



VMA 5 Volunteering Strategy: Eastern Metropolitan Region

2023

Introduction

The VMA 5 is a Commonwealth funded program which provides 4 years of funding to Volunteering Victoria to break down barriers to volunteering faced by identified priority groups - people with disabilities, First Nations people, and newly arrived migrants. It also has an emphasis on the use of online strategies. Volunteering Victoria commissioned EV Inc. as the lead agency in the eastern metropolitan region to lead this work with a consortium of local agencies and representatives.

Throughout 2022 EV Inc. held forums to identify enablers and barriers to volunteering for people with disabilities and newly arrived migrants. This work built on existing research and consultations undertaken over the past 3 years. A First Nations strategy is being commissioned in 2023 through partnerships with Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place. A Youth strategy will be commissioned in 2023/24 in response to the Minister's advice that the priority groups can be diversified. This strategy is consistent with that approach.

On 6th February 2023 representatives from key organisations and local government came together to consider the forum outcomes and research and develop the strategy for addressing barriers to volunteering for people with disabilities and newly arrived migrants. This document is the strategy which will be implemented from July 1st 2023 following an additional wider consultation period with consortia members and key stakeholders throughout February. This includes local migrant communities and people with lived experience of disability.

The strategy group was asked to consider 3 questions:

- What actions in the next 2-3 years will enable newly arrived migrants / people living with a disability in the eastern region to access volunteering?
- What actions in the next 2-3 years should we undertake to break down the most important barriers to newly arrived migrants / people living with disability volunteering?
- How should we engage Volunteer Involving Organisation's (VIO's) in the eastern region in opening opportunities for newly arrived migrants/ people living with disability to volunteer?

Each forum held in 2022 had been summarised and key barriers and enablers identified. These were considered along with additional evidence from the Eastern Region Victoria Alive Forum held in 2019 looking at inclusive volunteering for people with a disability and a 2022 state funded piece of work kindly shared by Puffing Billy Railways and developed by AMES on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) volunteering. In addition, each participant in the strategy workshop brought their professional and lived experience to the table.

Themes emerging from the forums:

The workshop identified key themes arising from the forum deliberations on barriers and enablers to volunteering opportunities [refer Addendum for the full documents].

Newly arrived migrants

- Language barriers
- How to reach communities
- What is volunteering for the diverse newly arrived migrants?
- Access- where to find opportunities, what is required, how to approach an opportunity.
- Onboarding processes- simplified and more accessible.
- VIO's being culturally aware.
- Cost of volunteering.
- Opportunities that volunteering can bring.
- Uncertainty of the first year of settlement- refer to the Forum outcomes on impact of settlement on capacity to volunteer in the first year.

People Living with Disability

- Accessibility- digital, physical, emotional, legal/compliance issues, financial, how to find opportunities, recruitment process, language, environmental.
- Attractiveness and invisibility of informal volunteering- it's easier.
- Discrimination- preconceived ideas in VIO's, unconscious bias, stigma.
- Organisational capacity- structure of policy and procedures, adaptability of the organisation and their willingness to change, workforce behavior e.g. bullying, is the organisation welcoming, training and education.
- Cultural safety.
- Resources – both of VIO and the volunteer. NDIS funding not always available, need funding for changes to physical infrastructure.

Common themes:

There are clearly common themes between the 2 priority groups:

1. **Accessibility** - which covers both the accessibility of VIO structures and the people element of VIO's. It includes cultural and religious/faith accessibility as well as physical access, workplace inclusive behavior, welcoming environments and all aspects of understanding volunteering and what is available to people. Communication on opportunities is a key element to accessibility and access to online resources is not always an enabler but in some cases a barrier.
2. **Cost**- it was well recognised volunteering costs and transport to opportunities was a key issue here. For marginalised or vulnerable groups financial capacity to volunteer is a key barrier.
3. **Flexibility of VIO's** – it was well recognised that VIO's may well have to adapt and change their practices to be more inclusive and this is not always easy. Within this comes the burden and challenges of change management in a post COVID environment. These themes are detailed in the forum appendices.
4. **Resources of VIO's** – not all organisations and groups utilising volunteer workforces have the resources to be totally accessible and inclusive for everyone. It was recognised that matching people to what VIO's are capable of doing and being is more important. There needed to be pathways for participation in volunteer opportunities.

What actions in the next 2-3 years will enable newly arrived migrants / people Living with disability in the eastern metro region to access volunteering?

Workshop participants were asked to prioritise the actions they identified for both priority groups. These priorities were:

Newly arrived migrants

- Building relationships with key CALD communities and organisations.
- Better communication on where to find volunteering opportunities at the local level
- Ambassador program to promote opportunities within communities
- Resources on volunteering which address barriers such as visa restrictions and cultural understanding of volunteering.

People living with disability

- Match ability and capacity of the volunteer to the ability and capacity of the VIO to offer inclusive and meaningful volunteering opportunities. This recognises that not all VIO's can accommodate all volunteers with varying needs.
- Simplify recruitment process and match to the volunteer role. Make it easier to become a volunteer and then grow the pathways and necessary compliance for the roles people have.
- Utilise experienced volunteers to mentor and buddy new volunteers.

What actions in the next 2-3 years should we undertake to break down the most important barriers to newly arrived migrants / people living with disability volunteering.

Priority actions were:

Newly arrived migrants

- Ensuring a safe and accessible process to volunteer - address the onerous nature of compliance onboarding.
- Cost of volunteering - look at options for paid transport and out of pocket reimbursement.

People Living with Disability

- Develop resources for the assessment of opportunities so successful recruitment and placement can be undertaken e.g., assessment matrix or toolkit.
- Ensure strategy is led by people with lived experience.
- Toolkits which VIO's can use on transparent processes of offering and placing people with a disability.

How should we engage VIO's in the eastern metro region in opening up opportunities for newly arrived migrants/people living with disability to volunteer?

Priority actions were:

Newly arrived migrants

- Engagement with VIO's - it is important to engage with the hard to engage with VIO's, or those VIO's that do not identify as a volunteering organisation.
- Standardised approach to recruitment, onboarding and support with tools and resources wherever possible.
- Collaboration with existing regional initiatives especially those within the 7 council regions.

People living with disability

- Identify the capacity and aspirations of VIO's for inclusive volunteering.
- Develop a small steps resource for VIO's which outline small steps toward inclusive Volunteering.
- Inclusion awards to celebrate good practice

Common actions identified from the discussions:

1. Ambassador or champions style program to promote volunteering and inclusive volunteering utilising people with lived experience and from migrant communities.
2. Regional resources and communication tools which can be used by all VIO's- do it once and for everyone.
3. Get to know your community and volunteering opportunities programs - e.g., settlement bus trips.
4. VIO capacity - start small with expectations and changes needed and build from there to develop volunteer pathways.
5. Mentors for volunteers
6. Inclusion audit/ assessment tool
7. Regional awards
8. Collaboration - engage executives of VIO's, link Local Jobs, regional councils and social enterprises.
9. Staff volunteer program - encourage VIO staff to volunteer for 2 days a year paid in organisations working with the priority groups.

ACTION PLAN

Using the outcomes methodology Results Based Accountability, there are 3 performance measures for any program, organisation or service system.

1. How Much Did We Do - a measure of the internal activity of the program / strategy. It's about activity - # clients seen, # programs conducted, # participants etc.
2. How Well Did We Do It - a measure of the quality of this activity, again internal to the program/strategy but part of a quality improvement process. e.g. % VIO's engaged
3. Is Anyone Better Off - this is the consumer outcomes of the quality activity.

It is important to identify who is the consumer in this strategy:

The consumer of the eastern metropolitan region's volunteering strategy are people living with disability or newly arrived migrants who seek to volunteer to meet their need for community connection, employment or other personal goals and the VIO's that can offer these opportunities.

Barriers to volunteering cannot be broken down just by a concentration on VIO's. Both sides of the coin have a role to play i.e., the volunteer and the VIO.

The lived experience of the consumers will lead this strategy.

The table below outlines the key performance measures to be used to evaluate this strategy:

<p>How Much Did We Do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # tools / resources developed # VIO's participating in networking opportunities # VIO's participating in training # training programs promoted # submissions for additional funding streams # volunteering opportunities promoted centrally # volunteers newly arrived migrants in VIO's # volunteers with disability in VIO's # VIO's attending awards / conference # collaborative strategies initiated 	<p>How Well Did We Do it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % VIO's utilising the central tools/resources % satisfaction with VIO support through networks % satisfaction with training delivered % VIO's accessing online training % new funding to the region for VMA5 outcomes % increase in newly arrived migrants volunteering % increase in volunteers with disability in VIO's % VIO's attending awards/conference
<p>Is anyone better off?</p> <p>Eastern metropolitan region VIO's offer meaningful volunteering opportunities for priority groups Priority group volunteers find suitable volunteering opportunities to meet their aspirations and goals.</p>	

Measurement methodology:

- Baseline data against the above measures will be collected through VIO and priority group surveys for a State of Volunteering Report in 2023-2024. Priority group surveys will include organisations and people with lived experience. Targets will be then established for improvement in future years
- Annual surveys will continue for the period of funding.

Strategy	Key Actions	Priority Group	Timeline	Lead
1. Improve the accessibility of volunteering opportunities	1.1 Develop assessment tools for VIOs to audit the accessibility of its structures, systems and people	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 2	EV
	1.2 Implement a program of building capacity for inclusive volunteering using existing EV modules which should be updated for both priority cohorts.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 2	EV
	1.3 Develop a recruitment and onboarding model and resources which recognise small steps and limits compliance obligations to the actual volunteer role.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 3	EV
	1.4 Standardise, stylise and share tools and resources for recruitment and onboarding which can be used by VIO's regionally for each priority group.	Disability Communities from a migrant background	Yr 4	BVRC
	1.5 Advocate for funding to improve physical accessibility of VIO's.	Disability	Ongoing	IOE and EV
	1.6 Explore transport options for volunteers to reduce expenses including trialing payment for transport.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Ongoing	EV
	1.7 Provide accessible points of contact and promote where people can find volunteering opportunities e.g., VSS's.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Ongoing	BVRC and EV
	1.8 Develop a common process to identify and match aspirations, ability and capacity of a volunteer to the ability and capacity of a VIO to offer inclusive and meaningful volunteering opportunities. This recognises that not all VIOs can accommodate the varying needs of all volunteers. Develop resources which support VIO's to understand why people volunteer and match this to clear pathways for participation including for employment and social connection.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 3	IOE and EV
	1.9 Identify if translated core volunteering information exists and if not seek funding to develop a core set of volunteering information which can be translated for use regionally.	Newly arrived migrants	Yr 4	MIC and EV

Strategy	Key Actions	Priority Group	Timeline	Lead
	1.10 Develop social stories and other collateral on successful volunteering which is matched to the priority groups and implement marketing strategies regionally.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 4	BVRC
	1.11 Explore accessible opportunities for priority groups to navigate finding volunteering opportunities.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 4	EV
2. Build capacity within VIO's for inclusive volunteering	2.1 Provide easy access to training resources through existing channels including communities of practice networks and online resources.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	ongoing	EV
	2.2 Engage with VIO's who have not strongly engaged with VSS 's in the past or who have disengaged and re-energise the collaboration.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	ongoing	EV/BVRC
	2.3 Identify the capacity and aspirations of VIO's to offer inclusive volunteering and assist them to offer realistic and meaningful opportunities for priority groups i.e., they don't need to do it all.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	ongoing	EV and BVRC
	2.4 Consult VIO's on the barriers and enablers to encourage successful examples of increased opportunities.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	ongoing	EV
	2.5 Develop relationships with Boards and executive management to showcase structural support for volunteering.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Ongoing	EV
	2.6 Explore how VIO's identify and whether they identify as volunteering organisations. Promote messaging regionally which assists them to see and name their volunteering and need for support.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Ongoing	EV and BVRC

Strategy	Key Actions	Priority Group	Timeline	Lead
3. Promote and reward priority group volunteering regionally	3.1 Implement an ambassador / champion program regionally to promote volunteering.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 3	EV and BVRC
	3.2 Implement regional VIO awards and a conference to celebrate and showcase achievement.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	YR 2 and 4	EV
	3.3 Investigate feasibility of a tick program which is free and accessible and utilises people with lived experience.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Yr 4	EV
4.Improve strategic collaboration	4.1 Identify and connect with strategies and programs with aligned outcomes to collaborate and co-ordinate effort, e.g., local government, Local Jobs.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	ongoing	EV
	4.2 Build relationships with CALD communities to progress VMA5 strategies and relevancy of volunteering to newly arrived migrants.	Newly arrived migrants	Ongoing	EV
	4.3 Consolidate relationships with disability sector organisations and providers to promote better use of volunteering opportunities regionally.	Disability	Ongoing	EV
	4.4 Promote regional program of VIO staff having paid volunteer days annually in disability and CALD organisations to promote understanding and connection.	Disability Newly arrived migrants	Ongoing	EV and BVRC

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Appendix 1: Forum Outcomes: Disability Forum held 24 /11/ 2022

Barrier	Barrier or Enabler	Enabler
Difficulty in finding out about volunteer opportunities (Davis Smith et al, n.d.; Ruhindwa et al, 2016)	Capacity to adapt to people's needs and create environments that work for all people	Attracting and recruiting people with disability (although it should be noted from an earlier claim that there are more people with disability wanting to volunteer than there are roles available for them),
Overly formal and inaccessible recruitment processes (Davis Smith et al, n.d.)	Respectful communication which communicates in ways people can hear and understand.	Inclusion once they arrive, which can be subdivided into:11 - Administration issues (resource management, including time; role design; networking, policy development etc) - Managing attitude change
Stigma and misconceptions about disability, negative attitudes of both other participants and leadership (Chia, n.d.; Craig & Bigby, 2014; Davis Smith et al. n.d.)	The workplace and management culture - is it inclusive?	Creating sensory environment and accessible quiet areas for neurodivergent people
Unequal power dynamics (Davis Smith et al, n.d.; Kleeman & Wilson, 2007)	If you don't know ask. Can fear asking questions or do the wrong thing.	Disability awareness training for staff and volunteers
Financial cost to individual including transport (Chia, n.d.; Davis Smith et al, n.d.; Middleton, 2010)	Don't assume that a non response means they don't know esp with ID.	Good policies and procedures in place before engaging a volunteer
Organisational unwillingness to adapt roles to meet volunteer needs/abilities (Chia, n.d.)	Incorporation of technology to support participation	Building and equipment accessible to volunteers with disability
Lack of adequate disability awareness training (Chia, n.d.).	Incorporation of support workers/ carers in the volunteering role	Regular consultation with volunteers around what is and isn't working well and engagement in discussion and decision making
Physical or environmental access issues (Chia, n.d.; Davis Smith et al, n.d.; Middleton, 2010)	An environment which is accessible for those who wish to disclose or not disclose a disability	Volunteer roles which are meaningful and utilise the volunteer's skills
Volunteer agencies and support services under resourced to match or support people with disability to undertake appropriate roles (Chia, n.d.)	The organisation's flexibility in making changes to their processes	Available mentoring and/or a contact for a support person
How do we present to people? Big, overwhelming, aren't upfront with support that can be made.	Offer pathways for participation ie. 3 hrs to 1 day working then to employment	Volunteer needs to like the opportunities they are doing

Barrier	Barrier or Enabler	Enabler
Don't ask people to do the menial work	People with disability more likely to volunteer informally - how can we support this?	Strengths based approach
Don't make resources available to be inclusive or don't have commitment to it.	Allocating internal supports to make the opportunity work	Multiple pathways for feedback and complaints
Organisations are not sure what roles could be done by people with disabilities.	Is the work meaningful?	Use of social stories in handbooks which make clear expectations and instructions
Compliance requirements for volunteer and support workers.	Provide diversity of tasks	Connection before Correction
Being tokenistic	Share volunteering experiences which are inclusive as a region so people aren't knocked back eg an inclusive CVB of opportunities	Clear signage and instruction
Inconsistency in values and attitudes between management and staff on the ground - management might be supportive, staff may not or vice versa.	Flexibility around job sharing	Being prepared to volunteer knowing what they need to do to assist in making the opportunity work.
Poor previous experiences of volunteering	Clarity about how accessible you are	Opportunities for social connection are provided in the volunteering experience.
Support worker becomes the volunteer	Multiple drivers in an organisation supporting inclusion	Recruitment processes which identify what people need to support them in their volunteering.
Support workers not involved in the volunteering process or poor communicators	Offer roles which are challenging	Use Child Wise questions in recruitment assessment as they are accessible.
Disengaged support workers who aren't providing the right level of support	Attitudes of support workers to volunteering or their role.	Review processes internally with a committee of people with disabilities
VIO's may need to fund support	VIO understanding of support worker role and supporting it appropriately	Promote what level of accessibility you have
NDIS view of volunteering - not valued by case planners	How do I onboard a support worker? Disability Forum and research Findings	People can showcase their skills and strengths to the rest of the VIO

Barrier	Barrier or Enabler	Enabler
NDIS plan goals not written to accommodate volunteering	Support workers need to be consistent for the person so compliance processes are key. What if support workers change on roster?	Support workers model appropriate behaviours and provide feedback to the volunteer or the VIO.
Compliance issues for support workers who have NDIS checks - VIO's insist on their own checks.	Authorising environment of the Volunteer leader in the VIO to influence onboarding and compliance processes.	Support workers champion volunteering
Funding to be physically accessible	Evidence on what works can help change internal VIO processes.	Leading with inclusion like we do with pronouns - we can do this.
Promote the VIO is inclusive and it is not		
People don't know how to speak to people with a disability		
VIO's are not committed to inclusion because its too hard		

Appendix 2: Forum of Newly arrived migrants held 12/ 9 /2022

Barrier	Barrier or Enabler	Enabler
Visa category- may determine when people can volunteer eg skilled migrants can volunteer more quickly	First impressions	People come with a good range of skills which can be utilised
Lack of understanding of volunteering	English language proficiency	Culturally competent / multicultural environments enable volunteering - people need to see themselves
Don't identify their volunteering as informal volunteering	People's back stories	supportive environment which assists the person at their stage of settlement
Lack of awareness of how to access volunteering	Who are their communities already and how connected are they already	How do we enable friends and faith based organisations to connect people into volunteering
Whether they are networked into settlement agency	Previous volunteering experiences even overseas can be enablers or barriers	How do we message about the enablers - things that will assist people
Do settlement agencies understand volunteering?	Are there opportunities for people to see volunteering within their communities already	People are already volunteering informally
Uncertainty as to whether they have the skills needed	Confidence	Mentors from the volunteer pool to support people into volunteering
Not familiar with Australian workplace culture	Trust in the documentation and processes needed	Explain processes of volunteering to people especially around compliance issues
Lack of supports for people to obtain what is needed to volunteer	Ease of recruiting and supporting newly arrived migrants	Key services that people can connect with in the eastern region
previous experience of exclusion and racism	Do we have the right opportunities being offered to match motivation and skills	Internal organisation discussions on how to involve newly arrived migrants in volunteering in their space.
Organisational understanding of cultural practices and values	Understanding Australian cultural idiosyncracies	Be clear about targeting newly arrived migrants when designing the volunteer roles

Barrier	Barrier or Enabler	Enabler
Immunisation requirements	Understanding of gender equity and intersectionality among organisations and volunteers	People can see themselves in the organisation and hear stories of people from their communities who have volunteered.
Experience of torture trauma oppression	Tolerance of different cultural views and values.	Volunteer passport - everyone can accept.
Cultural cliques can be barriers - existing ethnic and other tensions which are not well understood.	Transport and accessibility	Networking? A "volunteer board" of opportunities that has a broad reach across all migrant communities. Perhaps exists in a small way already.
Capacity to support people into volunteering	Can afford to volunteer	Knowing benefits of volunteering to assist settlement
Compliance requirements	Opportunities which create a sense of camaraderie and belonging with mutually supportive networks and skills development	Opportunities for cultural sharing
Triggers which act as barriers can be culturally specific		Time available to be inclusive
Consequences for families at home of our processes		Incentives to volunteer esp for young people.
skilled migrants - some of them are looking for more meaningful role where they can utilise or enhance their skills but organization may not be able to offer that opportunity		Marketing messages to newly arrived migrants around volunteering.
Documentation migrants lack		Community leaders as messengers
Funding for management of support of volunteers		Funding to provide volunteers with training and better equipment
Cost of volunteering		A sector network group eg CoP
	Newly Arrived Migrants Forum	Facilitation of partnerships with local firms and industries

Barrier	Barrier or Enabler	Enabler
		Proactive approach to recruiting people from CALD background
		Building volunteering confidence among CALD communities
		Have work environments which cater to multi faith requirements, gender specific toilets, variety of uniform options
		Appoint multicultural ambassadors for volunteering
		Acknowledge existing volunteering and its role in having a sense of responsibility to community
		Have CALD specific volunteer strategies developed with each community
		Having face to face communications
		Translated materials
		Make compliance and recruitment easier – Plain English processes and communication
		Cross cultural training