The Emergency management sustainable volunteering blueprint: Interim action plan

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Version	Release history	Date
1.0	Initial release of document – internal	28/11/24
2. 0	Final document	20/05/25

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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.

Acknowledgements

The Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint

The *Emergency management volunteering: More than just words* project was funded by Natural Hazards Research Australia (the Centre). This project was conceived with a clear goal in mind – to move the emergency management sector beyond discussing challenges for emergency management 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 (the Blueprint). This has been undertaken by Victoria University (VU) in collaboration with AFAC, members of the Volunteering Management Technical Group (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 emergency management 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.
- Develop an Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint in which living documents can be adapted to changing circumstances and needs. Their purpose is to guide and support strategic, sector wide collaborative action that supports emergency management volunteers (the people), volunteering (the activities) and volunteerism (the culture).

The Blueprint focuses on the State Emergency Services (SES) and State and Territory 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 overleaf). 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 VMTG is the champion for the Blueprint and steward of Strategic Framework and Interim Action Plan. As a live document, the Interim Action Plan can be adapted as required by the VMTG and other AFAC collaboration groups.

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint – more than just words
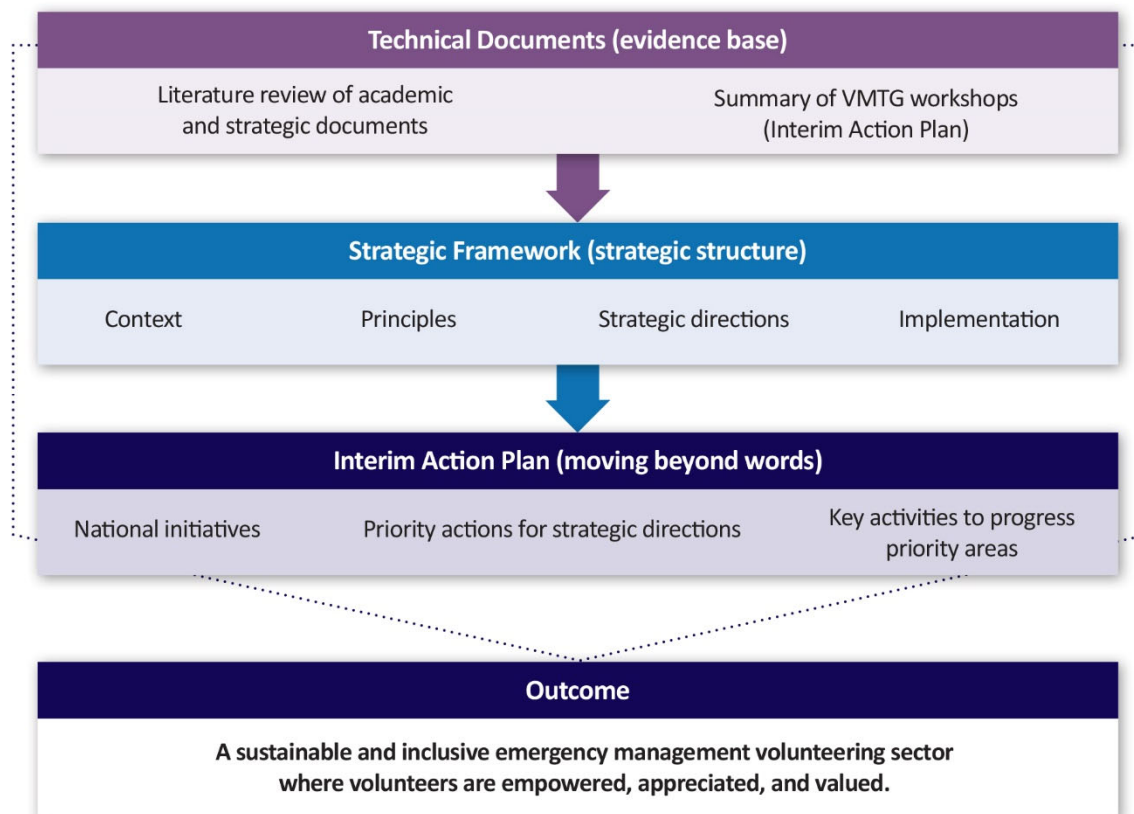
Technical Documents (evidence base)

| Literature review of academic and strategic documents | Summary of VMTG workshops (Interim Action Plan) |

Strategic Framework (strategic structure)

| Context | Principles | Strategic directions | Implementation |

Interim Action Plan (moving beyond words)

| National initiatives | Priority actions for strategic directions | Key activities to progress priority areas |

Outcome

A sustainable and inclusive emergency management volunteering sector where volunteers are empowered, appreciated, and valued.

FIGURE 1: THE SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING BLUEPRINT COMPONENTS.

Focus and purpose of this document

The purpose of this Interim action plan is to provide a basis for tangible action at the national scale that supports the development of the sustainable volunteering agenda. The actions have been selected as priorities by the VMTG. The actions and tasks outlined in this document will be used to inform implementation by the VMTG and Australian and New Zealand Fire and SES Agencies over an 18-month period. This is not intended to be final plan but a foundation on which the allocated owners of proposed activities within these actions can shape to meet their agendas. It also provides a mechanism for supporting focused activities that build towards the longer-term strategic outcomes needed.

The VMTG is the champion for the Blueprint and steward of the action plan. However, some actions and activities within this plan fall outside of the scope of the VMTG. As a result, it will be important to identify where others within the AFAC Collaboration Framework inform or need to take ownership of specific activities and actions.

How this plan was developed

This plan was developed through three workshops that brought together the AFAC VMTG and key community stakeholders to explore how sustainable volunteering could be achieved within the broader emergency management volunteering ecosystem. Workshops one and two concentrated on the components of the Strategic Framework and pathways forward and are summarised in

Attachment A. Workshop 3 identified the priorities for action and accompanying activities that led to this Interim action plan.

Six strategic directions within the Strategic framework guide the action areas:

1. Working with communities to build resilience and safety.
2. Strengthening trust through organisational capability in volunteering emergency management organisations.
3. Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable workforce.
4. Ensuring a safe, diverse and inclusive volunteering environment.
5. Enabling innovation.
6. Developing responsive and effective governance.

The two priority action areas identified by the VMTG focused on Strategic Directions 3 and 5:

- **Action 1**: **Enhancing and building on the current national education curriculum to support volunteering skills pathways focusing on future capabilities needs and skills transferability.** This action primarily sits under Strategic Direction 3: Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable workforce, but aspects of the action have alignment with:
  o Strategic Direction 5: Enabling innovation
  o Strategic Direction 2: Strengthening trust through organisational capability in volunteering emergency management organisations

- **Action 2: A national initiative to assist organisations incorporate emergent and innovative models of volunteering and understanding of where and how they can be applied across the Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PPRR) spectrum**.

  This action primarily sits under Strategic Direction 5: Enabling innovation, but aspects of the action have alignment with:
  o Strategic Direction 1: Working with communities to build resilience and safety.
  o Strategic Direction 2: Strengthening trust through organisational capability in volunteering emergency management organisations
  o Strategic Direction 3: Enhancing education and learning for a skilled and capable workforce

These were selected based on the understanding that achieving the desired outcomes is a long-term proposition, so that the actions contained within this Plan are first steps and will be built upon. Potential owners of those actions have been identified within the AFAC collaboration structure.

These two priority actions were selected using a collaborative decision-making process with the AFAC VMTG members. There are also additional actions (Attachment B) which can be considered and added to the current actions. Beneath each are three proposed activities to be implemented across an 18-month time frame. This time frame is indicative only as it is recognised that fire and SES agencies work in highly volatile and at times unpredictable circumstances, so adjustments may be needed to accommodate these. Each action area is accompanied by priority activities.

Key considerations for their selection were:
- Activities beneath each action must be achievable within the time frame allocated and within the resource and time constraints of VMTG members.
- They must consider the stakeholders and broader factors influencing the volunteering ecosystem and be consistent with the strategic directions outlined in the Blueprint Strategic Framework.
- They must provide a foundation for further activities that build toward a sustainable volunteering workforce for the future.

This is intended to be a live document and should be read in conjunction with the Strategic Framework. An additional action area will be added to incorporate activities related to support the uptake of ownership of the Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint when it has been finalised and endorsed by the appropriate AFAC authorities. Additional actions or activities may also be added as the agenda evolves.

Context summary

The critical role that volunteers play within EMO workforces is widely acknowledged across the sector. The Productivity Commission estimates there were 23,327 SES and 189,041 Fire Agency volunteers in the workforce in the 2023–24 financial year (SCRGSP 2025). Over the past decade, emergency services volunteers have remained relatively constant, while fire services volunteers have slowly declined (SCRGSP 2024). For SES and Rural Fire Services across Australia, volunteers make up the majority of their workforces. However, those who volunteer as part of the emergency management ecosystem extend beyond these organisations.

Major trends that impact emergency management volunteers fall into four groups (McLennan 2022). The following examples of these four areas show their highly dynamic nature:

1. **Broad shifts in volunteering practices**
   - Expansion of roles beyond response into all areas across the PPRR spectrum.
   - Social, technological and digital innovation skills needed in response to changing technologies and socioeconomic circumstances.
   - Professionalisation of the workforce.

2. **Changing community and government expectations**
   - The changing expectations of volunteers in relation to how they wish to work.
   - Increased formalisation of training and safety requirements.
   - Increasingly constrained time and resources.
   - Changing occupational health and safety (OHS) requirements in relation to safe workspaces and the need to provide psychologically safe workspaces.
   - The changing service model that aims to work with communities to achieve outcomes rather just provide a service to them.

3. **Demographic and community change**
   - Internal and external migration, ageing and dynamic community compositions.
   - Changing community demographics, capacity and internal migration.
   - The need to diversify the emergency management workforce to better reflect their communities.
   - Increased economic stressors.

4.   Climate change and rising hazard exposure
- Increases in the frequency and/or severity of many natural hazards due to climate change placing increased pressure on emergency services and communities.
- An increase in compound and cascading events impacting on community and workforce wellbeing (burnout and insufficient time for recovery).

(McLennan 2022, Young et al 2018 and 2021, NSW Government 2024.)

The need for fire and emergency agencies to maintain and sustain their volunteers in the face of increasing service demands in a changing environment, presents challenges and opportunities. Effective progress requires broad collaboration and redefining the nature of the relationships emergency management organisations have with their communities and other key stakeholders in emergency management volunteering. The current lack of collaborative mechanisms and enabling infrastructure to support widespread, coordinated change presents a considerable barrier (McLennan et al 2022, Young et al 2024).

The systemic nature of these issues requires longer term activities, innovation and strategic approaches. Maintaining a focus in relation to implementation of activities is important to avoid agencies feeling overwhelmed by the size of the task ahead of them.

The development of the plan

This plan has been developed using the 'working from the inside out' methodology (Young 2016), which is a transdisciplinary methodology that uses a systems approach to combine diverse forms of knowledge. Translation, communication and integration into systems is central to its activities. Its aim is to provide useful and useable outputs and outcomes for research users.

The activities undertaken to support the development of this Action Plan are as follows:

- A systemic literature review that examined, institutional, organisational, community and individual areas of formal and grey literature.
- Three workshops:
    - **Common Ground Workshop One:** Friday 14 June 2024. AFAC, 340 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Attended by VMTG members, the purpose of this workshop was to identify and come to a consensus as to the two strategic priority areas for actions.
    - **Common Ground Workshop Two:** Thursday 17 October 2024. Multicultural Hub, 506 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Attended by VMTG members, community and volunteering organisational representatives, the purpose of this workshop was to receive feedback on the draft Framework (a component of the Blueprint) and to map strategic pathways across the six strategic areas identified from previous work undertaken by the team.
    - **Common Ground Workshop Three**: Friday 18 October. AFAC, 340 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Attended by VMTG members, the purpose of this workshop was to develop a draft Interim Action Plan focusing on the identified priority action areas.

See Attachment A for a summary of key points from Workshops One and Two that have informed the Interim Action Plan.

Considerations for success

The following are components needed for successfully completing the actions outlined within the Plan.

- A mandate to operate and an authorising environment. Authorisation and signoff of the Plan by upper-level leadership in organisations and at a sector level.
- Ability to allocate time and leverage resources to complete activities. Consideration of how existing resources/programs can be leveraged and maximised and who should be responsible for supporting and/or funding and resource gaps.
- The development of relationships/partnerships across AFAC committees and where appropriate, beyond the emergency management sector to support activities.
- Clear allocation of leader/s for each action.
- Socialisation of the strategic action and its desired outcome across VMTG organisations and their volunteers to ensure understanding of the role of the Plan and promote buy-in to actions.
- Connection and cohesion between the two actions, as they are related. Clear communication with key stakeholders and across AFAC committees to ensure that actions have a complementary outcome rather than duplicate tasks.

Specific bodies identified aligned with the action plan

- Australian Institute of Disaster Resilience (AIDR)
- Natural Hazards Research Australia (the Centre)
- Australian and New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC)
- AFAC collaborative groups and councils, including the Workforce Management Group, Digital Immersive Learning Network
- Disaster Relief Australia
- National Emergency Management Minister's Meeting (NEMMM)
- Volunteers within organisations (individuals and unit/brigade/branch level)
- Government departments (e.g., Public Skills Australia, National Emergency Management Agency funding)
- Other Emergency Management Volunteering organisations (e.g., Australian Red Cross, BlazeAid, Disaster Relief Australia (DRA))
- Community volunteering groups (e.g., Neighbourhood House networks)
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR)
- Volunteering associations and councils (e.g., Council of Volunteer Fire Associations (CVFA) and Volunteering Australia)
- Multicultural and faith-based organisations
- Research institutes
- Private industry – tech providers/vendors
- VMTG member organisations
- Local government representatives.

National volunteering initiatives

The following national initiatives relate either directly or indirectly to the actions contained within this document.

- AIDR – Volunteering Leadership Program, Emergency Management Volunteering Forum https://www.aidr.org.au/programs/australian-emergency-management-volunteer-forum/ Volunteering Leadership Program https://www.aidr.org.au/programs/volunteer-leadership-program/

- Volunteering Australia – CPD Program for Professional Leaders of Volunteer CPD Program for Professional Leaders of Volunteers - Volunteering Australia

- Volunteering Australia – National Strategy for Volunteering and Action Plan 2024–2027 https://www.volunteeringaustralia.org/get-involved/national-strategy-for-volunteering/

- NSW Government – Development of national principles and strategic plan

- NEMA – Disaster Relief Australia https://www.nema.gov.au/our-work/disaster-recovery/disaster-relief-australia

- Australasian Institute of Emergency Services – Certified Emergency Services Manager https://www.aies.net.au/certified-emergency-services-manager

Priority Action 1

Enhancing and building on the current national education curriculum to support volunteering skills pathways focusing on future capabilities needs and skills transferability.

Outcome: For volunteering organisations to become an active participant in national emergency management workforce planning activities.

This overarching action area aims to:
- diversify training
- establish national core competencies for emergent volunteering models including where these are placed across the PPRR spectrum
- provide a basis for understanding future skills needs and their potential pathways to assist with future workforce planning
- improve the understanding of community capabilities, what they are and where they occur
- identify where non-traditional capabilities and skills exist in organisations and communities so they can be better leveraged and managed and
- support greater transferability of competency and skills across the sector.

Activities

1. Undertake a stocktake of information and data across the sector relating to volunteering education and training with regard to innovative models, using an existing template that will be updated.

2. Scoping research project to gain insight into current skills being used by volunteers (National comparison analysis). This would examine the full scope of skills currently being used by volunteers in their day-to-day activities across the PPRR spectrum.

3. A national assessment of the current education and training landscape that addresses emerging and innovative models of volunteering. This will examine community and organisational perspectives, opportunities, needs and barriers. Areas that may be assessed include:
   - emerging models of volunteering and the skills and capabilities needed to deliver these
   - emergent roles and skills needed to enact these across the PPRR spectrum – what these are and where they are needed
   - core skills and capabilities in technical and non-technical skills (current and emergent)
   - transferability of competencies and skills
   - effectiveness of current delivery models
   - community capabilities and skills.

Action 1: Activities plan

Activity	Task(s)	Resources	Potential Collaborators	Potential lead	0–6 months	6–12 months	12–18 months
1. **Internal mapping of current courses and skills information.**	• Establish working group • Map and update current environmental scan template in use • Scope what is needed • Update template • Test template for usability • Send out to VMTG organisations • Collate findings and report back to group	• Dedicated time and resources of VMTG group members	• Workforce Management Group (WMG) • Learning and Development Group (L&DG)	• Workforce Management Group (WMG)	X———————X		
2. **Option A: Scoping and submitting research project to gain insight into current skills being used by volunteers. National comparison analysis.** **(N.B., submissions for the Centre occur twice a year.)**	• Identify agency sponsor and partners • Write proposal • Sign off by authorising bodies/agencies • Submit proposal to the Centre	• Dedicated time and resources of group members • Expert support to assist proposal writing	• The Centre • VMTG group members • EM associated volunteering agencies • NSW Gov	• WMG • VMTG • Learning and Development Group (L&DG) • Strategic Research Group (SRG) •	X———————————————X		
3. **Option B: Scoping and submitting a research project concept for funding to examine volunteering skills and education from community and organisational perspectives to clarify the status and future needs in relation to emergent volunteering models.**	• Identify sponsor and partners • Select funding source • Clarify scope • Write proposal • Sign-off by authorising bodies/agencies • Submit proposal to the Centre or NEMA	• Dedicated time and resources of VMTG Group members • Contributions from participating research partners	• VMTG group members • EM associated volunteering agencies (e.g., Australian Red Cross, BlazeAid) • Community • Local government representatives • AFAC workforce management group and Community Safety Group • Public Skills Australia • FRRR, CFVA, DRA • The Centre, NEMA	• WMG • VMTG • SRG	X———————————X		

Priority Action 2

A national initiative to assist organisations incorporate emergent and innovative models of volunteering and understanding of where and how they can be applied across the PPRR spectrum.

Outcome: To reach a state where innovation is understood and an accepted part of organisational structures and ways of working.

This overarching action area aims to achieve the following:

- provide the mechanisms and organisational infrastructure to support development of practitioners and innovation practice
- broaden the innovation knowledge system beyond Fire and SES agencies by including greater diversity of thought (e.g., private sector, broader volunteering sector including health and not-for-profits (NFPs), international, youth, multicultural communities, First Nations and different abilities)
- enhance learning and knowledge exchange opportunities in our volunteering workforce across the sector
- improve data and its accessibility for volunteers across the sector to enable better across sector innovation
- promote greater representation of volunteers in key decision-making processes and policy development in relation to innovation
- advocate for better connectivity for communication technology and understanding of application of those technologies to support innovation activities.

Activities

The proposed activities are as follows:

1. **Establish an innovation platform and or community of practice (CoP) for sharing knowledge to support development of innovation practice across the EM volunteering sector. Longer term aims for this include:**
   - building a better database for volunteers across the sector in common format
   - expanding to include the community and wider ecosystem
   - developing an innovation map and pathways for sector workforce development that includes formal, informal and spontaneous volunteers
   - building data-matched spontaneous volunteering models and apps (e.g., languages other than English).

2. **Obtain a licence to innovate (organisations and institutions) – develop a document that outlines the process of innovation and its value for endorsement by sector leaders.**

3. **Provide an evidence base for the development of an ongoing tech foresighting function to inform innovation within the network.**

   Areas for exploration may include:

   - mapping connectivity (geographical and time scales), to better understand limitations and access of IT and networks
   - examining learning to cope with limited connectivity – workarounds, network redundancy, multiple modes of communication
   - ways of learning to cope with limited connectivity – workarounds, network redundancy, multiple modes of communication
   - develop innovation discussion paper for presentation to nominated sector leadership group.

Action 2: Activities plan

Activity	Task(s)	Resources	Potential collaborators (many may span tasks)	Potential lead	0–6 months	6-12 months	12–18 months
1. **Establish an innovation platform and or community of practice (CoP) for sharing knowledge and supporting development of innovation practice across the EM volunteering sector.** Develop a virtual sandpit for developing ideas and concepts.	• Establish working group within VMTG • Map existing innovation network across sector and identify key stakeholders (e.g., AIDR, community groups, non-government organisations [NGOs], government) • Identify funding and resources • Develop concept paper for the innovation CoP and platform to present to AFAC leadership group for endorsement • Present to AFAC leadership group • Develop platform and establish network • Promote network through social media and AFAC platforms, consider awards for innovation in the sector NB: Options for the knowledge sharing platform range from simple (e.g., webpage on an existing website or a Sharepoint group) to complex (e.g., website or data sharing platform). As a result, the above actions may require adjustment to ensure it is achievable within the 18-month period.	• Time and resources VMTG • Dedicated resources for curating and hosting online resource • Collaborative partners	• Active emergency management volunteers • AIDR • Tech providers/vendors (collaborative platform) • Organisations with parallel volunteer models (e.g., community health, ACOSS, youth, seniors, multicultural organisations and networks, Neighbourhood House network, Landcare Australia). • Award and scholarship owners (state and national) • State or national peak bodies (e.g., ACOSS and Volunteering Australia) • International partners/agencies • Research institutions • Volunteers within organisations (individuals and unit/brigade/branch level)	• VMTG • L&DG • AFAC Knowledge, Innovation and Research Utilisation Network (KIRUN)	X————————————————————————X		
2. **Obtain a licence to innovate (organisations and institutions).** Develop a document that outlines the process of innovation and its value for endorsement by sector leaders.	• Internal collation from VMTG members of 'innovative' volunteering models. • Develop a shared understanding of the innovation process within the emergency management organisational context. • Develop discussion paper to be presented to the AFAC leadership for discussion and endorsement. Activities involved with the above may include: • Obtaining consensus as to the focus of volunteer innovation roles (whole volunteer lifecycle) • Collating case study evidence through stories of where innovation exists within the sector and its benefits. • Identify how it is currently being rewarded (awards, funding, prizes) • Determining innovation appetite and buy-in for transition activities	• VMTG time and resources • Collaboration with others across the volunteering ecosystem	• Sector leaders • State and national governance bodies (AFAC councils, NEMMM, ANZEMC) • AIDR • Volunteers (individuals and unit/branch level) • Award and scholarship owners (state and national) • Volunteers within organisations (individuals and unit/brigade/branch level)	• KIRUN • VMTG		X————————X	

Activity	Task(s)	Resources	Potential collaborators (many may span tasks)	Potential lead	0–6 months	6-12 months	12–18 months
3. **Development of a research proposal under the theme of:** *Enhancing the volunteer experience in emergency management organisations through innovation*. (See Attachment B for options).	• Identify sponsor and partners • Select funding source • Clarify scope • Write proposal • Sign-off by authorising bodies/agencies • Submit proposal to the Centre or NEMA	• VMTG time and resources	• Active emergency management volunteers • AIDR • VMTG group members • EM associated volunteering agencies (e.g., Australian Red Cross, BlazeAid) • Community • Local government representatives • FRRR, CFVA, DRA • The Centre	• VMTG • L&DG • KIRUN	X —————————————— X		
4. **Provide an evidence base for the development of an ongoing tech foresighting function to inform innovation within volunteering organisations.** Scope a research proposal for EM volunteer future workforce modelling in light of AI/tech advancements.	• Identify sponsor and partners • Select funding source • Clarify scope • Write proposal • Sign off by authorising bodies/agencies • Submit proposal	• KIRUN time and resources • VMTG time and resources • AFAC resources and coordination	• Industry and R&D with respect to emerging tech • Defence (tech innovation) • Young people (emerging tech) • Research institutions • AFAC Digital Immersive Learning Network	• KIRUN • VMTG		X —————————— X	

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Attachment A: Workshops One and Two – summary of key points

This section provides a summary of the key points from Workshop One and Two. Workshop Three's focus was the development of this Interim Action Plan.

Workshop One

Innovation, education and learning, workplace culture, change, valuing and the value of volunteering and an uncertain and rapidly changing environment were strong themes that arose. Community and community benefits were also discussed, along with the need for actions to have mutual and, where possible, equal benefits for communities and organisations.

Across the areas of 'needs', 'opportunities' and 'outcomes', six overarching strategic focus priority areas were identified by the participants (Table A1). The opportunities selected have the potential to provide a starting point for strategic and tangible actions.

Strategic Focus Priorities
Needs
To understand the impact of cascading events and the changing nature of natural hazards on the future volunteering workforce and community capacity to volunteer.
To innovate and collaborate better through ways of working, systems, processes and training to support this.
Opportunities
Development of a national education curriculum to support volunteer career pathways, skills and capabilities development and transferability of these.
A national initiative to assist organisations incorporate emergent and innovative models of volunteering and understanding of how and where these can be applied across the PPRR spectrum.
Outcomes
Volunteering with emergency management volunteering organisations is valued, appropriately resourced and is being invested in for the long-term future.
Sufficient and fit-for-purpose volunteer capability that enables a safe and resilient community.

TABLE A1: STRATEGIC FOCUS PRIORITIES
N.B., how the priority strategic focus priorities (action areas) are articulated in this plan have been changed in line with feedback received from workshop participants and the VMTG.

Other discussion points included:

Innovation:
- The need 'to innovate and collaborate' is central to activities.
- There are varying understandings as to what innovation was and meant.
- Some organisations are already innovating in terms of in their volunteering models or technology (e.g., spontaneous volunteering and drone operators).
- There is a need to develop a shared understanding as to what innovation is and means to support the Blueprint's implementation.

Workplace culture:
- Roles are expanding to resilience and community capability. However, the predominant response culture does not necessarily reflect this and can create barriers.
- The long-term nature of ensuring a sustainable workforce requires building a more strategic culture.

- Cultural change and management will play an important role in effective implementation of the Blueprint activities.

Working towards a national agenda:

- There are contextual differences between organisations. However, there is also considerable alignment in terms of strategic focus areas across EM volunteering organisations in the VMTG.
- There is alignment with the AFAC *Strategic Directions 2022–2026*. However, actions fell across multiple AFAC strategic directions due to their systemic nature, raising questions as to how they might be measured at a national level.
- Collaboration beyond the VMTG group and an authorising environment at a national level is critical.
- Ongoing strategic conversations throughout implementation is required to ensure that on ground actions and goals don't become disconnected from the longer-term outcome of a sustainable volunteering workforce.
- There is an inherent tension between meeting current service demands and the need to change. However, it was acknowledged that not changing would present greater challenges and risk.

Source: Young, C., Jones R. N., Ooi, D., Dadswell, K., and El-Masri, N. (2024). *Emergency Management Volunteering: More Than Just Words. Common Ground Workshop One, Summary Report*. Natural Hazards Research Australia, Melbourne.

Workshop Two

Workshop Two presented and discussed a draft framework and explored pathways towards sustainable volunteering.

Innovation

Suggestions
- industry scan of current innovation situation in organisations
- development of innovation hubs across organisations
- build an ecosystem of innovation/innovators
- effective knowledge transfer
- changing metrics for reviewing/assessing ideas.

Enablers
- building collaborations with learning institutes focused on innovation
- education and skills – innovation capability
- knowledge transfer systems
- engagement with grassroots organisations and other organisations who are innovating
- embracing and adapting to new ways of volunteering
- tech disruption – embrace drones, satellite, early notifications, etc.

Education and learning

Suggestions
- counting volunteer characteristics for strong data set (census)
- graduate type training where people are given foundational skills for all EM and then rotate around different organisations
- schools-based education in collective action skills
- national training skills program with transferable skills between sectors/states/territories.

Enablers
- embedding volunteering value into education and curriculum
- efficient reimbursement systems/regulatory incentives
- options for out of school – TAFE, gap year, university, migration program
- better understanding of the motivations of volunteers
- the right measurements.

Ownership of the Blueprint

Suggestions
- gain upper level and sector endorsement and buy-in.

Enablers
- volunteers feel the Blueprint speaks to their needs and that this will benefit them
- shared governance.

Overarching enablers for all actions

- inclusion of community volunteers and other related organisations in the development of programs and decision-making and development of initiatives
- localised resourcing
- the need for the chiefs to agree on the need and the benefit
- stories and narratives of successes, shared stories
- strong leadership in agencies and communities to support and drive actions
- trust, sustained and maintained relationships
- sector-wide collaboration (government, organisations and community).

Citation: Young, C., Jones, R. N., Ooi, D., and El-Masri, N. (2024). Common Ground: Volunteering More Than Just Words, Context Paper Workshop Two: Pathways to sustainable volunteering. Natural Hazards Research Australia.

Attachment B: Additional activity options

Activities raised during the document review process in addition to the those agreed upon by the VMTG during Workshop Three, are listed below to further support annual planning of activities by the VMTG.

Priority Action 1

- Benchmark against the National Standards for Volunteering and the Maturity Matrix – what is done currently and gap analysis.
- Explore expanding the National Volunteering Standards to include an EM component.

Priority Action 2:

- Explore innovative volunteer service delivery and engagement models that can support practice within the sector.
- Develop case studies on flexible volunteering options. Exploring how can these approaches ensure diversity and inclusion.
- Explore digitization and other ways of communicating and engaging with volunteers that is consultation based.
- Map current innovation occurring across the sector.

Enhancing the volunteer experience in emergency management organisations through innovation

- Create recognition arrangements that respect the contribution of all volunteers.
- Areas for further research:
  - o Development of an assessment tool that can be used by organisations to assess where bureaucracy can be reduced for volunteers.
  - o Collation of case studies of innovative initiatives and models in volunteering emergency management organisations that have actively enhanced the volunteering experience.
  - o Exploration of mechanisms to reduce the administrative burden on volunteers.
  - o Mechanisms for providing rewards that respect the contribution of all volunteers.
  - o Economic research to identify the value of volunteering to support business cases for government.
  - o How to build fit for purpose support arrangements for volunteers to reduce the financial burden.

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