National Strategy for Volunteering
2023–2033

Model for Shared Accountability

Overview

The National Strategy for Volunteering is co-owned by members of the volunteering ecosystem. The Model for Shared Accountability (the Model) is a framework that provides guidance on how stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem can work together to implement the National Strategy. The Model has the following elements:

a. Shared goals

b. Defined roles and responsibilities

c. Transparent and open communication

d. Knowledge sharing processes

e. Participatory monitoring and evaluation

f. Distributed resourcing

g. Co-designed development activity

The Model for Shared Accountability has been informed by the five principles underpinning the National Strategy. It complements the Governance Blueprint and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The Governance Blueprint outlines the governance arrangements for the National Strategy for Volunteering and explains the role of the National Strategy for Volunteering Council. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is a guide to measuring progress of the National Strategy for Volunteering and the Three-Year Action Plans.

Introduction

The concept of shared accountability promotes a sense of collective ownership and fosters collaboration between different stakeholders working towards a common goal. It demonstrates how stakeholders are responsible for their specific role or actions towards a set of shared objectives.

In the context of the National Strategy for Volunteering, the Model for Shared Accountability is a framework to guide how stakeholders across the volunteering ecosystem can work together to implement the National Strategy over its ten-year lifespan.

As the National Strategy is implemented, there will be a need to learn from progress and adapt to changing circumstances. This includes the need to re-consider the approach to shared accountability to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and is meeting the needs of the volunteering ecosystem.

Principles of the National Strategy for Volunteering

The Model for Shared Accountability was developed in line with the principles of the National Strategy.

1. Evidence-Based Approach

The National Strategy for Volunteering is underpinned by a robust evidence-base. This includes data and findings from research, insights from lived experience, and the incorporation of knowledge and expertise from individuals, communities, and organisations.

The Model for Shared Accountability is based on research evidence supporting the most effective, accessible, and sustainable approaches to shared accountability. The Model combines findings from various sources and leverages them to provide a framework that is fit-for-purpose for the National Strategy's context.

2. Commitment to Co-Design

The National Strategy for Volunteering was developed using a co-design approach and is co-owned by the volunteering ecosystem.

The Model for Shared Accountability outlines how responsibility for implementation will be shared by different members of the volunteering ecosystem. The Model provides a framework that will require continuous dialogue between members of the volunteering ecosystem. It will take an intersectional approach, which recognises that stakeholders experience unique combinations of discrimination and privilege. An intersectional approach will seek to ensure that diverse voices are represented and embedded in implementation activities.

3. Investment in Collaboration

Achieving the vision of the National Strategy for Volunteering requires diverse stakeholders to unite around and promote a shared agenda. Constructive collaboration — which leverages the expertise of different stakeholders, minimises duplication, and shares responsibility for action — will enable efficient and effective use of resources towards a common goal.

The Model for Shared Accountability provides a framework to enable collaboration, seeking to leverage the unique strengths and capabilities of different stakeholders. Impactful collaboration will be central to operationalising the Model and achieving the National Strategy's vision and goals.

4. Courage to be Experimental and Adaptable

Many of the actions that flow from the National Strategy for Volunteering will be experimental by nature as new collaboration and ideas are explored and tested. The National Strategy for Volunteering was designed and is owned by the entire volunteering ecosystem. Therefore, all stakeholders have responsibility for its success.

The Model for Shared Accountability is experimental: it requires stakeholders to come together and choose to take accountability for various aspects of the National Strategy. Because the National Strategy is co-owned, no one member of the volunteering ecosystem has the authority to enforce compliance. Therefore, it requires

stakeholders to collectively determine the most effective and efficient means of sharing accountability. This also includes recognition of the importance of learning from each other and prioritising knowledge-sharing to promote innovation and good practice.

5. Investment in Continuous Improvement

A commitment to continuous learning and improvement will facilitate proactive reflection and adaptation. This will require strong monitoring and evaluation, a willingness to reflect honestly on progress, and stopping or adjusting when outcomes are not working for volunteers or intended beneficiaries, or not meeting agreed objectives.

This is the first time a national strategy has been jointly owned in Australia and the first time a Model for Shared Accountability has been proposed. Testing the Model will require reflection, honesty, and a willingness to change and adapt.

The Model for Shared Accountability follows the five principles outlined in the National Strategy. There are three additional practices that capture the spirt of the National Strategy that are critical for shared accountability: trust, transparency, and active participation.

These additional practices differ from the abovementioned principles in that they aim to guide how stakeholders approach collaboration and shared accountability.

1. Trust

Building and maintaining mutual trust by demonstrating reliability and integrity in all actions is crucial to the success of shared accountability. Deep, trust-based bonds must be built, maintained, and nurtured for us to work together towards achieving the National Strategy's vision and strategic objectives.

2. Transparency

The National Strategy for Volunteering reinvented what a national strategy looks like. Rather than a top-down approach, it was co-designed to ensure the entire volunteering ecosystem felt their voice was reflected in the final strategy. This approach means that ongoing transparency will be a critical part of implementation. This includes transparency in how actions are progressed and communicated and how the ecosystem collaborates to achieve long-term outcomes.

3. Active Participation

Shared accountability requires active participation. This means taking both individual and collective responsibility for implementation. For the National Strategy for Volunteering to succeed, individual stakeholders need to consider what they can proactively do to contribute to implementation.

Approach to Shared Accountability

The Model for Shared Accountability is designed to jointly promote accountability and learning. To achieve this, the Model has the following elements:

a. Shared goals

b. Defined roles and responsibilities

c. Transparent and open communication

d. Knowledge sharing processes

e. Participatory monitoring and evaluation

f. Distributed resourcing

g. Co-designed development activity

a. Shared Goals

The foundation of any approach to shared accountability is having a set of shared goals. The National Strategy for Volunteering has three Focus Areas and 11 Strategic Objectives.

Focus Areas

1. **Individual Potential and the Volunteer Experience:** Volunteering is safe, inclusive, accessible, meaningful, and not exploitative.

2. **Community and Social Impact:** The diversity and impact of volunteering is articulated and celebrated.

3. **Conditions for Volunteering to Thrive:** The right conditions are in place for volunteering to be effective and sustainable.

Strategic Objectives

1.1 Focus on the Volunteer Experience

1.2 Make Volunteering Inclusive and Accessible

1.3 Ensure Volunteering is Not Exploitative

2.1 Diversify the Understanding of Volunteering

2.2 Reshape the Public Perception of Volunteering

2.3 Recognise the Inherent Value of Volunteering

2.4 Enable a Community Led Approach

3.1 Make Volunteering a Cross Portfolio Issue in Government

3.2 Build Strong Leadership and Shared Accountability

3.3 Commit to Strategic Investment

3.4 Recognise the Importance of Volunteer Management

b. Defined Roles and Responsibilities

In relation to the implementation of the National Strategy, stakeholders have a range of roles and responsibilities.

There are two main ways to take action to support the National Strategy for Volunteering and both are vital to its implementation:

- Stakeholders may participate in coordinated actions outlined in the Three-Year Action Plans. These are co-designed by the ecosystem and provide structured action necessary for implementation of the National Strategy. Coordinated actions have a lead stakeholder who is responsible for the action's progression. The Action Plans also include accessible actions that provide opportunities for other members of the volunteering ecosystem to contribute to implementation.

- Stakeholders may also take independent action outside the Three-Year Action Plans, by aligning their work with the National Strategy for Volunteering. Any member of the volunteering ecosystem can use the Focus Areas and Strategic Objectives in the National Strategy to guide their activities and enhance their volunteering outcomes, working towards the National Strategy's unifying goals. This form of action, alongside the Three-Year Action Plans, is essential to achieve the National Strategy's vision.

There are also specific roles that support implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering. These are prescribed roles in relation to governance and coordination.

Governance role

The National Strategy for Volunteering Council is the governing body. It is a committee drawn from across the volunteering ecosystem that is responsible for strategic oversight of the National Strategy for Volunteering. Using the procedures described in the National Strategy for Volunteering Council Charter, the Council is empowered to independently consider the needs of the National Strategy for Volunteering and the opportunities that can be pursued with stakeholders in the volunteering ecosystem.

Council members may include volunteers, managers of volunteers, leaders of volunteer involving organisations, government staff, researchers, volunteer-enabling organisations and any other members of the volunteering ecosystem. The Council will draw upon their skills, experiences and networks to aid the National Strategy for Volunteering in achieving its vision.

Coordination role

The coordinating body for the National Strategy for Volunteering is responsible for:

- Convening the National Strategy for Volunteering Council, including secretariat support.

- Leading monitoring and evaluation of the Three-Year Action Plans and the National Strategy as a whole, in accordance with the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

- Leading the co-design of the Three-Year Action Plans.

- Convening relevant National Strategy Working Groups. These groups will be established as new needs arise. They may advise the coordinator or other key stakeholders and lead actions in the Three-Year Action Plans, but do not have a formal role in the governance of the National Strategy for Volunteering.

- Maintaining the National Strategy's infrastructure, including website and mailing lists.

Coalition of Support

The Coalition of Support allows stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to making volunteering the heart of Australian communities by signing up as official supporters of the National Strategy for Volunteering. While members do not have formal responsibilities, their

membership communicates a commitment to contributing to implementation, including raising awareness of the National Strategy in their own communities. Many of the members of the Coalition of Support are Action Plan Leads and Contributors.

Action Plan Leads

Stakeholders with responsibility for leading an action in one of the Three-Year Action Plans are responsible for planning the resourcing and execution of that action. They are also responsible for evaluating and communicating the progress of their action to the coordinating body for the National Strategy for Volunteering.

Action Plan Contributors

The National Strategy for Volunteering Three-Year Action Plans include accessible and supporting actions that can be undertaken by a range of stakeholders in the volunteering ecosystem. It is the responsibility of those who choose to participate in these actions to plan the resourcing and execution of their participation.

The table below summarises the responsibilities attached to each role:

Stakeholder group	Responsibilities	Other activities
Governance body (National Strategy for Volunteering Council)	• Providing oversight of the National Strategy for Volunteering to ensure its implementation is effective and adheres to its key principles. • Reviewing National Strategy for Volunteering outputs, including key documents and Three-Year Action Plans. • Providing strategic advice to guide the implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering. • Attending Council meetings to receive updates and vote on matters for decision.	• Championing the National Strategy and its benefits, promoting and advocating for the National Strategy and its implementation. • Serving as a contact point for interested parties across the volunteering ecosystem. • Identifying and sharing positive examples of National Strategy implementation. • Reviewing the outputs of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, electing to endorse the report or nominate refinements to the process. • Where appropriate, participating in the coordination of the National Strategy for Volunteering.

Stakeholder group	Responsibilities	Other activities
Coordinating body	• Convening the National Strategy for Volunteering Council, including secretariat support. • Leading monitoring and evaluation of the three-year Action Plans and the National Strategy as a whole, in accordance with the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. • Leading the co-design of the Three-Year Action Plans. • Convening relevant National Strategy Working Groups. • Maintaining the National Strategy's infrastructure.	• The coordinating body may communicate with the ecosystem about the National Strategy and the Three-Year Action Plans.
Action Plan Lead	• Designing and implementing designated activities in the Three-Year Action Plans. • Resourcing designated activities in the Three-Year Action Plans. • Communicating with the coordinating body to share information on outputs of designated Action Plan initiatives.	• Planning, resourcing, managing, evaluating, and communicating progress against the action to the coordinating body. • Collaborating with Action Plan Contributors and other actors in the ecosystem may be done at the discretion of Action Plan Leads. • Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of specific designated actions may be done at the discretion of Action Plan Leads.
Action Plan Contributor	• Action Plan Contributors have no formal responsibilities to the Council, coordinating body, or Action Plan Leads.	• Planning, resourcing, managing, evaluating, and communicating progress of any independent actions to the coordinating body may be done at the discretion of Action Plan Contributors.

Stakeholder group	Responsibilities	Other activities
Coalition of Support	• Coalition of Support members have no formal responsibilities to the Council, coordinating body, or Action Plan Leads.	• Planning, resourcing, managing, evaluating, and communicating progress of any independent actions to the coordinating body may be done at the discretion of Coalition of Support members.
Independent actor	• Other members of the volunteering ecosystem have no formal responsibilities to the Council, coordinating body, or Action Plan Leads.	• Planning, resourcing, managing, evaluating, and communicating progress of any independent actions to the coordinating body may be done at the discretion of independent actors.

In addition to the defined roles outlined above, stakeholders across the ecosystem can assume the following responsibilities on their own terms:

Advocacy

All stakeholders are encouraged to take responsibility for advocating for the National Strategy for Volunteering internally and externally. This includes advocating for implementation as part of adjacent policy and funding discussions. By collectively building awareness for the National Strategy, we can ensure it is well known across Australian communities and prioritised accordingly.

Resourcing

Implementation will require ongoing, diverse resourcing. This will take the form of financial resourcing as well as in-kind resourcing and knowledge-sharing. Those in a position to do so can choose to fund actions and provide in-kind support to those undertaking actions. Together, we can share the responsibility for 'growing the pie' to ensure there is sufficient resourcing for implementation.

Building authority and providing legitimacy

Many stakeholders are well positioned to bring people together to generate further support for implementation of the National Strategy. Those with greater resources can enable access to processes and projects for those that might not otherwise be able to participate.

Data collection and information sharing

Those that collect data on their volunteering programs and initiatives can share data (which may require de-identification) with the coordinating body and other stakeholders to build the evidence base for volunteering in Australia. Information sharing can also include sharing data collection methodologies with others that are interested in collecting their own data, but do not have the knowledge, resources, or systems to support it.

Shared learning

The volunteering ecosystem is vast and there are activities taking place across Australian communities every day that are contributing to the National Strategy's Strategic Objectives. Those who are delivering effective projects and programs can invest in implementation by sharing their learning with others who may be able to emulate their approach.

Research

When conducting research on volunteering or that involves volunteers, researchers and academics can align their projects with the National Strategy and commit to contributing data, where possible, to the existing evidence-bank on volunteering in Australia.

c. Transparent and Open Communication

Models for shared accountability rely upon transparency and open communication. It is through transparency in processes that trust can be built between stakeholders. Open communication also supports inclusion by giving all stakeholders a voice in progressing the National Strategy. When information is shared transparently, stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives can offer their insights, experience and expertise.

The coordinating body will be transparent and open in all its communications on the progress of the National Strategy. It will endeavour to dismantle access barriers and create culturally sensitive communication pathways for diverse communities including First Nations and culturally and/or linguistically diverse communities.

The coordinating body will facilitate communication between Action Leads and the governance body as needed. The coordinating body will also share information about the National Strategy with the broader volunteering ecosystem.

Action Leads are expected to communicate with the coordinating body regarding the progress of actions. All members of the volunteering ecosystem should communicate with one another on the progress of actions to enable coordination and facilitate learning and continuous improvement.

d. Knowledge Sharing Processes

Knowledge sharing processes are important for the Model for Shared Accountability as they will enhance transparency, facilitate continuous learning and promote opportunities for collaboration. When knowledge is shared in a transparent way, it enhances accountability amongst all stakeholders irrespective of their role.

A range of knowledge sharing processes will be needed across various roles and functions, including to address different needs, barriers to access and inequities in the volunteering ecosystem. All members of the volunteering ecosystem will be encouraged to share learning and the coordinating body will have a defined role in relation to knowledge-sharing. For example, the coordinating body is responsible for facilitating and supporting relevant working groups to share knowledge and promote learning. The coordinating body will also report on the outcomes of the Three-Year Action Plans and the National Strategy as a whole to the governance body, the Action Plan Leads, and the broader ecosystem.

e. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Fostering engagement in the monitoring and evaluation of the National Strategy is vital for delivering a co-owned strategy. Stakeholders across the ecosystem are responsible for taking actions and have a role in their monitoring and evaluation. However, different roles have differing responsibilities in relation to monitoring and evaluation.

The coordinating body has primary responsibility for leading the monitoring and evaluation of the three-year Action Plans and the National Strategy as a whole, in accordance with the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Members of the ecosystem that have designated responsibility for actions in a Three-Year Action Plan may use the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to measure the outcomes of their actions at their discretion, including through existing internal processes. Leading stakeholders are expected to share information on the inputs, outputs, and outcomes of actions to facilitate learning and continuous improvement.

Any member of the ecosystem may use the Outcomes Framework of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to guide monitoring and evaluation of their own initiatives. This may be done to demonstrate the outcomes of actions and their contribution to the objectives of the National Strategy for Volunteering, or to facilitate learning to improve policies and programs. Measures included in the Outcomes Framework collect data directly from volunteers where possible to ensure they are involved in monitoring and evaluation.

f. Distributed Resourcing

Responsibility for resourcing implementation of the National Strategy for Volunteering is distributed across members of the ecosystem. Funding is not provided centrally through the National Strategy Council or coordinating body. Funding for actions is the responsibility of Action Leads who may already have funding secured or will need to seek additional resourcing. Across the volunteering ecosystem, certain stakeholders have the capacity to provide funding (for example, governments and philanthropy) whilst others are reliant on funding from others (for example, volunteer involving organisations and peak bodies). To be successful the ecosystem must work together to consider how to strategically and sustainably support implementation.

g. Co-designed Development Activity

Commitment to co-design is a key principle of the National Strategy for Volunteering. This means that future development activities will also be developed through co-design processes. This includes the second and third Three-Year Action Plans. The coordinating body is responsible for facilitating these activities.

Appendix: Key Concepts

Accountability: a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and justify their conduct, the forum can ask questions, and the actor may face consequences. [1]

Governance: the rules and forms that guide collective implementation. [2]

Responsibility: the obligation to perform a task or role, adhere to standards or rules, and accept the consequences of actions and decisions.

Volunteering Ecosystem: the network of people, organisations, institutions, and agencies all working for the collective viability and recognition of volunteering in Australia.

Appendix: Volunteering Ecosystem

Stakeholders

Volunteers: those who give their time willingly for the common good and without financial gain.

Volunteer Involving Organisations: any organisation/group/business/government department that engages volunteers.

Volunteering Support Services (also known as Volunteer Resource Centres and Volunteer Support Organisations): place-based organisations that promote, resource, and support volunteering in local communities. These organisations work with volunteers to ensure their experience is positive and safe, and with volunteer involving organisations to provide support for recruitment, management, and recognition of volunteers.

Volunteering Australia: the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community.

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1   Lee, S., & Ospina, S. M. (2022). A framework for assessing accountability in collaborative governance: A process-based approach. Perspectives on Public Management and Governance, 5(1), 63-75.

2   Stoker, 2004.

State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies: the seven State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies that advocate for volunteering and deliver state/territory/local programs and initiatives.

National Peak Bodies: national organisations that represent a sector, industry, or the community.

Community Organisations/Groups (including Grassroots Associations): a broad range of organisations that provide activities, services, and/or programs in the community.

Philanthropy: funders, social investors, and social change agents working to achieve positive social, cultural, environmental, and community change by leveraging assets and influence.

The Business Community: businesses and companies with an interest in volunteering.

The Research Community: researchers, academics, universities, and other educational institutions with an interest in volunteering.

Governments: Federal, State, Territory and Local Governments in Australia.

Enabling Organisations: organisations that act as an intermediary by providing resources and support to enable volunteering. For example, organisations that provide IT infrastructure to support volunteering.