

The Emergency Management Sustainable Volunteering Blueprint

Now is a time of opportunity for the emergency management (EM) volunteering sector.

“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 CONTEXT

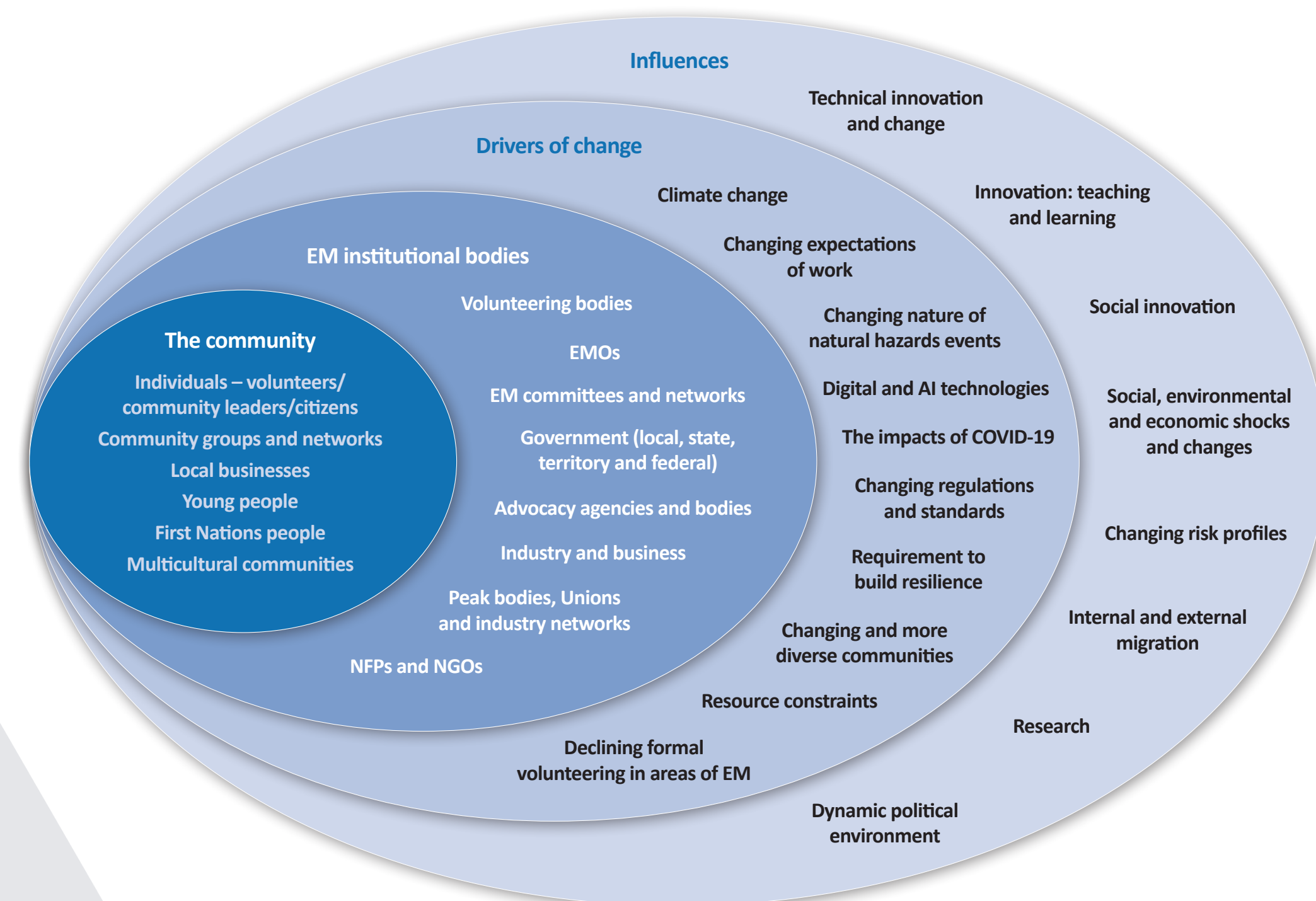


FIGURE 1: THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT VOLUNTEERING CONTEXT

The context in which communities and emergency management organisations (EMOs) exists is changing in response to a number of factors (Figure 1). This is creating compression points for EM volunteering which include:

- > Increasing demand and expanded roles, decreasing formal participation but increasing informal volunteering
- > Changing communities, community contexts, and social and psychological contracts.
- > Changing expectations of work and the need to enhance the volunteering experience.

Communities are changing, as are the risks they face. The EM sector needs to embrace innovation to retain their current volunteers and to ensure that future volunteering is sustainable. The Blueprint offers the opportunity to evolve and transform. By forging collaborative, innovative pathways across the EM volunteering ecosystem, it can realise the opportunity to revitalise and secure a volunteering workforce for the future which can continue to meet the needs of their communities.

THE BLUEPRINT

“The best way to predict your future is to create it.” — Abraham Lincoln

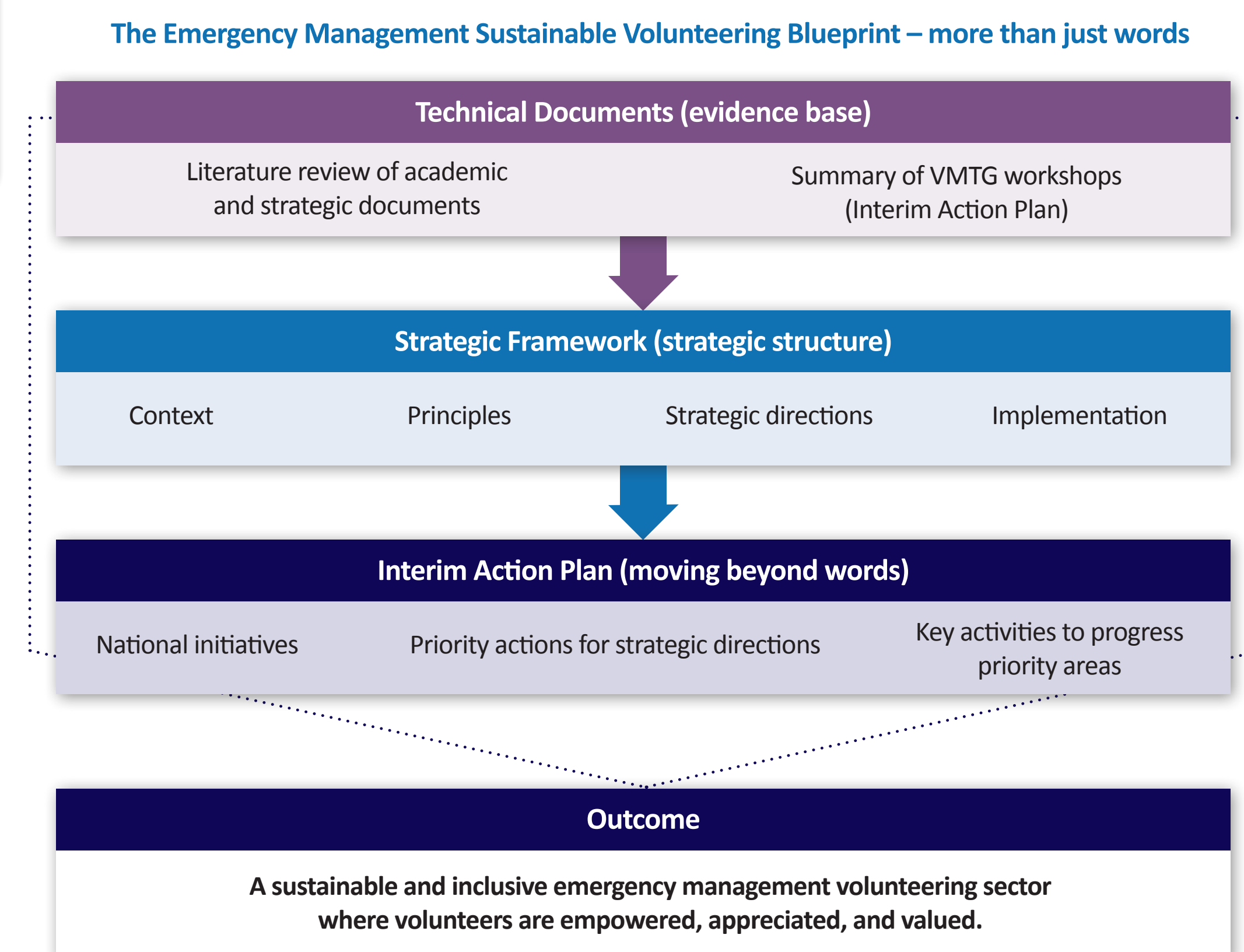


FIGURE 2: THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING BLUEPRINT

The **Blueprint** (Figure 2) was developed as part of the ‘Emergency management volunteering: more than just words’ project was funded by NHRA and undertaken by Victoria University (VU) in collaboration with AFAC, members of the Volunteer Management Technical Group (VMTG), and representatives from across the broader volunteering ecosystem between March 2024 and June 2025.

The **function** of **The Blueprint** is to provide a foundational structure that:

- > Presents an evidence base that brings together existing knowledge with sector intelligence to provide a synthesis of what is known and what is needed to progress the agenda.
- > Organises and makes visible the different aspects of the EM volunteering system to support identification, planning and coordination of actions being undertaken across the sector.

It does this through two living documents – **The Strategic Framework** that links strategy to on ground action, and **The Interim Action Plan** that focuses on two key actions that will be the focus of the AFAC VMTG. The AFAC VMTG is the champion for **The Blueprint** and steward of **The Strategic Framework** and **The Interim Action Plan**.

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

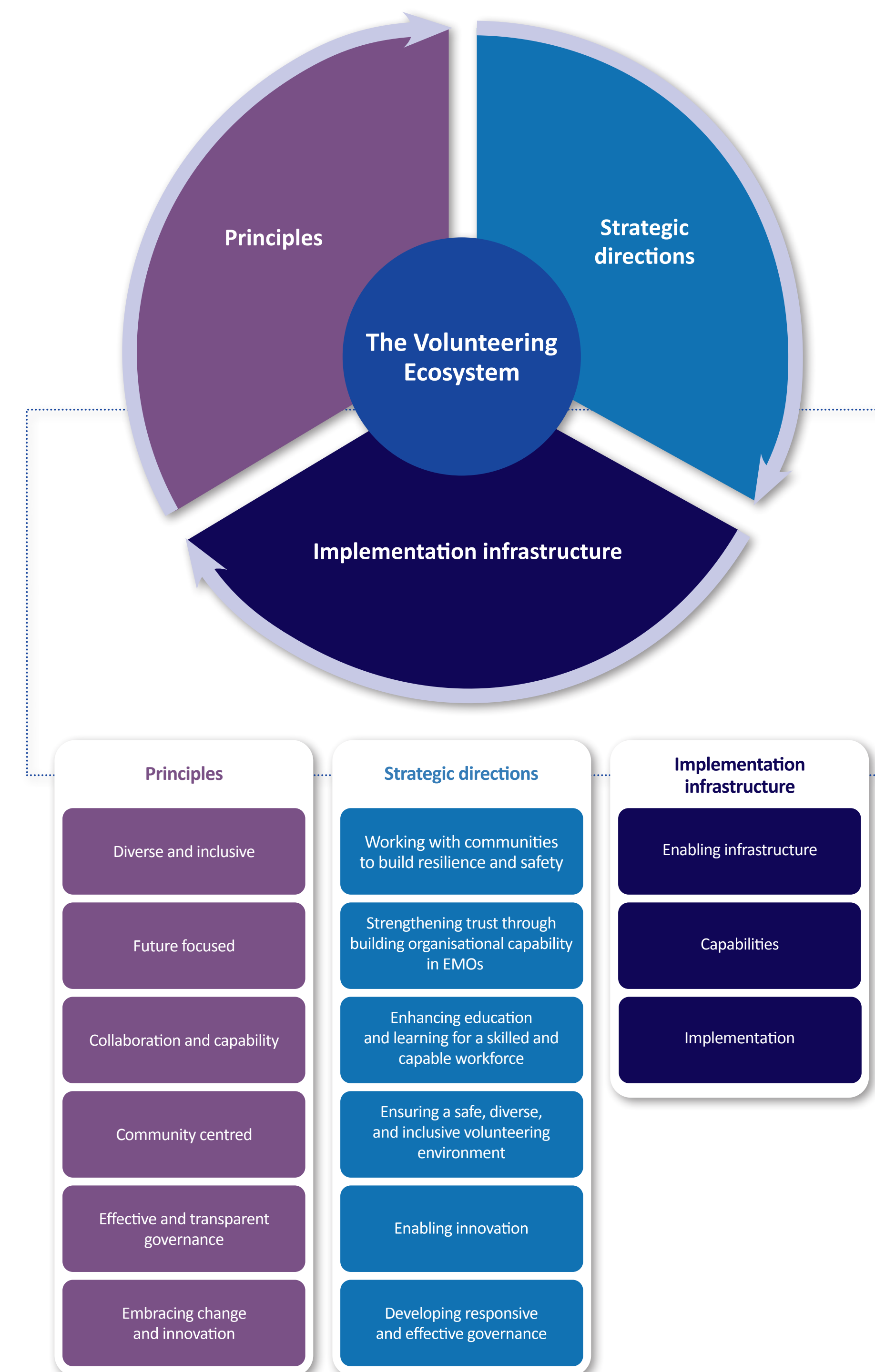


FIGURE 3: THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SUSTAINABLE VOLUNTEERING BLUEPRINT: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The **Strategic Framework** has four components (Figure 3):

- > **Principles** inform the ethical implementation of actions, and support collaboration, value learning, community, and connectedness.
- > **Strategic directions** provide the overarching areas of focus for sector-wide actions
- > **The volunteering ecosystem** provides the stakeholder and collaborative context for activities.
- > **The implementation infrastructure** and high-level guidance across three areas needed to support implementation and innovation case studies.

Innovation and education and learning provide pathways for effective action.

THE ECOSYSTEM

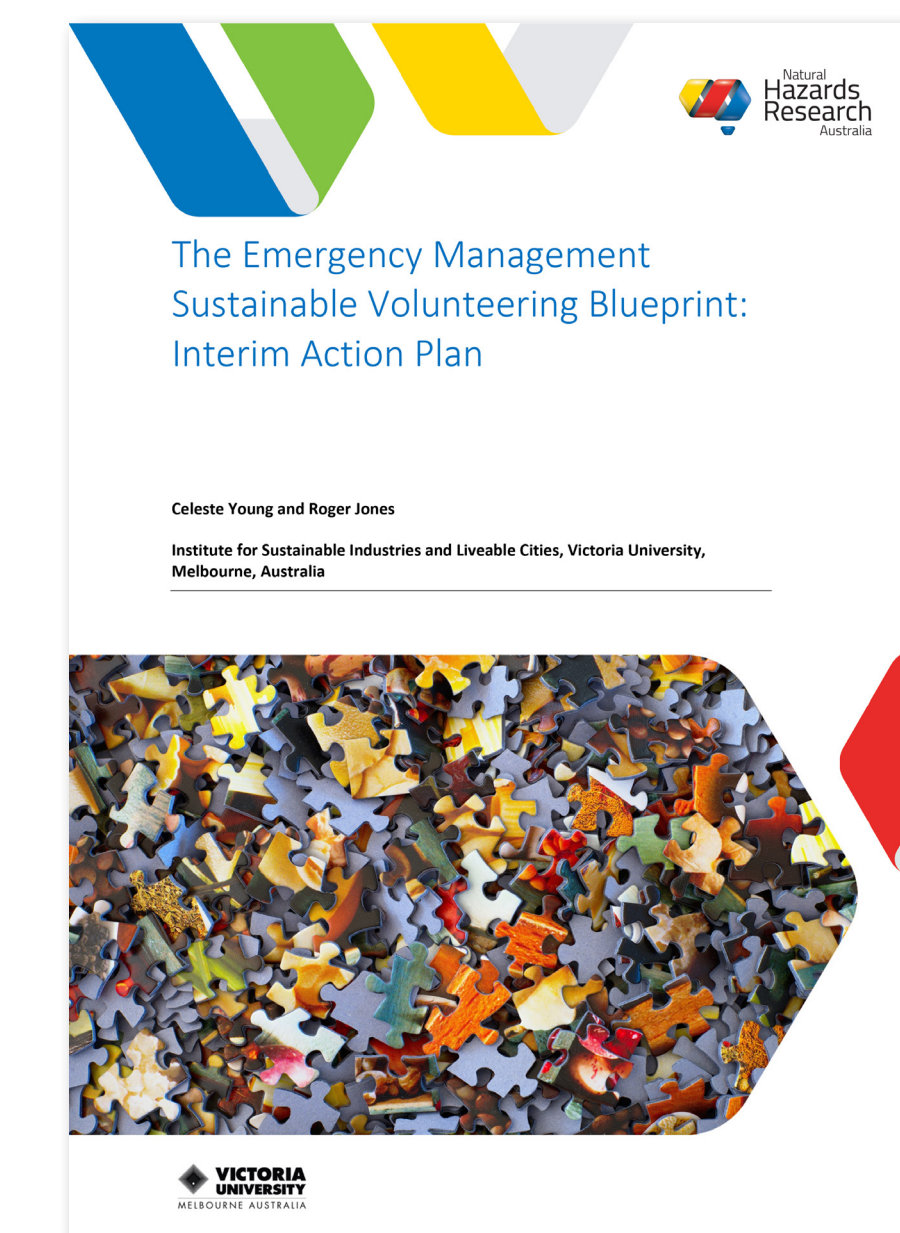
Communities are the volunteers, and the volunteers are the community.



FIGURE 4: THE VOLUNTEERING ECOSYSTEM

EM volunteering makes up an **ecosystem** (Figure 4) where communities are central. To achieve effective sector-wide outcomes, the many different stakeholders will need to collaborate in clarifying their various volunteering roles and responsibilities across the prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (PPRR) spectrum. This will require strengthening trust and understanding between EMOs, volunteers and communities, while making the contributions of volunteers highly visible.

THE INTERIM ACTION PLAN – BEYOND WORDS



The **Interim Action Plan** outlines two priority actions:

- > **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.
- > **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.

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Reference: Davies, A. (2023). How can we bolster Australia's depleted army of volunteers to match the soaring demand for their services? *The Conversation*. Accessed 20 April 2025 at <https://theconversation.com/how-can-we-bolster-australias-depleted-army-of-volunteers-to-match-the-soaring-demand-for-their-services-205218>



Further information

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