

# Volunteer Management Activity (VMA)

## Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteer Programs – Content Brief

### Background

From 1 July 2021, the Department of Social Services' revised Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) launched, with the support of the State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies. This new five-year program (2021- 2026) focuses on developing and implementing strategies to **build the capacity of volunteer-involving organisations**.

Communications materials are used to promote the role of Volunteering Peak Bodies (the Peaks) in strengthening volunteer participation across Australia **through the provision of resources and materials for developing good volunteer management practices**.

We are seeking the development of a series of **generic communications materials** that will assist Peaks in promoting the resources and services developed through the Volunteer Management Activity.

All key messages need to align with the three DSS funding priorities and outcome areas. These include:

1. The delivery of online services in best practice volunteer management, to build the capacity of the Volunteer Involving Organisations and volunteer managers.
2. Breaking down of barriers to volunteering faced by three identified groups: people with disability, First Nations People, and newly arrived migrants.
3. An increase in service coverage across regional, rural, and remote areas.

### Audience

The State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies (through the VMA Working Group) are looking to reach out to volunteer managers and volunteer-involving organisations across Australia.

All volunteer-involving organisations are to be engaged, but with a focus on organisations that are small and medium in size. These organisations often have limited funds and time to engage with paid support and resources. As the VMA services and resources are provided free of charge, these services and resources will be more accessible for all.

In many smaller organisations the volunteering programs are managed by a volunteer, or a part-time employee or an employee who has had volunteer management added to their 'day job'.

### Language and accessibility

Considering the diversity of volunteer managers, all messaging/copy must be accessible and inclusive enough to appeal to a broad audience. [Accessible and inclusive content | Style Manual](#) guidance should be applied to copy where possible.

### Outputs

We are seeking the development of a series of **generic communications materials** that will assist Peaks in promoting the resources and services developed through the Volunteer Management Activity.

We need consistent copy for the Peaks to share across their networks and channels (including social media and e-newsletters). Each Peak will incorporate their own branding and templates.

## What does success look like?

It is important to note that this is targeted to volunteer managers, not volunteers. A requirement of Volunteer Management Activity is to support and enable volunteer managers to engage volunteers from the three identified groups.

Messaging needs to cover how to foster diversity and inclusion in Volunteer Involving Organisations. The messaging highlights “how your Volunteering Peak Body can offer support, services and resources”. The messaging should be positive and welcoming, for example, highlighting how volunteer managers can support and enable volunteering, as opposed to focussing on breaking down the barriers.

We are looking to increase awareness around what support and services the Peaks have to offer, as well as to encourage people to engage with their State/ Territory Peak. This messaging could aim to take the form of improving metrics across a range of channels including:

- Website traffic
- Followers and engagement on social media
- Newsletter subscribers
- Direct engagement via phone or email.

## Key messages regarding diversity and inclusion in volunteering programs

### What is diversity and inclusion?

Diversity refers to political beliefs, race, culture, sexual orientation, religion, class, and/or gender identity differences. In the workplace, diversity means workforce consists of individuals who bring new perspectives and backgrounds to the organisation. Inclusion means that everyone feels involved, valued, respected, and treated fairly. This involves empowering your team and recognising each member’s unique talents. Both aspects of diversity and inclusion are important. Diversity without inclusion can result in a toxic culture, and inclusion without diversity can make an organisation stagnant and uncreative.

### Some key issues for volunteering for identified group members

Some key issues for volunteers from the priority groups are:

- Disability
  - 1) Organisational cultural safety/attitudinal barriers
  - 2) Accessibility of places
  - 3) Transport being accessible/ available
- First Nations People
  - 1) Cultural safety
  - 2) Other priorities may take priority over volunteering
  - 3) Difficulty obtaining clearance checks
- Newly arrived migrants
  - 1) Cultural safety
  - 2) Language confidence and communication
  - 3) The concept of ‘volunteering’ is unknown or expressed differently in cultures of origin

## Engaging volunteers from identified groups, for volunteer managers

Some key issues volunteer managers can consider when recruiting a diverse range of volunteers, including those from the identified priority groups include:

- How to gain confidence in engaging in an appropriate manner with a diverse and inclusive range of volunteers
- Improving understanding of how to successfully establish what volunteers can and cannot do
- Overcoming fear and any bias or misconceptions
- Making reasonable adjustments to space, equipment or flexibility in working arrangements and onboarding if required
- How to support communication between a person from the priority groups and other workforce to occur freely and easily.

## Benefits of diversity and inclusion for volunteer managers

People of all abilities share the same reasons and desires to volunteer. This includes wanting to help others, learn new skills, meet new people, contribute meaningfully to the community, gain confidence, and increase happiness. Some people may disengage from volunteering opportunities, or simply do not approach organisations if they do not appear to be inclusive. At the same time, many volunteer-involving organisations express their need for more volunteers.

The many benefits that volunteer-involving organisations enjoy from fostering inclusive and diverse workplaces include:

- Access to a larger pool of prospective volunteers
- Promote higher engagement among volunteers, which has a ripple effect on productivity, team morale, and retention
- Enjoy a higher tendency for improved physical and mental health
- Gain a wide range of perspectives, skills, and experience
- Welcome a volunteer program which reflects the diversity of the larger community
- Offer a pathway, open doors and create opportunities for people of all abilities to be involved and contribute
- Increased opportunities to develop partnerships
- Improved understanding of diversity and inclusive practices within organisations

## How your volunteering peak body can help you engage with a diverse range of volunteers

Your local State/Territory Volunteering Peak Body is here to support you to enhance your volunteering programs by embracing inclusive practices.

Each State/Territory Volunteer Peak Body can support you in a range of ways. These may include:

- Resources
- Training
- One-on-one support and advice.

Contact your State/Territory Volunteer Peak Body for more information.