – *National Strategy for Volunteering and Action Plan 2024–2027*, and
- National Emergency Management Agency – Disaster Relief Australia.

Achieving sustainable volunteering requires focus on specific areas, and the identification and coordination of areas of alignment across national and state agendas. This will support the development of holistic actions that complement rather than duplicate or create negative competition. Innovation and education and learning have been determined to be the two priority focus areas of opportunity for volunteering. These broad areas are central to enabling the change needed and offer tangible pathways forward for the sector.

Innovation – the door to the future

> "The best way to predict your future is to create it." — Abraham Lincoln

Innovation is central to enabling the change that is needed to ensure a sustainable workforce for the future. Innovation itself is a process that is different to normal organisational or societal processes. This is due to the high levels of uncertainty associated with innovations and applying new knowledge (Drucker, 2002), especially those involved in complex change. However, this is not a new concept to EMOs, and areas of innovation already exist in these organisations, which include:

- continuous learning and knowledge-sharing forums (e.g., lessons learned)
- piloting and application of innovative technologies by volunteering organisations (e.g., digital communication, drone teams, and immersive learning)
- piloting integration of new models of volunteering, such as spontaneous volunteering (e.g., NSW SES Reimagining Volunteering program)
- policy and process innovation (e.g., flexible volunteering and working arrangements, cohesion grant NSW), and
- social innovation, such as inclusion-based initiatives (e.g., Champions of Change [AFAC] and the Multicultural Program, Lifesaving Victoria).

Summary innovation case studies are provided in Section C.

National initiatives that support innovation in the EM sector include:

- the NHRA Disaster Challenge is an annual competition that encourages innovation in EMOs, communities and research
- the Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (AIDR) innovation and research collection that provides case studies and research papers, and
- AFAC Knowledge Innovation and Research Utilisation Community of Practice.

The sustainable volunteering agenda encompasses multiple forms of innovation including social, technological, policy, organisational cultural, and service areas. As a result, systemic innovation is needed. Key factors needed to enable this agenda are a coordinated innovation system (Midgley and Lindhult, 2021), and an understanding of different types of innovation and their application. Being aware of other areas of innovation and looking at the opportunities to work with, position, or leverage other innovations (Drucker, 2002), is central to this process.

Systemic innovation is where different types of innovation (such as policy, technical, and social innovation) converge to achieve impactful outcomes and transformation. An example of this is the recent introduction of the new Australian Fire Danger Rating System. This type of complex change "… is rarely achieved through a single organisation or sector but involves complex interaction of public policy and reforms to legislation, changes to business and community cultures and practices, as well as shifts in consumer attitudes and behaviour" (Davies et al., 2013). Key characteristics of this are:

- it develops following a crisis or period of upheaval
- new ideas, concepts and paradigms
- new laws and/or regulations across a broad area
- coalitions for change of many actors and/or across more than one sector or scale
- changed market metrics or measurement tools
- changed power relationships and new types of power structures
- widespread diffusion of technology and technology development
- new skills or roles across many actors
- new institutions, and
- widespread changes in behaviour, structures and/or processes.

The humancentric nature of volunteering, the role of communities, and the need for cultural and behaviour change, make social innovation an essential part of the volunteering innovation agenda. Although many innovative programs throughout the EM volunteering workforce use social innovation, there is limited understanding across the sector of this type of innovation, which can create additional challenges for those implementing these programs.

Social innovation is often used in to address complex challenges and has been used in areas such as climate change, justice, and equity. (Phills et al., 2008). It is a critical factor in sustainable change and often begins at the grassroots level but can grow to have a broader impact. Social innovation is not market-driven; however, markets may emerge as society changes (e.g., social entrepreneurs such as Foodbank). Some of its key features are "cross-sector dynamics, co-design, exchanging ideas and values, shifting roles and relationships, and blending public, philanthropic, and private resources and social entrepreneurship" (Phills et al., 2008; and Brandsen et al., 2018). It is this boundary spanning aspect of social innovation that also makes it particularly dynamic, and the process can be more emergent and less defined than technological innovation. It is also a critical factor in sustainable change and often begins at the grassroots level but can grow to have a broader impact.

One example of social innovation is the Grantham land swap program following the devastating 2011 Queensland floods, enabling people to move from high-risk areas without incurring prohibitive costs. This was instigated by the local government in collaboration with their communities (Young, 2014).

To date, innovation has been primarily understood in technological terms and often uses adaptive innovation where an innovative model developed elsewhere is adapted for use in the local context. However, innovation is not a formalised field established within the EM sector, and as such it will need to build the infrastructure and knowledge need to fully realise its opportunities.

The EM sector has tended to focus on specific innovations or the need for innovation, rather than the process itself and its effectiveness. This indicates a need to develop practice in this area, particularly in relation to application of different types of innovation, managing the risk of innovation and monitoring and evaluation.

Areas of opportunity include:

- strengthening and formalising innovation capability across the sector
- development of a national innovation program for EM volunteering
- supporting individual agencies and organisations to pilot innovative volunteering models and technologies that align with the national interest
- working with and leveraging community and other EM stakeholder innovations to advance the sustainable volunteering agenda, and
- development of monitoring and evaluation to more effectively map progress of innovation in the EM volunteering sector.

Education and learning

> "We recruit a certain type of person to do a certain job, and at some point, we ask them to do a very different job, which requires very different skills." — EMO Manager (Young and Jones, 2019)

Education and learning underpin EM capability and innovation, and the current learning programs within the sector vary widely in their extent, complexity, and how they relate to specific roles. They include:

- non-accredited short courses designed for specific knowledge, skill(s), or role requirements
- single units of nationally endorsed competency standards designed for specific knowledge, skill(s), or role requirements
- multiple units of nationally endorsed competency standards designed for specific role requirements (these units may be packaged together as nationally endorsed or organisation-designed skill sets)
- multiple units of nationally endorsed competency standards leading to national qualifications that may be supported by one or more role requirements, and
- inclusion of organisationally required content not described in national units may occur in programs when it is required for the performance of a specific role.

The strategies that support effective learning apply to all learning programs, irrespective of whether they are formally accredited or not. Design and development of training package units and qualifications involves various stages and are based on the ADDIE – Analysis, design, development, implementation, evaluation – model (AFAC, 2019). These are delivered through a combination of media, including in-person, online, and hybrid options by many of the Agencies, many of which are registered training organisations (RTOs).

In recent years, catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been widespread adoption of digital technologies and platforms that support enhanced ways of learning. Immersive technologies are also increasingly being used in the educational space. These advances are improving the accessibility of education and learning to beyond place-based learning.

This reflects the general broadening nature of education and learning in response to technological, environmental, and social innovation occurring globally. The rate of change, and the need to have current and relevant knowledge and skills, makes learning and education a continuous process that incorporates upskilling and reskilling through formal and informal learning (Figure 8, overleaf).

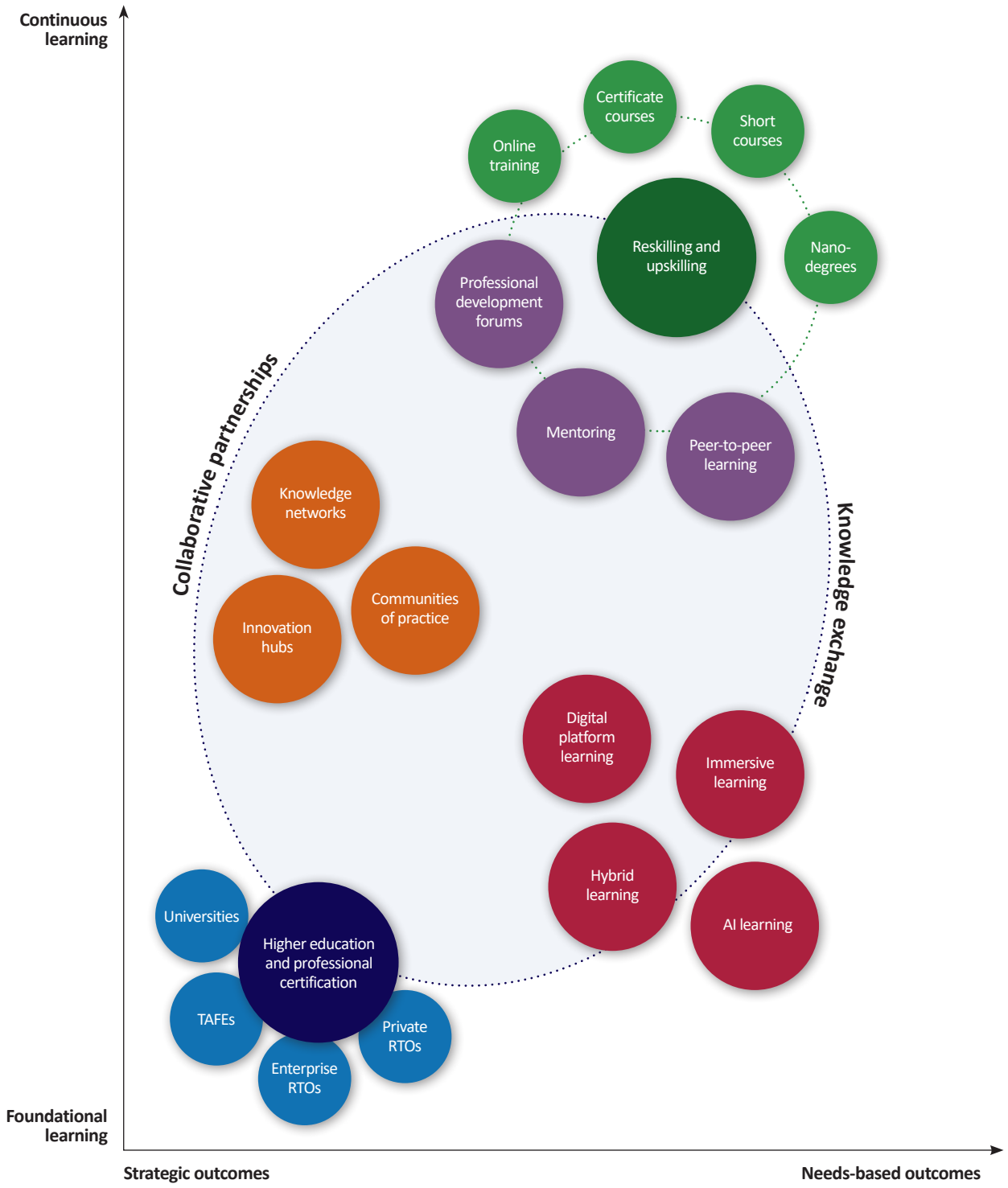
Recognition of the importance of non-technical people skills – such as cultural awareness, team building, transformation management and communication (AFAC, 2023) – is also growing. Our desktop review of publicly available training options for volunteers in Fire and SES Agencies found non-traditional options such as health and wellbeing, community engagement, drone, and virtual reality training, but these were primarily limited to operational response. If emergent skill needs, particularly those associated with innovation and the expanding roles of volunteers, are not identified and addressed, these organisations are likely to face growing skills gaps that will weaken their capability.

There is also little training offered beyond EMO staff and volunteers that "… supports community-wide preparation and mobilisation" (Kruger and McLennan, 2019). In view of the increasing need for surge capacity, this is a key opportunity with the dual benefit of building community resilience.

Areas of opportunity include:

- Building on current Recognition of Prior Learning to include more non-traditional forms of learning. For example, the Australian Red Cross extension of recognition of learning to incorporate lived experience.
- Leveraging existing capability and skills of community members and volunteers and incorporating these into existing volunteering capability frameworks.
- Mechanisms to enable greater transferability of skills between jurisdictions to support greater efficiency and enhance surge capacity in organisations.
- Clarification of skills associated with EM volunteers' expanded roles and emerging areas of skills needs, particularly before and after events.
- Optimisation of new technologies to increase accessibility of learning and education to new and different cohorts and enhance training delivery.

  (Australian Red Cross, 2022; AFAC, 2021; and Young et al., 2021)



Universities	Diplomas, Degrees, and Doctorates
TAFEs	Diplomas and Certificates
Enterprise RTOs	Cadetships, Diplomas, and Certificates
Private RTOs	Diplomas and Certificates

FIGURE 8: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL TRAINING MEDIUMS AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE MECHANISMS THAT ARE PART OF THE CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF LEARNING (YOUNG ET AL., 2020)

Conclusion

> "The growth of informal volunteering shows Australians are still willing to volunteer, if volunteering can fit in with the other demands of their busy lives." (Davies, 2023)

The long-standing assumptions surrounding the volunteering workforce can no longer be sustained in the changing context organisations and communities occupy. To bridge the emerging gap between current and future capability created by the changing needs and expectations of those who volunteer, investment in decisive action over the longer-term is critical. Understanding the evolving relationship between volunteers and their communities and how this is reshaping expectations and understandings of what volunteering is and does is central to this. It means that the sector will need to take the time to consciously negotiate and build trusted relationships with their communities so that there are shared understandings of roles and responsibilities, how volunteering is enacted and the terms of this. It will also require commitment to resourcing innovation and longer-term action.

The pathway forward is clear. The sector can either embrace the opportunity that change offers or delay and commit themselves to a future which will no longer serve them or their communities.

Section 3
The Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework

The volunteering agenda is complex and spans multiple institutions, communities, and EMOs who are operating in a highly changeable and increasingly uncertain environment. Addressing the long-term issues relating to this complexity and the need for innovation cannot be done effectively through single agendas but requires systems thinking. Rather than examining individual components in isolation, systems thinking focuses on the relationships and interactions between different aspects of a system. It requires collaboration, continuous learning and adaptation. This framework is designed to provide a systems-based structure that can evolve as the sector matures. It has four key components (Figure 9):

- the volunteering ecosystem provides the environment in which The Strategic Framework will be applied and inform actions
- principles have been developed to guide the key intentions of The Strategic Framework throughout its application
- strategic directions provide the overarching focus for actions, and
- implementation infrastructure needed to enable actions related to The Strategic Framework.

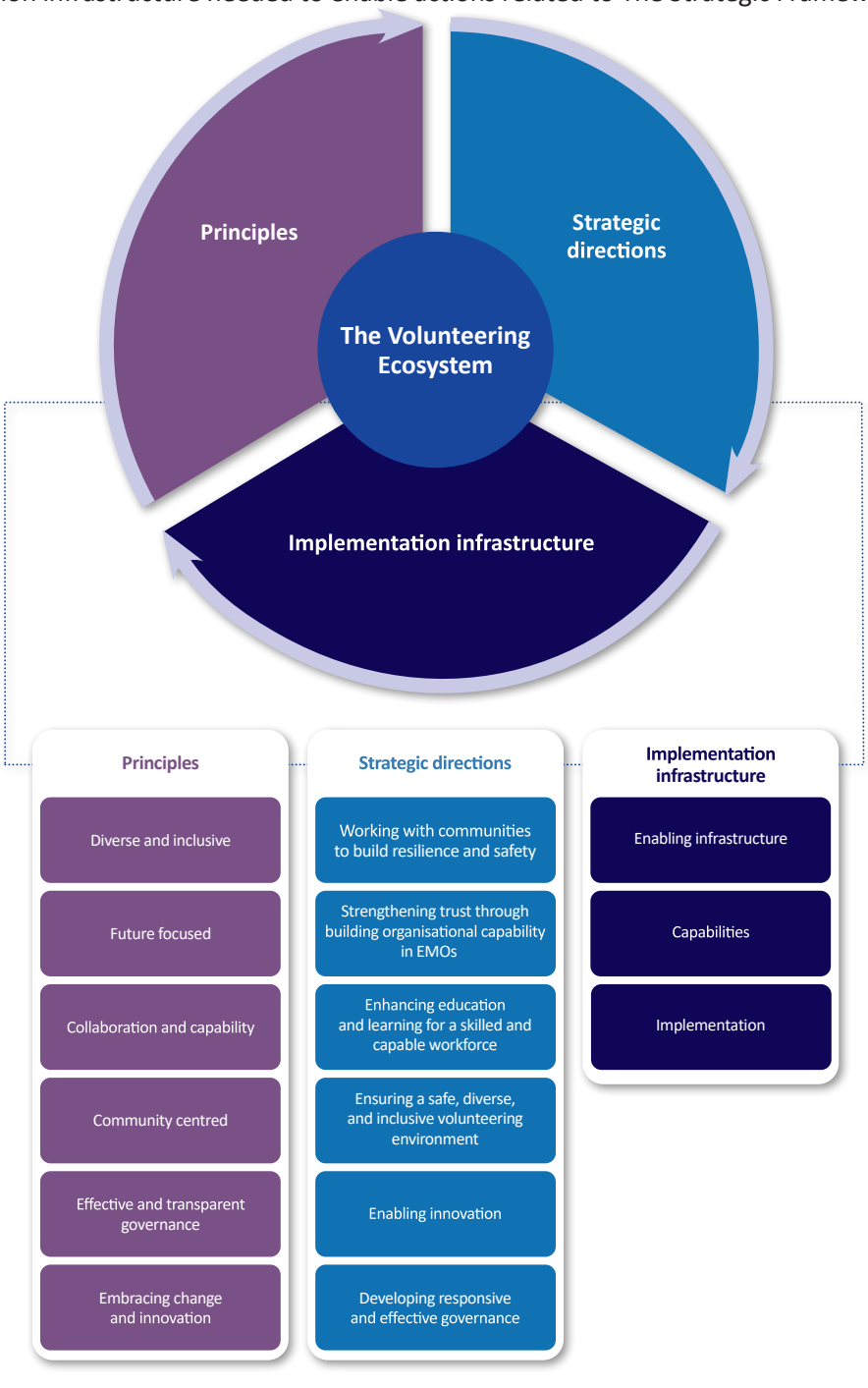


FIGURE 9: THE COMPONENTS OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING BLUEPRINT: THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The EM volunteering ecosystem

The EM volunteering ecosystem has multiple intersecting and interdependent components. It is only by considering these different components, what actions need to be undertaken, the actors' roles and agendas, and the relationships and interactions between these, that effective action can be achieved. Actors within the ecosystem can be separated into:

> those who actively participate in volunteering, and
> those who support volunteering.

In some cases, actors within the ecosystem will have a dual purpose and actively engage in volunteering as well as support it.

Actions within the ecosystem are undertaken at three levels:

> **Institutional:** government/community/industry sectors/NGOs/NFPs
> **Groups:** organisations/community groups/businesses/departments/agencies/networks, and
> **Individuals:** community members/volunteers/employees/managers/coordinators/ facilitators/business owners/leaders.

While EM volunteering can be seen as a social institution, these other institutions (Figure 10) have important roles. With the exception of 'Volunteering bodies', volunteering is not always their main purpose, so understanding their institutional arrangements can help identify shared interests that align with this framework and its desired outcomes.

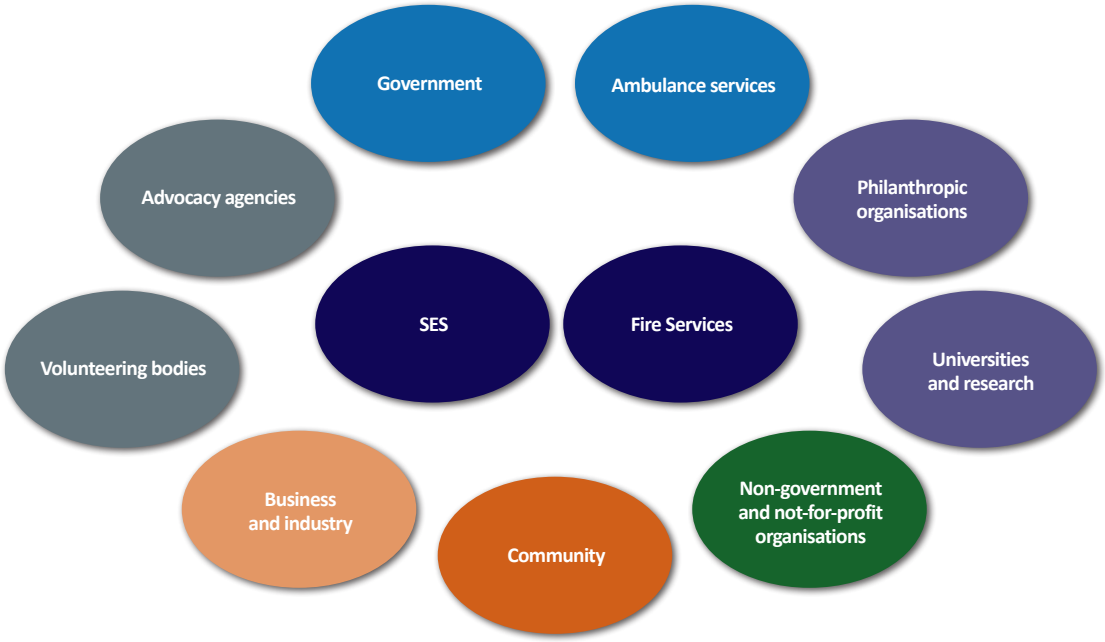


FIGURE 10: KEY INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE EM VOLUNTEERING ECOSYSTEM

Subgroups within these institutions provide the touch points for specific actions and activities that support the implementation of the strategic directions, and who should lead and have ownership of these. Nesting tangible actions within broader strategic agendas is important because without this these, actions remain siloed and unfocused and are less likely to be supported by the sector. (See Attachment B for the complete ecosystem.)

The institutional players within the EM volunteering ecosystem have formally allocated roles across the PPRR process, which determines who has primary responsibility for different phases of this process. These roles are documented in numerous strategies and plans by all levels of government (federal, state, territory, and local), and agencies. The role of the community and volunteers who are not part of formal EM structures are less well defined. The changing environmental and operational circumstances brings to the fore the need to understand what area EMOs have primary agency to act and lead, and where others in the EM ecosystem are better placed to do so.

The key considerations for ascertaining this are:

> **Ownership:** who is best placed to be responsible, accountable, and pay for the action?
> **Ability to act:** who has the capability and capacity for acting? This can include considering aspects such as how resilient or vulnerable an entity is, whether they have the resources, or if they have the will to act.
> **Authority:** who has the formal or informal authority to act or lead? This can be a cultural mandate to act or lead in a particular community, an organisational leader of an agency, or the formal role that an agency, organisation, or community group is tasked with.

Some examples of primary areas of agency that EMOs have to act within the ecosystem (Figure 11) are:

> **Organisations** have direct agency to act on initiatives that are within their current strategic framework and the resources to support transformation. This includes the ability to drive collaboration and inclusion with the community, and influence and advocate with institutional agencies.
> **Communities** and the individuals within them make up a diverse social and cultural infrastructure that can contribute directly to the volunteer workforce within organisations and more broadly in support of them. The primary area of agency between EMOs and the community is through collaboration, education, and by incorporating inclusive systems and structures. The community can also advocate and influence institutions on behalf of EMOs, but this is stronger when done collaboratively.
> **Institutions** formally shape and influence the authorising environment for EMOs through policy and funding. Agency for change is primarily through leveraging grants, influence, and advocacy. This can be targeted to specific areas such as funding and the regulatory, policy, and cultural areas governing EMOs and the community.

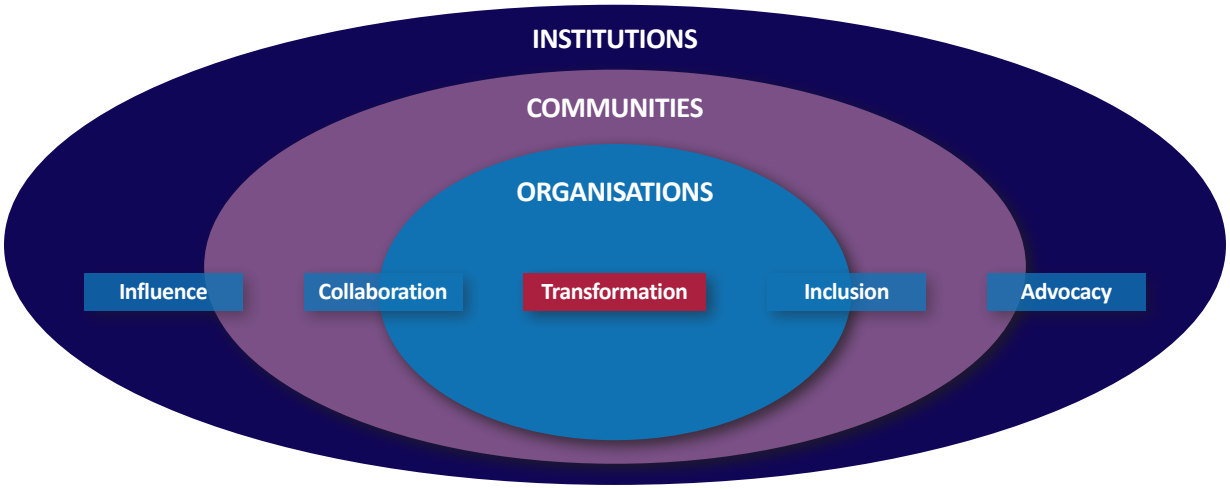


FIGURE 11: OVERARCHING ECOSYSTEM OF PRIMARY AREAS OF AGENCY FOR EMOs

The principles

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 that makes visible the value of volunteering contributions, risks associated with volunteering, and effectiveness of actions.

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 to support effective adaptive responses to the dynamic environment in which communities and EM volunteers live and work.

The strategic directions

Six strategic directions provide the focus for actions to be undertaken nationally. They have been developed through an assessment of current strategic directions of participating organisations to understand where there is alignment across the sector. These strategic directions have also been aligned with AFAC and Volunteering Australia's Strategic Directions.

The 'Potential actions' are a synthesis of actions collated as part of the research process from the three workshops, discussions with community and volunteering representatives, and the members of the VMTG.

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.

Outcomes	Potential actions
> Communities view EMOs as trusted partners who work alongside them before, during, and after natural hazard events. > There are shared understandings between communities and the EMOs as to how they work together, and who has primary agency to lead in different circumstances. > Communities feel empowered to act, that their contributions and knowledge are valued, and that their needs are listened to and responded to. > EMOs and communities have a shared expectation of EM volunteering, how they can participate, and the mutual benefits that volunteering provides. > EMOs and communities understand each other's needs and the limitations of their capacities and capabilities.	> Strengthening trusted relationships between communities and EMOs through listening forums. > Work with communities to build capability and capacity to manage natural disasters at the local level. > Developing baseline data to support a more comprehensive understanding of how different community stakeholders can and do participate in EM volunteering, and their capabilities, skills and capacity. > Advocate for community 'leave' to support EM volunteers. > Reimbursement scheme for local businesses/ industry who contribute to volunteering. > Strengthening local networks. > Develop collaborative narratives and stories with communities to make visible their experiences. > Develop a volunteer-led initiative to support community-based solutions.

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.

Outcomes	Potential actions
> EM sector volunteers and other organisations within the volunteer ecosystem are valued and able to participate and grow in a meaningful way alongside and within EMOs. > EMOs are capable, flexible, and strategic organisations who are appropriately resourced and able to meet their community and volunteer needs.	> Development of real-time access to volunteer and related data. > Development of a national resource needs roadmap for EM sector volunteering to support its growth and sustainability. > Counting volunteer characteristics to develop a robust data set. > A national initiative that provides insights into the future risk environment they are likely to be working within (floods, bushfires, heatwaves, economic, social, environmental, and the built environment) to support planning. > Strengthening continuous improvement, interoperability, and strategic capability within EMOs. > Developing a workplace culture that supports collaboration and innovation. > Building fit-for-purpose support for volunteers within EMOs that results in a positive volunteering experience and reduces unnecessary burdens on volunteers nationally (e.g., red tape or financial). > Strengthening of nationally focused community, government, research, and industry partnerships to support EM volunteering transformation. > Strengthening management and leadership capability to support organisational change, and management of strategic and systemic risk in EM volunteer workforces. > Building financial capability though ensuring comprehensive valuing of volunteer contributions, appropriate resourcing, recognition, and rewards. > A revision of the national standards for EM volunteering.

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.

Outcomes	Potential actions
> A more strategic and broader approach to education and learning to ensure skills and education pathways build upon current training arrangements. > Greater transferability of skills and capabilities across jurisdictions and between communities and EMOs.	> Clarifying emergent volunteering roles across the PPRR spectrum, and the related education and skills needed. > Expanding the current response-focused skills and capabilities to include more non-traditional volunteering capabilities and skills. > Raising awareness of the value and benefits of non-traditional volunteering capabilities and skills beyond response (e.g., cultural awareness, collaboration, and empathy). > Developing understanding and recognition of community skills and capabilities and how to embed them in EM processes to build capability before, during, and after natural hazard events. > Development of national career and skills pathways for EMO sector volunteers. > Graduate-type training where people are given foundational skills for all EMOs and then rotate within different organisations. > Schools-based education in collective action skills focused on responding to natural hazards. > National training skills program with transferable skills between sectors, states and territories.

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.

Outcomes	Potential actions
> An environment where all volunteers and community cohorts feel welcomed and emotionally, culturally, and physically safe. > Volunteers and associated volunteer organisations feel that their unique contributions are valued, acknowledged, and respected. > Volunteers and communities feel that their needs are accommodated, that their different perspectives are valued, and their concerns are heard and effectively responded to. > A diverse, connected volunteering sector that is reflective of their communities.	> Building inclusive leadership and practice across the EM sector (EMOs, community, NGOs, government, business, and industry). > Developing mechanisms and an inclusive culture to reduce barriers to participation for diverse cohorts and those who wish to volunteer. > Mapping how diverse groups (those who identify as having a disability, First Nations people, multicultural communities, and young people) might like to contribute to EM volunteering. > Culturally appropriate support for families of volunteers. > Organisation-specific capability frameworks that outline inclusivity skills and characteristics (vs codes of conduct) and provide adequate support for growth. > Building awareness of cultural and social safety and how to manage this, and its connection to psychosocial safety requirements. > Development of a national standard for inclusive practice throughout the EM sector.

5. Enabling innovation

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

Outcomes	Potential actions
> Innovative volunteering models are effectively embedded in EMOs' EM processes. > The EM sector invests in, understands, and effectively manages innovation. > Develop sector-wide data and measurements to enable an improved understanding of the investment needed and the benefits of innovation. > Develop national guidance in relation to innovation implementation within EMOs to support improved understanding of the innovation process and its application.	> Undertake an industry scan to clarify the current status of innovation within organisations across the sector, and where already innovation exists. > A national initiative to support innovation and its implementation within EMOs and throughout their volunteer workforce. This would include identifying and incorporating successful models of innovation and technologies into training and organisational frameworks. > A national initiative to assist EMOs to incorporate and embed emergent and innovative models of volunteering and understanding how and where these can be embedded across the PPRR spectrum. > Develop a platform to support innovation knowledge and practice sharing. > Development of innovation hubs across the sector to support knowledge exchange and communities of practice, creating an ecosystem of innovation/innovators across organisations and communities. > Develop sector-wide data and measurements to enable an improved understanding of the investment needed and the benefits of innovation. > Develop national guidance in relation to innovation implementation within EMOs to support improved understanding of the innovation process and its application.

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.

Outcomes	Potential actions
> Volunteers have clear roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities that are understood and acceptable to volunteers. > Volunteers and community organisations/ representatives are included within decision making structures. > Volunteering contributions are valued, and their worth and benefits are measured. > A safe operating environment for volunteers that is cost-neutral to those volunteering. > Monitoring and evaluation that is supported by robust data, and evidence that supports decision making and continuous improvement.	> Mapping and clarifying current roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of volunteers and volunteering support staff. > Identifying through a negotiated process how volunteers and community representatives can be effectively included as part of formal decision making that relates to them. > Development of economic models to support the development of comprehensive business cases, and the type of investment needed to ensure it is sustainable into the future. > Clarifying insurances and liabilities for volunteers and who is responsible for these. > Development of baseline data to establish the national status of volunteering in EMOs and volunteering programs. > Increase data literacy in organisations. > Support development of robust models and mechanisms that make visible: — the value of volunteering contributions — monitoring and evaluation of volunteering programs — management of associated volunteer risks, and — the monetary and non-monetary ROI of volunteer programs.

Implementation infrastructure

Implementation of The Strategic Framework requires the practical application of its strategic aspects. For this to be achieved, EMOs will need to build the supporting structures, capabilities, and skills needed to support practitioners. The key aspects of this process are:

> enabling infrastructure
> capabilities to support and enable implementation, and
> implementation practice – specific areas of practice that will need to be strengthened or developed.

Enabling infrastructure

In order for this framework to succeed, it requires the appropriate enabling infrastructure to ensure that long-term action can be maintained. The enabling infrastructure needed to support and sustain implementation of effective actions in volunteering fall across the following areas:

> **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 needed to enact actions.
> **Resource infrastructure:** the financial, time, and human resources needed to deliver programs.

The need for an infrastructure that enables adaptiveness and flexibility without compromising the core business will require a strategic and pragmatic approach. Existing areas of strength in the current infrastructure can be built upon.

Considerations relating to enabling infrastructure when undertaking actions are:

> What is the nature (e.g., innovative, community focused, organisational, long- or short-term action), purpose, and desired outcome of the action?
> What do we need to consider in relation to the context (e.g., the operational or community environment, formal and informal governance, culture, risk, and knowledge) within which this action will be implemented?
> What knowledge, resources, organisational conditions, capabilities, and skills do we need to undertake this action?
> What existing infrastructure (e.g., funding, policies, processes, other stakeholders with shared agendas and interests) might support this action, and how can we leverage this?
> Do we need to develop a new area of infrastructure (e.g., policy, partnerships, governance, knowledge, and skills) before we can undertake an action?

Capabilities

A key aspect of implementation infrastructure is organisational and workforce capability. In terms of the volunteering throughout the EM sector, there are areas of strength that can be built upon. However, it will also be important to identify what capabilities need to be strengthened or built into organisations and institutions across the sector to support implementation of the strategic directions (Figure 12).

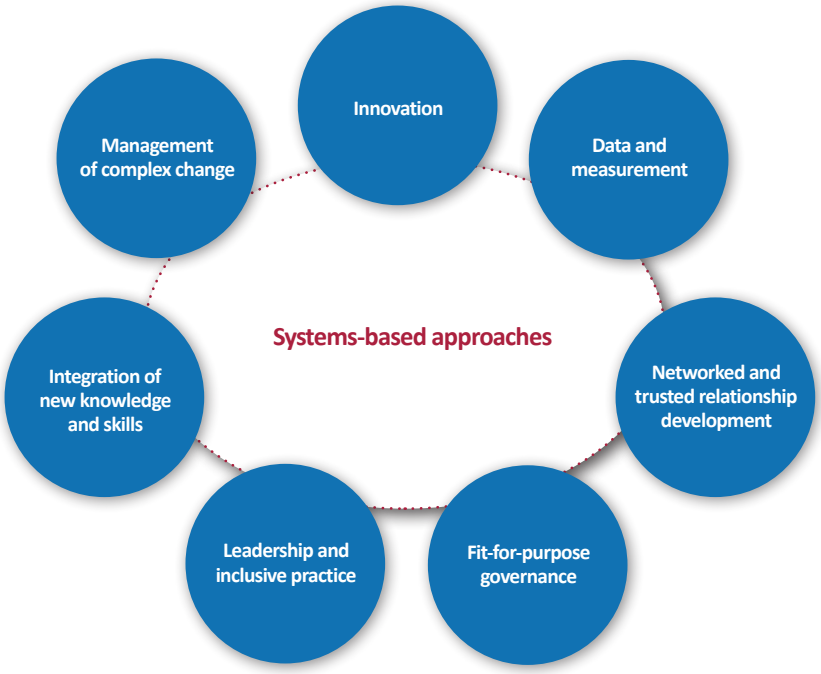


FIGURE 12: FRAMEWORK PRACTICE COMPONENTS

Systems-based approaches

Systems-based approaches are methodologies or ways of working that analyse and address complex problems by considering all the interconnected parts within a system. It requires different skills sets, discipline areas, ways of thinking, and an ability to work collaboratively across these. Specific skills are needed to effectively manage uncertainties and risk associated with changes in the system. As this is an emergent area of practice, new knowledge and structural capabilities will need to be built to support implementation.

Capabilities include collaboration, connected systems, coordination, communication, and systems knowledge.

Skill areas include:

> systems thinking
> strategic planning and visioning
> mapping, synthesis, and analysis of multidisciplinary data and information
> collaboration
> knowledge broking
> communication and engagement
> negotiation
> management of uncertainty
> adaptability, and
> the ability to translate and communicate complex ideas to diverse audiences.

Management of complex change

Complex change management is a process that aims to achieve transformation through a holistic approach that incorporates management of innovation and human and social aspects. This is an enabling capability that underpins other areas such as innovation and integration of new knowledge

Capabilities associated with this area include resilience, adaptiveness, learning and leadership.

Skills associated with this are:

- change management
- strategic planning and visioning
- communication and engagement
- negotiation and conflict resolution
- management of social risk
- leadership
- agility, and
- resilience.

Data and measurement

Building data capability provides the foundation for future investment and decision making. There is a recognised need for nationally consistent and robust data sets to support the future sustainability of volunteering. Aspects of capability building needed are collation and alignment of current data sets, data quality issues, and increasing data literacy. There is also a need to consider the capability of current data systems and governance and where areas may need to be developed. There is also a need to identify appropriate data to support the effective valuation of volunteering contributions and evaluation of the progress, value, and benefits of strategic direction activities.

Capabilities associated with this area include data systems, technological knowledge, innovation, and risk management.

Skills areas include:

- data literacy
- digital and artificial intelligence engineering
- development and maintaining of longitudinal data sets
- modelling and scenario development
- collation, assessment and synthesis of data
- risk assessment and analysis
- economic modelling and analysis
- policy and ethics
- data security, and
- visualisation and communication of data.

Networked and trusted relationships development

The transformation of the EM sector requires working across the volunteering ecosystem over the longer-term and is an enabling capability. The foundation for this capability is networked and trusted relationships – the connections between different individuals, organisations, or communities within a network where there is a high level of mutual trust. Characteristics of this are that entities within the network rely on each other and feel confident in their interactions. Qualities often associated with this field include empathy, open mindedness, and responsiveness. Due to the importance of psychological contracts between volunteers, communities, and EMOs, this is a critical capability for volunteering.

Capabilities associated with this area include communication and engagement, transparency, trust, and reliable responses.

Skills areas include:
- inclusive practice
- deep listening
- negotiation
- stakeholder engagement and management
- collaborative decision making
- cultural awareness
- emotional and political intelligence
- communication and engagement, and
- trust building.

Fit-for-purpose governance

Fit-for-purpose governance is a critical capability for organisations and institutions. Governance structures and mechanisms shape culture, performance, and functioning of organisations and institutions. This capability exists at institutional, organisational, community, and group level, and can be informal and formal. Its key purpose is to ensure transparent decision making, and that accountability and responsibility are understood and enacted ethically. It also underpins effective evaluation of the progress of the sustainable volunteering agenda and the programs and activities associated with it. As there are different forms of governance needed to support this agenda, developing new governance models will strengthen overall capability in this area.

Capabilities associated with this area include risk management, business improvement, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, and communication structures and systems.

Skills areas include:
- policy and procedure analysis and development
- emotional and political intelligence
- business improvement and quality assurance management
- change management
- risk management
- systems analysis, development and management, and
- legal and regulatory analysis and intelligence.

Leadership and inclusive practice

The link between ‘leadership’ and ‘inclusion’ is critical for this agenda, due to the need for broad collaboration across multiple parties. Leadership capability in this agenda is not restricted to formalised leadership roles, as informal leadership within organisations and communities also plays an important role. It is particularly important as leadership capability sets the tone for the appropriate cultural and social behaviours needed for a supportive and safe volunteering environment. It is also central to effective action and operational functioning of organisations.

Inclusive practice is “… the use of knowledge, experience, and evidence to implement diversity and inclusion-related programs and projects and to engage in day-to-day inclusive conduct and behaviour” (Young et al., 2021). Its purpose is to ensure that all people feel welcome and supported, and that the unique skills and perspectives they bring to an organisation are valued, respected, and rewarded. This capability is an enabling capability that supports actions and effective working relationships.

Capabilities associated with this area include strategic foresight, trust, strong leadership, decision making, and inclusive culture.

Key skills include:
- strategic decision making
- inclusive and empathetic leadership
- inclusive and collaborative practice
- cultural awareness
- emotional awareness
- management of risk (social, economic, environmental, and organisational)
- decision making, and
- communication.

Integration of new knowledge and skills

EMO volunteering requires the growth and integration of multiple sources of new knowledge and skills over the longer-term to build its sustainability agenda. Integration of new knowledge into systems also requires the development of new skills. These aspects are a core part of enabling and sustaining actions, and ensuring long-term knowledge capability and underpins effective innovation, continuous improvement, and resilience building. It is also central to being able to adapt to dynamic and uncertain circumstances and managing systemic issues and risk.

Capabilities associated with this include knowledge systems, adaptive and iterative processes, continuous improvement, education, and collaborative frameworks.

Key skills include:

- implementation of innovation
- knowledge and research translation
- knowledge systems management
- communication and engagement
- collaboration
- education and training, and
- risk management.

Innovation

Innovation capability is central to the sustainable volunteering agenda. Innovation capability is the ability to absorb, apply, and adapt knowledge to develop new ideas into tangible outcomes that address existing problems and add value. These capabilities are also central to shaping how innovation ecosystems evolve and respond to challenges and opportunities. Due to the systemic nature of the solutions needed, the skills that sit beneath this cover a broad spectrum. As a result, specific skills for different areas of innovation will need to be identified and developed.

Capabilities associated with this area include adaptive and flexible systems, creativity, transformation management, strategic leadership, and risk management.

Skills areas include:

- problem solving
- creative thinking
- education
- communication
- negotiation
- strategic planning
- risk management
- design thinking, and
- entrepreneurship.

Implementation

Implementation of The Strategic Framework will require the development of existing and new areas of practice to support the cohesion needed between the strategic directions and tangible actions. This section provides a brief overview of these areas and key questions to assist those undertaking actions in these areas.

Overarching considerations for implementation practice are:

- What is the current status of practice and knowledge in a given area?
- What resources exist, and what resources are needed now and for the future to enable effective practice?
- What environment is needed to support effective practice?
- Who needs to involved and what role do or can they fulfil?

Measuring strategic progress

As the actions contained within this framework are strategic, overarching measurements are needed to focus on the longer-term outcomes. One of the ways used to measure strategic directions with high levels of innovation is a maturity matrix. These tools are used to evaluate progress using key developmental stages (Figure 13).

FIGURE 13: MATURITY MATRIX – STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION

The progress of each strategic direction is determined by measuring the development of aspects that contribute to achieving the outcomes of each strategic direction. These can be used to guide the development of specific measurements by the sector and EMOs to measure progress. An example of a mapped aspect is decision making and leadership for the strategic direction, working with communities to build resilience and safety (Table 1). (See Attachment C for the complete maturity matrix.)

TABLE 1: EXAMPLE OF A MAPPED ASPECT OF A MATURITY MATRIX

Limited awareness	Aware and engaged	Integratin and applying	Sustainable
Community excluded from decision making and EMOs lead activities	Volunteering EM sector has basic representation of community representation in some decision making areas	EMOs are undertaking collaborative codesigned projects and programs with communities	Communities and volunteering EMOs have shared decision making and leadership of EM actions

Robust, credible, and salient data sets are critical. However, measurements and data are evolving, so it is important:

> that new measurement and data systems leverage and build upon what already exists rather than imposing upon them
> how the different types of data connect and inform each other across the different levels of the sector, and
> to develop consistency in data sets across longitudinal timeframes so process can be tracked effectively.

Key questions for practitioners:

> What data and measurements are needed and why?
> Who will use these data sets and how will they use them?
> What roles do different people play in relation to data (e.g., collation, analysis, storage, communication, and decision-making).
> What data and measurements currently exist that are relevant to this agenda, and where do they exist?
> What data and measurements need to be developed, and how might these be developed?
> What is the level of data maturity of the stakeholders you are working with, and is there a need for training to ensure it is understood and able to be used?

Working with systemic issues

Working with systemic issues is an emergent area of practice in the EM sector, so it presents new challenges. This is because the primary focus in this sector has traditionally been response, which requires tactical decision making. As a result, solutions have tended to use simple and complicated decision making, and this has shaped organisational systems and structures and ways of thinking (Table 2).

TABLE 2: SIMPLE, COMPLICATED AND COMPLEX DECISION MAKING RELATED TO PRACTICAL APPLICATION (ADAPTED FROM YOUNG AND JONES, 2016)

Type of decision making	Simple	Complicated	Complex
Characteristics	Linear – actionable, can be solved with one solution. Often static risks with known treatments and outcomes.	Systemic – can be bounded but may require more than one solution to address and can be solved. Will use a mixture of known and unknown treatments. Dynamic, but usually able to be stabilised over time.	Systemic – unbounded, multiple interrelated actions and solutions required to address the issue. The treatment will often evolve and change over time. Highly dynamic and unpredictable, high levels of uncertainty. Often high-impact low probability.
Example	A faulty piece of machinery.	Containment of a single natural hazard event.	Resilience, recovery, diversity and inclusion, sustainable volunteering.
Actors	Individual to organisational – person(s) with allocated responsibility or the asset owner.	Collaborative – parties associated with, and effected by, the event. Shared ownership with delegated areas of responsibility.	Extensive collaboration – a 'whole of society' approach. Complex collaborative ownership that is shared across all areas of society.
Thinking frameworks	Logical, analytical, prescriptive, and practical.	Short- to medium-term thinking, analytical, responsive. Predominantly prescriptive but has intuitive elements that respond to changing circumstances.	Long-term, strategic, conceptual, lateral, analytical, creative, reflexive, continuous, flexible.
Leadership actions	Direct and review.	Consult, assess, respond, and direct.	Consult, evaluate, facilitate, empower, and direct.

Working with systemic issues is more diffuse and requires longer-term strategic approaches and decision making. It also involves continuous change, uncertainty and long-term commitment and investment. This is because systemic issues cannot be solved and require ongoing management over the longer term, as they are constantly evolving and changing. There are existing examples throughout the EM sector of where this occurring in areas such as resilience building and diversity and inclusion.

When working with complex systemic issues such as the sustainable volunteering agenda, if you try to address everything at once, it is easy to become overwhelmed. One way to address this is to identify and tackle one part of a complex issue and to build upon that. This is often referred to as 'layering'. Take the time initially to establish:

> the focus and what area of the system you are working within

> the scope of the specific project activity and how this sits in the broader context of the strategic direction, and

> what is needed to enable what you want to achieve (relationships, knowledge, systems, environment).

Key questions for practitioners:

> What is the root cause/s of the issue and what are the symptoms of the root cause? (e.g., if a lack of funding is the symptom, then the root cause could be lack of ability to effectively value the contributions and benefits of volunteering).

> What is the most important issue/s and what part of the system do you need to focus on to address this? (e.g., if the issue is data, the focus area could be workforce planning).

> What are resources, systems, structures, skills, and environment you need to support your effective activities?

> What is the starting point for the activities you want to undertake? For example, do you need to start by developing new structures or skills?

> What can you realistically achieve with the resources you have, and how will it contribute in a meaningful way to addressing the issue you want to address?

Understanding innovation

Innovation can present a challenge for volunteering EMOs because as experimentation is central to the process, it has high levels of uncertainty. It has distinct phases (Figure 14), and timing of these phases can vary considerably – from rapid to long-term. Factors that can influence this timing include the context in which the innovation is developed and adopted, resourcing, and perceptions of usefulness of an innovation (Rogers, 2003).

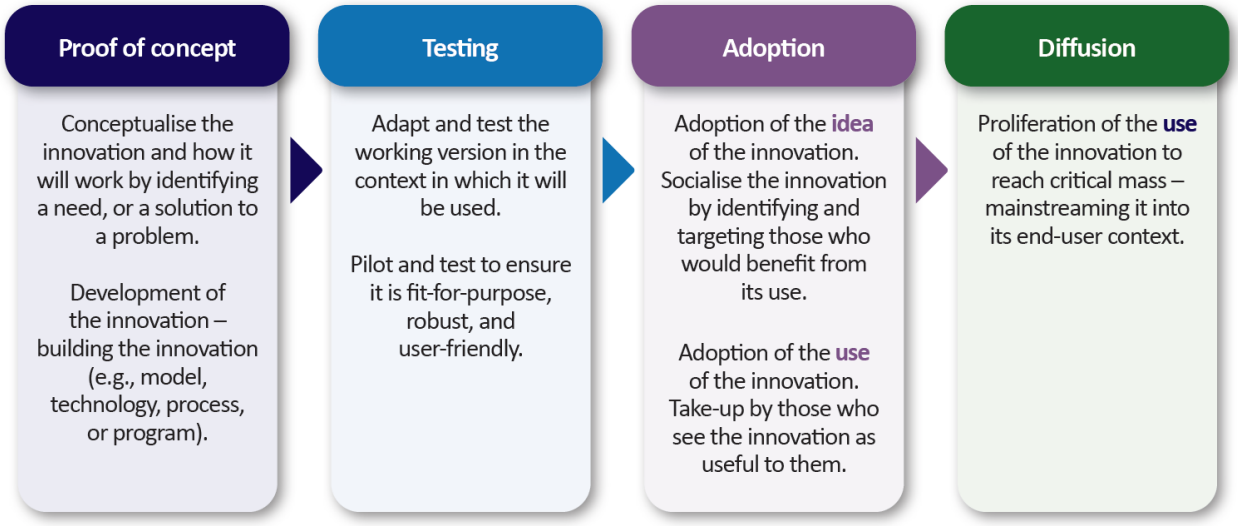


FIGURE 14: THE PHASES OF THE PROCESS OF INNOVATION

Due to nature of the solutions needed, as mentioned previously, systemic and social innovation are crucial. As a result, coordination of diverse types of innovation is often required. The selection of the appropriate type(s) of innovation(s) is determined by task and context. Looking beyond technological innovation, a need already recognised, other types needed to progress the sustainable volunteering agenda are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: TYPES OF INNOVATION NEEDED TO PROGRESS THE SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING AGENDA

Type of innovation	What it is	Example
Adaptive	Adaptive innovation is the process of adopting existing solutions, techniques, or products and adapting them to new scenarios or changing conditions.	Communities using Facebook as means of communication during emergencies to coordinate activities and empower action.
Cultural	Cultural innovation is the outcome of complex co-creation processes that involve the reflection of knowledge flows across the social environment within communities of practice while fostering the inclusion of diversity within society. Consideration is given to addressing inequity and the process to the distribution and use of knowledge and how to build innovation to improve the welfare of individuals and communities (Pozzo et al., 2020).	Cultural burning inclusion into fire management programs.
Service	New service experience or service solution that consists of one or several of the following dimensions: a new service concept; new customer interaction; new value system/business partners; new revenue mode; or new organisational or technological service delivery system (Witell et al., 2016).	The introduction of hazard warning apps by the Bureau of Meteorology.
Policy	These innovations can involve changes in problem framing, policy instruments, processes, practices, or structures that change or transform policy and how it structured and delivered (OECD/Eurostat, 2005).	The inclusion of citizens juries to inform policy or the development of policy documents.
Organisational	The generation and adoption of new ideas or behaviours that enhance productivity and improve business performance (Jia et al., 2018). It can be achieved by introducing a new product, a new organisational structure, a new managerial practice, or a change in organisational culture (Kwon and Cho, 2016). It can also contribute to the evolution of the industry as a whole (Alharbi et al., 2019).	Flexible working from home arrangements enabled by digital technologies.

When initiating a project, identifying the different areas of innovation can assist in understanding what types of expertise (practitioner, research, technological, or human behaviour), is needed and what part of the process it is needed in. Often more than one area of innovation will be needed to implement an action. The purpose of the innovation process is to establish if something novel can be made useable in a way that adds value. It is a process of discovery rather than a predetermined outcome, so not everything will work (Young and Jones, 2016). This makes managing expectations in relation to outcomes and notions of failure associated with innovation throughout the process important.

The process itself is inherently risky. Normal project management models and monitoring and evaluation do not necessarily account for the types of surprises or unexpected outcomes associated with innovation. This means that the management of complex change, continuous learning and behaviour change are central to this process. As a result, innovation management models that have iterative and reflexive frameworks and processes are needed. These provide the appropriate structures for adaptive responses, monitoring and evaluation and risk management.

Key questions for practitioners:

- Do you have the right environment and capabilities for innovation? If not, what do you need to be developed before you start?
- What type of innovation is needed to address the issue?
- How will it add value and who will benefit from it?
- What expertise is needed and who has this?
- What resources are needed to sustain the process innovation and how will obtain these?
- What sort of changes are likely to result in response to this innovation?
- How will the risks associated with the innovation process and the innovation be managed? These include potential risks that might arise as a result of the use of the innovation.
- How might the context, capacity and capabilities of those you want to use the innovation impact their ability to adopt it?

Integrating new knowledge

EM volunteering requires the growth and integration of multiple types of new knowledge over the longer-term. These different types of knowledge can come from multiple sources, including government, organisations, communities, research institutes, practitioners, and volunteers (Figure 15). The complexity of the sustainable volunteering agenda and the need for active responses at local levels will require blending these different areas to ensure that outcomes are evidence based and are useable in specific contexts. It is a key aspect of innovation, continuous learning, and resilience.

Collaborative, reflexive and responsive frameworks and processes are central to managing the new needs and risks that can arise when applying new knowledge. These aspects enable the building of new layers of knowledge and assists with integration into the existing body of knowledge.

FIGURE 15: KNOWLEDGE COMPONENTS FOR DECISION MAKING (YOUNG, 2017)

The development and integration of new knowledge into existing systems has three stages (adapted from Sterling, 2003):

- the collation of old and new knowledge to understand a problem, or aspects of a problem, in a new way
- evaluation and use of this knowledge to develop context-specific solutions, and
- tailoring this knowledge to the context it is to be applied in.

Key concepts that underpin new knowledge generation and integration include:

- **Inclusive knowledge structures:** inclusive structures and mechanisms for collating, evaluating, and synthesising diverse knowledge in a way where all forms of knowledge are valued and respected.
- **Connected knowledge:** recognising and building on the linkages and synergies between different levels and types of knowledge from a range of disciplines and sources.
- **Ownership of knowledge:** ensuring appropriate conduct in relation to ownership of knowledge and the terms of its use.

It is also important to define the purpose of new knowledge, who will using it, and how it will be used, (e.g., will it be used to inform, educate, or make decisions?). This helps determine the target audience and what is needed to manage the process. Consideration of pre-existing contexts that different cohorts work or live within is also needed as this often shapes their understanding and can influence their ability to respond and act.

New knowledge can become a contentious issue if its purpose and use is not well understood, so socialisation and education are often needed. It is particularly important that the value proposition, and how it will be used, is clear to the parties you wish to engage with.

Key questions for practitioners:

- How will this new knowledge be used and who will use it?
- What is the current context of those who will use it?
- Is there a need to socialise, educate, or develop new skills so this knowledge can be used?
- Who are the trusted knowledge sources and communicators?
- What are the existing formal and informal communication and knowledge networks?
- What is the current capability and capacity of the target cohort to use this knowledge?
- What needs has this new knowledge created (e.g., socialisation, skills development, education, changes in systems, and ways of working), and how will this be addressed?
- What systems (social, operational, and technical) can be adapted for use, and what new systems might be needed to enable the uptake and use of this new knowledge?

Managing complex change

Transformation of EM volunteering is a long-term social process of reshaping how individuals within EMOs see themselves and volunteering generally. This requires a complex change model to guide organisations and communities through the different stages to achieve a new status quo through management of innovation and human responses to change (Figure 16, overleaf).

This model combines four different models:

- the changing of status quo – Satir model of change (Satir and Banmen, 1991)
- the changing of identity – the four layers of diversity (Gardenswartz and Rowe, 2003) informed by Brewer and Pickett (2014)
- the management of grief – the five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross and Kessler, 1993), and
- social innovation – stages in the innovation-decision process (Rogers, 2003).

Supported by ongoing learning and integration of new practice, the processes enable organisations to evaluate where they are within the process, and understand what strategies are needed to most effectively manage behaviours and risks associated with actions.

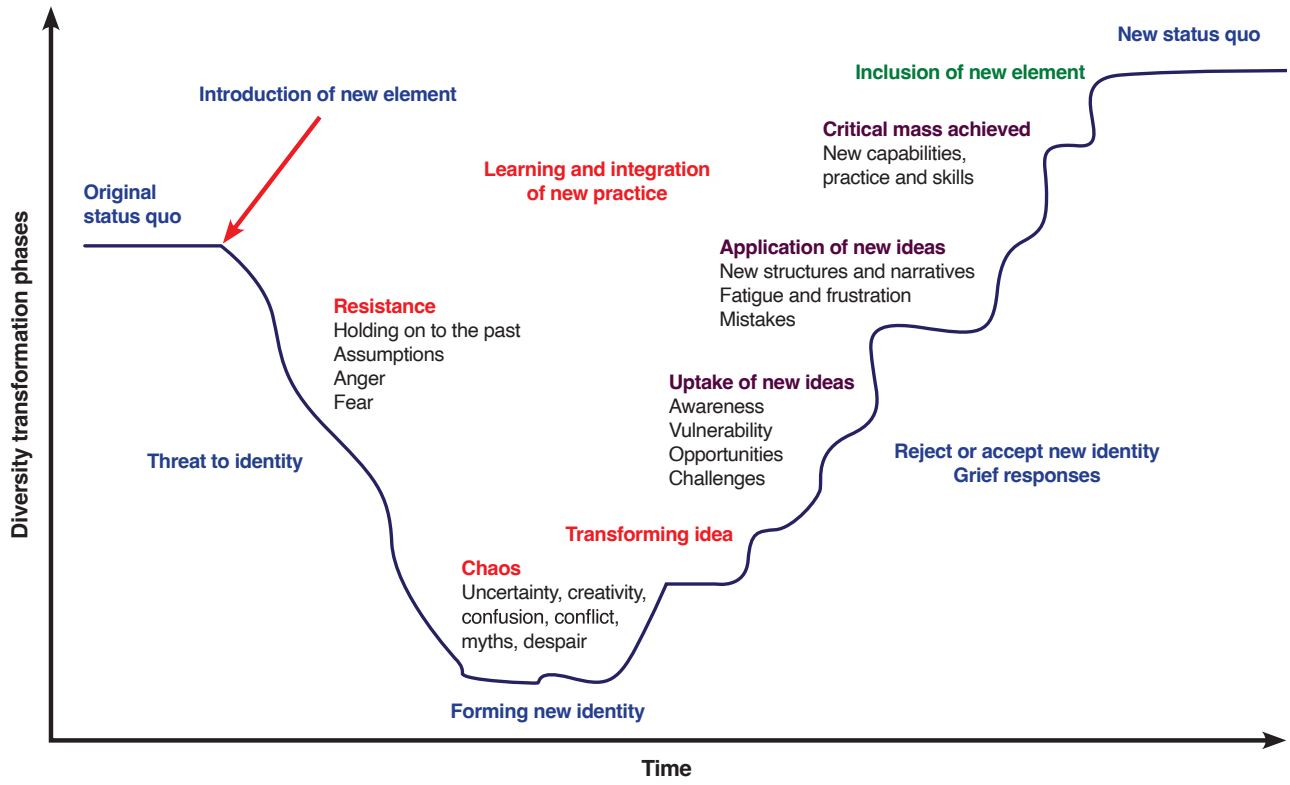


FIGURE 16: PHASES OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS (ADAPTED FROM YOUNG ET AL., 2018)

As any change is uncomfortable and can create confusion and fear, managing change requires strategic planning and consideration of what people are feeling. It is important take a facilitative approach and work with people to enable and empower them through encouragement, rather than giving directives. Some of the actions needed to support effective management of this type of change include (Young et al., 2018):

> helping people to reflect on and navigate discomfort
> taking time to ensure that people are feeling heard
> not forcing people to change their belief structure but working with it
> having clear boundaries and letting people know what these are
> identifying and building on existing strengths, and
> a vision of what you want to achieve and shared narratives to support communication of this.

Key questions for practitioners:

> Why is change needed, what needs to change, and how does it need to change?
> How do they need to change?
> What is the long-term outcome you want to achieve?
> What is your vision for this, and is it shared by those who you want to engage with this change process?
> What stage are you at within the change process?
> What are the likely responses and risks that you will face with the stage you are enacting actions in, and how will you manage these?

Governance

The core purpose of governance is to enable effective decision making and actions through providing mechanisms that set expectations of behaviours and ensure accountability and responsibility. The sustainable volunteering agenda encompasses the community, all levels of government, and EMOs. This means that governance has multiple functions across multiple levels and different governance models will be present in different levels of the volunteering ecosystem. This can be challenging, as governance structures need to be flexible enough to respond effectively to changes and surprises but also robust enough to ensure effective functioning and ownership of accountabilities and responsibilities. There are two overarching ways governance manifests:

Formal governance is the use of laws, rules, and agreements to control and direct an organisation or group. It can also refer to the process of governing, such as the governance of a government department or agency. It comprises official and written agreements to regulate duties and responsibilities, reduce opportunism, and control risk (Solinas et al., 2022). These can manifest as frameworks, policy, legislation, regulations and standards, strategies, plans and assessments, and contracts and agreements. Formal governance is the key determinant of:

- how governance is structured within different organisations and institutions
- defining expectations of how an entity or a person will act, and
- the formal mechanisms for evaluation and compliance.

Informal governance is a system of rules, norms, and practices that are that are not enshrined in formal constitutions or legal frameworks. "Social relationships and webs of influence play crucial roles" in this type of governance (Harsh, 2013). Trust and reciprocity within and between different parties are central to this. Informal governance is a key determinant in how formal governance is enacted and underpins effectiveness of formal governance. Two ways informal governance manifests are:

- social contracts that the community have with government and EMOs which often determines their understanding of their roles and responsibilities and their expectations of the services they expect from EMOs, and
- psychological contracts that volunteers have with their organisations which determines what they expect from the organisations they work with and what organisations expect from them as volunteers.

These are changing due to a number of drivers and influences, and evolving behaviours and expectations. This means that active negotiation between communities, EMOs and volunteers to ensure a shared understanding and acceptance of the terms of these informal contracts is critical. It also offers opportunities to reframe aspects of EM volunteering which are more in line with current social and organisational requirements.

It is important to understand and acknowledge existing governance at the community level and the different cultural and social structures that inform this, particularly with First Nations communities.

Due to the collaborative and systemic nature of the sustainable volunteering agenda there is the need to blend sector wide 'top down' and participatory bottom-up governance models. Two governance models that are useful to consider in relation to this are:

Robust governance refers to "… the strategic and practical efforts … to balance and combine change and stability in the face of unpredictable dynamics" (Ansell et al., 2024). This type of governance is characterised by using agility and resilience strategies in the face of increasing societal turbulence. Robust governance "… is synonymous with a flexible and innovative mindset in the face of turbulence to develop and adapt areas such as policy, regulation, legislation" (Ansell et al., 2024). It is used for volatile contexts where you have multiple interactive components (e.g., economic, political, social, and environmental), which are either changing or require change and is enacted through formal governance.

The five aspects of robust governance are:

- **adaptability:** systems can adapt to maintain functionality during crises
- **accountability:** frameworks help ensure accountability and authority
- **decision making:** helps ensure sound decision making
- **compliance:** helps ensure compliance with laws, regulations, and policies, and
- **ethics:** promotes a culture of integrity and ethical behaviour.

There are many overlapping policy and strategy, legislation and plans between federal, state, territory, and local government and agencies within the EM sector. This means that understanding the intersections, dependencies, and autonomy of different areas of governance is important. It also means that current structures will need to adapt and change to build in the flexibility and resilience needed.

This type of governance model provides the overarching structures for institutions and organisations. It is an emergent governance model and as such the understanding, structures, and mechanisms that support this are still forming. This form of governance is also emerging in areas such as climate change and resilience building. Robust governance is needed to manage the volatility inherent in the EM sustainable volunteering agenda and can be designed to complement fit-for-purpose formal and informal governance arrangements.

Shared governance is a decentralised and collaborative decision-making process that involves sharing authority and responsibility among stakeholders across practice and work environments and allows for active participation and accountability of practitioners. Rather than being anchored to regulatory and rules-based organisational structures, it is a fluid process that requires ongoing revaluation and assessment with everyone buying in to the principles, processes, and behaviours of shared leadership (O'May and Buchan, 1999). This form of governance is currently being used in the nursing sector to enhance problem-solving and outcomes. Shared governance is useful at local levels as it provides structures that support inclusive decision-making, and greater understanding of accountabilities and responsibilities across the EM sustainable volunteering sector.

Key questions for implementation:

> What types of formal and informal governance arrangements are needed? Why and where are they needed?
> What types of formal and informal governance arrangements already exist and where do they exist? Are these autonomous or connected to other areas of governance?
> What models of governance (e.g., robust, shared, organisational) are most suited to the context and task?
> Who is responsible and accountable for the existing areas of governance?
> Are there changes in formal or informal governance occurring and where are these occurring? What might be the ramifications of these changes?
> Are there areas of governance which can be leveraged or built upon?
> What areas of governance (structures, policies, and processes) need development? How will this be achieved and who will responsible and accountable for this?

Building and maintaining trusted relationships

Trusted relationships not only support the enacting of effective actions, but the levels of trust and cohesion across the network that are a direct reflection on the level of collaboration across the network, and the quality of interactions and activities between different parties. Key aspects of building these relationships are effective inclusion and a deep contextual knowledge of the different stakeholder groups, and what is important and meaningful to them. Transparency, deep listening, and responsiveness are critical to enabling this. Underpinning this is authentic and tailored communication and engagement that meet the needs of the multiple groups that EMOs engage with and are part of their workforce.

Volunteers and associated volunteering groups choose to give their time to assist EMOs deliver their services, so understanding and respecting psychological contracts and their motivation for volunteering is particularly important.

Key questions for practitioners:

> Who do we need to build relationships with and why?
> Do we need to build trust with this stakeholder or group? If "Yes", then how will we do this?
> What cultural and social aspects need to be considered and accommodated?
> What is important to this person/cohort?
> How will we ensure open and transparent communication is established and can be maintained?
> What are the commitments and promises we will make and how will we ensure that we can deliver on them?
> Is there a need for mechanisms to manage potential conflict and ensure a safe and respectful environment?

Section 4
Innovation case studies

Innovation summary case studies

Fire and Emergency New Zealand – supporting volunteers through using a holistic approach

Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) have used cultural framing to holistically support their volunteers, which considers not only the cost to volunteers but to those who support them. The volunteering triangle (Figure 17) uses the volunteering experience as the focus and acknowledges the value of what they and their families contribute, the employer's responsibility to them, and the role of Whānau.

Whānau is a familiar term in Māori culture. "It is often translated as 'family,' but its meaning is more complex. It includes physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions and is based on whakapapa. Whānau can be multi-layered, flexible, and dynamic. Whānau is based on a Māori and a tribal world view. It is through the whānau that values, histories and traditions from the ancestors are adapted for the contemporary world" (Walker, 2017). By viewing volunteers through this lens, FENZ have created a model that brings together the deep culture of the Indigenous People of Aotearoa (New Zealand) with their organisation and the volunteers within them. As part of this model, they provide a small financial benefit to families of those who volunteer to reduce the impact on areas such as childcare and household duties.

FIGURE 17: VOLUNTEERING TRIANGLE AND EXPLANATION (REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION FROM FENZ)

Our volunteers (*kaitūao*) are the *amorangi*, they are at the front. Our *whānau* and FENZ are the *hāpai-ō* – the people that support them serve us all. It gives *mana* to our volunteers by acknowledging the work they do at the front (serving our communities) and more importantly it acknowledges the mana, the responsibility, and the role of the people in the back (*hāpai-ō*).

The Australian Red Cross – using lived experience to build capability

A person with a lived experience has firsthand experience of the structures, services, systems, and policies that impact them. The Australian Red Cross introduced the Lived Experience Framework (Australian Red Cross, 2022) that strategically equips people with a lived experience with agency over their support requirements through collaborative service models that address gaps and build on strengths. The Framework offers practice principles, practical instruction, and examples in engaging people with lived experience through:

- organisational capacity-building
- supporting staff and volunteers
- advocacy and representation, and
- participatory approaches.

It also covers areas such as:

- creating organisational policies and structures to ensure best practice towards people with lived experiences
- ensuring people have access to appropriate information, translators, and a sufficient network of support to know their rights
- adopting a participatory approach to Red Cross research, programs, and services by engaging and empowering people with a lived experience, and
- providing support and resources for people's engagement in the many platforms where advocacy and representation take place.

The Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) and Tasmania State Emergency Service (SES) volunteer station connectivity project

The volunteer station connectivity project was initiated by the Volunteer Strategy and Support Unit to improve digital access for emergency service volunteers by providing high-speed broadband, corporate network access, a desktop computer, and government Wi-Fi to every station across Tasmania. The initiative aims to enhance operational efficiency, streamline communications and current paper-based processes, provide greater opportunity for online training, video conferencing for remote stations, and support digital literacy among volunteers. Volunteers now have greater access to online resources, corporate systems, and self-service password reset (SSPR) capabilities.

The Station Connectivity Project represents a significant step forward in modernising emergency service infrastructure for volunteers. By overcoming geographical and technical challenges, the initiative has empowered volunteers with the digital tools needed to enhance emergency response and operational efficiency. The continued expansion of connectivity ensures a more resilient and capable emergency service network, providing the foundation for digital transformation and innovative solutions in the future.

Challenges: several key challenges were identified at the outset of the project:

- **Limited digital infrastructure:** many stations lacked the necessary connectivity to support modern IT services.
- **Geographical barriers:** remote and regional locations posed difficulties in implementing traditional broadband solutions.
- **Stakeholder coordination:** collaboration with multiple agencies, contractors, and volunteers required strategic planning and clear communication.
- **Weather disruptions:** severe weather events impacted installation timelines and necessitated adaptive scheduling.
- **Implementation:** to address these challenges, the project adopted a phased rollout approach.

Infrastructure assessment: stations were evaluated to determine connectivity requirements and feasibility.

- **Partnerships with contractors:** agreements were established with service providers to deliver broadband installations efficiently.
- **Technology deployment:** stations were connected using fibre, fixed wireless, or satellite solutions based on location and technical feasibility.
- **Training and support:** simple one-page 'Station Connectivity Guides' were created to assist volunteers in understanding and using new technologies.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** regular updates and coordination with emergency service leadership ensured alignment with operational needs.

Out of approximately 220 stations, there are currently only 40 sites left to connect, with all due to be connected before June 2025.

NSW SES pilots program engaging community in flood emergency planning

This case study is drawn from the work of David Webber, Andrew Gissing, Neil Dufty, and Dr Deanne Bird in a 2017 article from the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 23*(2).

The NSW SES ran a pilot program aiming to involve community members as active participants in flood management by drawing on their knowledge, preferences, and concerns. This was a significant change from traditional EM approaches, with an emphasis on one-way communication tools (inform and educate).

The program was run in three contrasting flood-prone communities: Chipping Norton (metropolitan Sydney, with flood risk from the Georges River), Narrabri (regional northwest NSW, prone to riverine flood risk), and Burringbar and Mooball (NSW North Coast, prone to isolation due to short notice flash flooding).

Workshops and online exercises were held with the community, including combined discussions around warning systems and evacuation planning, participatory mapping, community-led initiatives, and previous flood experiences.

The pilot concluded the following principles as key to co-involvement of the community in flood planning:

- **Understand the community:** implementation of community-based planning requires a thorough understanding of the needs, vulnerabilities, and resilience within it.
- **Engage early and often:** community involvement should be considered throughout.
- **Allow sufficient time:** timeframes to be identified by community and not dictated to it.

- **Be flexible and tailor approaches:** participation methods should be tailored to the context.
- **Agree on objectives from the outset:** objectives need to be agreed among participants, especially the community, from the beginning.
- **Acknowledge the community as equals:** without equality with and within the community, there is no empowerment to participate, and community will be passive.
- **Engage in two-way dialogue:** community participation should be based on mutual respect and trust and involve two-way deliberative dialogue.
- **Use skilled facilitation expertise:** facilitation needs to be independent and fair.
- **Use expert and local knowledge:** institutional, scientific, and local hazard risk knowledge.
- **Use and build social capital:** local relationships and local capacity is a critical enabler.
- **Evaluate programs:** communities should be involved in the evaluation process.
- **Learnings should be incorporated into future practice:** organisations must champion involvement of community members in decision making.

Reframing culturally diverse volunteering in the Victorian SES and Dal Baba Bidhi Chand Sikh Temple

This case study is based on work conducted by Mursha Gapasin, Thu-Trang Tran, and Marijke Fotia in 2021 and published in a report by Volunteer West (Gapasin et al., 2021). The authors conducted case studies of two key organisations that mobilised volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic response in Brimbank and Melton in Melbourne's west. These were the Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) and the Sikh community as represented by the Dal Baba Bidhi Chand Sikh Temple (Melton). The former was key to hub-and-spoke support to manage major COVID-19 exposure and testing sites, and the latter were key to providing food relief operations.

Having conducted interviews, focus groups, and site visits, the researchers articulate the need to reframe volunteering to distinguish between 'role-based volunteering' and 'fluid volunteering,' the latter being associated with much of the volunteering in multicultural and multi-faith contexts. They note that many volunteers are available to participate across various roles drawing on their relational roles in existing communities. Properties of each are shown in Figure 18, reproduced from their final report. They concluded that for the culturally diverse case studies they examined, there were three key motivations for volunteering, as well as a range of key considerations.

Volunteering in culturally diverse communities

Motivations

- A way of being
- Giving back
- Pathway to employment

Forms of volunteering

- Role-based
- Fluid

FIGURE 18: MULTICULURAL AND MULTI-FAITH VOLUNTEERING PROPERTIES

The AFAC Champions of Change program – enacting system innovation

Established in 2017 by AFAC, the 'Champions of Change' program seeks to improve gender equality by increasing the representation of women in leadership roles and frontline operational roles. It includes 26 members who lead some 288,000 employees and volunteers. The program comes alongside leaders so they can provide guidance and disruptive change to support transformation of their organisations. As leadership in this sector is male dominated, it was designed to address inherent issues by encouraging leaders to be cognisant and recognise their own style of leadership.

In 2017–18, seven action groups were formed to understand barriers to gender equality and opportunities for improvement (Young et al., 2021):

1. Inclusive leadership
2. Flexible workplaces
3. Talent development
4. Communication
5. Community
6. Systems, and
7. Reporting.

The *Champions of Change Coalition Impact Report 2024* reported that a collaboration of 80 leaders from member agencies identified 80 actions to address gender equality. A total of 37 actions were implemented throughout 2023–2024, including return-to-work support, firefighter recruitment reviews, consultations on inclusive PPE and facilities, and diversity training. For frontline service delivery enablers (overall employees) 15 of the 21 (71%) fire and emergency group organisations had achieved gender balance (AFAC, n.d.).

Multicultural Water Safety Programs – Life Saving Victoria

Commenced in 2007 in response to the higher occurrence (five times more likely) of CALD community members drowning than others, Life Saving Victoria's (LSV) program aims to ensure comprehensive water safety literacy in Victoria. The program comprises courses specifically designed for participants with limited English proficiency and/or limited swimming ability using qualified instructors who are skilled in CALD education. Other programs address emergency response scenarios and provide career pathways into the aquatic sector. Since 2007 when the employment and training program began, over 450 youth and adults have been trained for roles in the aquatics industry.

In 2013 and 2014, six teens and five adult high achievers from Chinese, Afghan, Thai, Burmese, and Bosnian communities were selected as CALD Ambassadors for LSV and emergency services. They were provided with extensive training to share their stories with the media and inspire CALD and non-CALD communities. Among the many benefits, the program has increased community cohesion, increased CALD participation in the program and led to employment of participants in the aquatic industry and other emergency management sectors (Young et al., 2021).

'We Speak Your Language' short films – Country Fire Authority (CFA)

This series of short films, developed by the CFA, provides local multicultural communities with a platform to educate the local community on the dangers of fires using their own language. Thai community members took part and co-scripted the first film, in collaboration with the Women's Cultural Friendship Group in Springvale, about kitchen fires, the importance of fire alarms, and being prepared. With the help of a liaison officer from a multicultural background, relationships with key community members have been forged, and the CFA and the local community have mutually benefited, learning about each other through the experience.

The films allayed concerns or misconceptions about how people from multicultural communities perceive those in uniforms. As a result of the films there has been an uptake in requests for smoke alarms, fire blankets, and reading materials. There have been further films focusing on Chinese and Indian communities in their roles as CFA members. All the films are available in the public domain and have been well received in multicultural media. There are numerous benefits from the films, including increasing cultural awareness, increasing the CFA profile, bridging the gap between brigades and multicultural communities, and building trust and long-term relationships (Young et al., 2021).

Emergency WA Hackathon

The 2023 Emergency WA Hackathon brought together DFES and the WA Data Science Innovation Hub with the aim of showcasing innovative ideas for improving the communication of emergency information during a disaster. This Hackathon came on the back of public sentiment that information should be more detailed, such as estimated evacuation times according to a user's current location, as well as Emergency WA's technology upgrade that will ensure faster and more specific dissemination of warnings. Teams were formed from 100 participants belonging to various industries with the task of developing innovative ideas and solutions to enhance delivery of emergency information.

While AI augments emergency information and warning systems through providing translated emergency information, automated warnings and predictive modelling of emergency situations, the challenges of the hackathon included:

> improving emergency interactions for people with hearing and vision impairments
> detecting and translating emergency notifications into a person's native language
> creating contextual warnings based on a person's location, and
> generating automated warnings using trends and forecasts from data sources.

At the end of the three-day event, an assessment is made by an expert panel of judges of the solutions devised by each team with cash prizes of up to $2,500 awarded (Government of Western Australia, 2023).

Student Volunteer Army – Canterbury earthquakes, New Zealand

The district of Canterbury, and most significantly the city of Christchurch, was subject to an earthquake on 4 September 2010, followed by a more intense aftershock on 22 February 2011 in which 185 people died. After the 4 September event, the Student Volunteer Army (SVA) was established through a Facebook page called 'Student volunteer base for earthquake clean-up' and brought approximately 2,500 people to shovel 65,000 tonnes of silt from Christchurch's streets and properties. When the deadly aftershock occurred, the club, affiliated with the University of Canterbury Students' Association, morphed into the SVA and engaged 13–15,000 volunteers who committed to more than 75,000 hours of work (Nissen et al., 2021). In subsequent disasters, the SVA has become a "leader of second wave crisis response" (SVA, n.d.), helping communities in clean up and recovery but is also focused on community preparedness and (SVA, n.d.):

> provides university club members, from which the SVA was originally founded, with ongoing training resources and equipment to respond safely and quickly in a crisis
> recruits and mobilises high volumes of volunteers to support and deliver a wide range of tasks in multiple locations across Aotearoa, and
> works with local and national bodies to plan for and deliver safe and effective spontaneous volunteer management in a crisis.

While the SVA is an example of spontaneous volunteering from its beginnings in the 2010 earthquake, it also had pre-existing structures and networks in place that enabled the effectiveness of the movement to be greater than a strictly 'spontaneous' response. Friends, colleagues, employers, and the university club structures were pre-existing networks that core SVA members could garner support from, as well as wider structural factors, all perceived as enablers to volunteering in an effective and mobilised way (Nissen et al., 2021).

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Acronyms

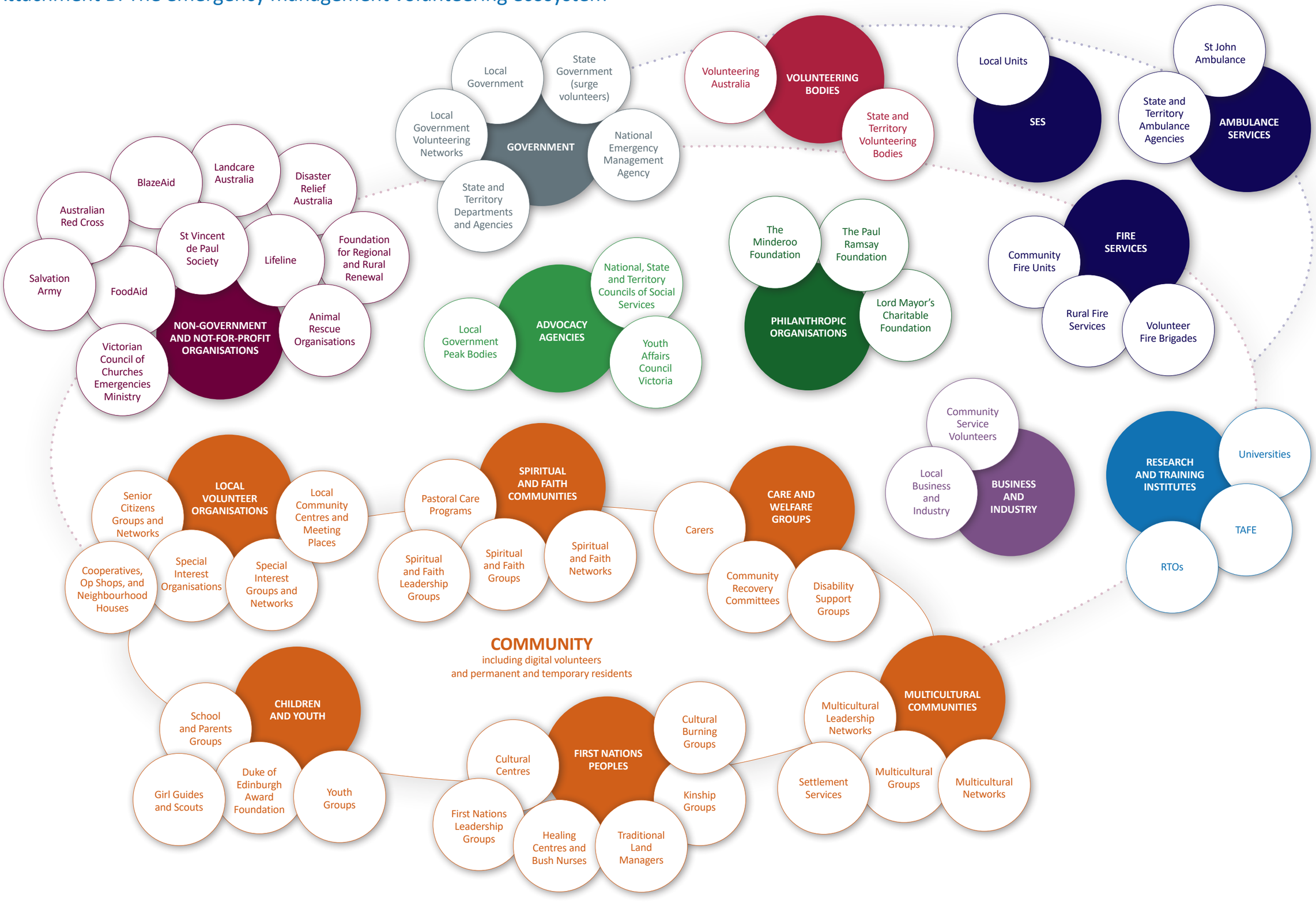
ADDIE	Analysis, design, development, implementation, evaluation
AFAC	Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (National Council for Fire and Emergency Services)
AI	Artificial intelligence
AIDR	Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
EM	Emergency management
EMO	Emergency management organisation
FENZ	Fire and Emergency New Zealand
FRNSW	Fire and Rescue New South Wales
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-government organisation
NFP	Not-for-profit organisation
NHRA	Natural Hazards Research Australia
NSW SES	New South Wales State Emergency Service
OHS	Occupational health and safety
PPRR	Prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
QFES	Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (The Queensland Fire Department since 1 July 2024)
ROI	Return on investment
RPAS	Remote piloted aircraft systems
SES	State Emergency Services
UNSW	The University of New South Wales
VICSES	Victoria State Emergency Service
VMTG	Volunteering Management Technical Group
VU	Victoria University

Attachment A: Strategic directions alignment

Please note: The numbering system in the table below corresponds with the number of the particular strategy we are referring to in the published sources at the top of each column.

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint: Strategic Framework	**AFAC *Strategic Directions 2022–2026***	**Volunteering Australia *National Strategy for Volunteering 2023–2033***
1. Working with communities to build resilience and safety	1. Supporting resilient communities through risk reduction 2. Providing a trusted response 3. Using credible and timely information and data 5. Informed by knowledge, innovation and research	1.1 Focus on the volunteer experience 2.2 Reshape the public perception of volunteering 2.3 Recognise the inherent value of volunteering 2.4 Enable a community-led approach 3.2 Build strong leadership and shared accountability
2. Strengthening trust through building organisational capability in volunteering EMOs	1. Supporting resilient communities through risk reduction 2. Providing a trusted response 3. Using credible and timely information and data 4. Safe, capable, and diverse workforce 5. Informed by knowledge, innovation and research	1.1 Focus on the volunteer experience 1.3 Ensure volunteering is not exploitative 2.1 Diversify the understanding of volunteering 3.2 Recognise the inherent value of volunteering 3.2 Build strong leadership and shared accountability 3.3 Commit to strategic investment 3.4 Recognise the importance of volunteer management
3. Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable workforce	4. Safe, capable, and diverse workforce 5. Informed by knowledge, innovation, and research	1.2 Make volunteering inclusive and accessible 2.4 Enable a community-led approach 3.2 Build strong leadership and shared accountability
4. Ensuring a safe, diverse, and inclusive volunteering environment	4. Safe, capable, and diverse workforce 6. Effective and transparent governance	1.2 Make volunteering inclusive and accessible 2.1 Diversify the understanding of volunteering 3.2 Build strong leadership and shared accountability
5. Enabling innovation	3. Using credible and timely information and data 5. Informed by knowledge, innovation, and research 6. Effective and transparent governance	3.1 Make volunteering a cross-portfolio issue in government 3.2 Build strong leadership and shared accountability 3.3 Commit to strategic investment
6. Developing responsive and effective governance	3. Using credible and timely information and data 6. Effective and transparent governance	1.3 Ensure volunteering is not exploitative 3.2 Build strong leadership and shared accountability

Attachment B: The emergency management volunteering ecosystem



Attachment C: Maturity matrix strategic actions

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.

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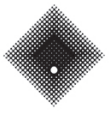

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