EV Strengthening Community

Empowering Victorian Communities Through Active Engagement

Executive Summary

What Works To Re-Engage And Broaden Volunteering – Two Sides Of The Coin

Contents

Overview

The number of engaged volunteers has been in decline since the millennium, COVID-19, and associated illness. Lockdowns during 2019-2021 have been a significant event resulting in an increased rate of disengagement. COVID has decimated the older volunteer cohort upon which the sector had heavily relied, people are returning but in different ways. Volunteering Victoria has stated, "COVID has accelerated volunteering disengagement by 64.1%. Even before the pandemic, the rate of formal volunteering had been steadily and worryingly declining decreasing from 36.2% in 2010 to 28.8% in 2019. The assumption that volunteering will organically return to a sustainable level in the coming months without deliberate support threatens the viability of the whole sector." In some instances, there has been a loss of 80% of volunteers who show no interest in being re-engaged. While COVID-19 has had a significant impact the decline was inevitable, due to the developing disconnect between the needs and wants of the contemporary volunteer, and the traditional volunteer offerings from Volunteer Involving Organisation (VIO) (Kappelides & Johnson, 2020[1] | Lachance, 2021[2] | Victorian Volunteer Strategy, 2022-2027[3]).

This research explores this contemporary volunteer-VIO disconnect through investigating each lens i.e., 'both sides of the coin'. The overarching question this project sought to shed light on was, "How do we build a sustainable volunteer workforce?". More specifically, what are the strategies to increase and diversify our volunteer workforce and support VIOs to offer volunteers opportunities, that suit the needs and wants of a contemporary volunteer, as well as their own service delivery requirements.

The volunteer lens of this research focused on understanding how to identify potential volunteers, determine their readiness to engage in volunteering and how to best transition these individuals to volunteering. The VIO lens of this research focused on understanding the challenges VIOs faced during and post-COVID, how these organisations have responded to these challenges, and how they are positioning themselves to facilitate a sustainable volunteer workforce.

The three major objectives of this research were to develop understandings and strategies to:

1. Identify, connect, and engage individuals within the community who are most likely to convert to volunteering.
2. Re-connect and re-engage volunteers who have disengaged.
3. Support VIOs to build a sustainable volunteer workforce.

Significance

The significance of this study is underpinned by the comprehensive and compelling research that shows that a culture of volunteering is an indicator of a healthy and connected community. In its broadest sense, a society where people help one another, by their very nature, is more resilient and robust and can rapidly mobilise and respond in an emergency or crisis (State of Volunteering in Victoria[3]). Volunteering offers environmental, social, cultural, health and wellbeing benefits, that translate to the broader community. In addition, volunteering contributes significantly to the economy. This Executive Summary brings the perspectives and experiences from both the volunteer and VIO perspectives and explores the contemporary volunteer-VIO disconnect. Strategies are presented that aim to strengthen the sustainability of the volunteer workforce. Full research details are available in The Volunteer Lens and The VIO Lens.

[1] Kappelides, P., & Johnson, T. (2020). A Heavy Load: Challenges and Current Practices for Volunteer Managers in the USA, Australia, and Canada. Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing, vol. 32, 4-24.

[2] Lachance, E. L. (2021). COVID-19 and its Impact on Volunteering: Moving Towards Virtual Volunteering. Leisure Sciences, vol. 43, 104-110.

[3] https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-volunteer-strategy-2022-2027/strategy-glance

The Volunteer Lens

Who Responded to the Volunteer Survey?

The number of people who entered the survey portal was 897 and 822 fully completed the survey. When comparing these people to ABS 2021 data there were some characteristics that were over or under representations in the survey sample (Table 1). The remaining characteristics of the sample accorded with 2021 ABS population data. The results reflect a more English speaking educated female cohort, and a group who is more representative of rural and regional Victorians, First Nations people and people experiencing disability. It represents the views of those 35-64 years in the main but did reach younger people.

TABLE 1 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE THAT WERE OVER OR UNDERREPRESENTED COMPARED TO ABS 2021 DATA.

Characteristic	Sample	Population
Overrepresented		
35-54 years	32.3%	26.8%
55-64 years	30.7%	11.5%
Spoke English at home	96.4%	67.2%
Disability	19.4%	5.9%
Bachelor's Degree or above	55.4%	29.2%
First Nations responders	8.0%	2.0%
Living in regional and rural Victoria	36.7%	24.0%
Underrepresented		
18-34 years	19.0%	23.5%
Men	34.7%	49.2%
Own a car	83.1%	87.6%

Australia's Welfare 21[4] **reports that:**

"In 2019, almost 5.9 million people participated in voluntary work through an organisation. A similar proportion of males and females participated in voluntary work (31% of males and 29% of females), and the proportion of people volunteering fluctuated with age. People aged 40–54 were most likely to have participated in unpaid voluntary work through an organisation (36%) followed by people aged 55–69 and 15–24 (both 29%). The proportion of people who participated in voluntary work in 2019 was higher for people who had attained a Bachelor degree or above, or an advanced diploma (33% and 32%, respectively), compared with those who had a primary or secondary school qualification (25%)."

Compared to these trends the current sample both in age and education level reflects the general cohort of volunteers nationally but is over representative of female voices. It however amplifies the voices of those with disability, First Nations peoples, and those living in rural and regional Victoria.

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[4] https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/volunteers

Stage Of Readiness To Volunteer

In this study the Transtheoretical Model (TTM[5]) of behaviour change was adapted to align specifically to represent five stages of a person's 'readiness/willingness to volunteer': precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance. From these five stages, seven categories were developed to reflect a person's position of their 'readiness to volunteer' more accurately (Table 2). Survey respondents were asked to choose one of these seven pathways to complete the survey based upon their 'stage of readiness to volunteer'. A full description of the stages of readiness to volunteer is reported in The Volunteer Lens.

TABLE 2 THE TRANSTHEORETICAL MODEL (TTM[5]) OF BEHAVIOUR CHANGE WAS ADAPTED TO A PERSONS WILLINGNESS / READINESS TO VOLUNTEER.

Stage of readiness to volunteer	7 categories of 'readiness to volunteer'	Number of respondents
Precontemplation	I have never volunteered and not interested in volunteering	22
	I have volunteered in the past and not interested in volunteering again	57
Contemplation	Open to consider / learn / understanding about the concept / culture of volunteering	45
	I have volunteered in the past and open to reconsider volunteering	208
Preparation	I am starting to think about if and how volunteering may be part of my world	36
Action	Planning to start volunteering in the next month or have started volunteering in the past 6 months	24
Maintenance	I am currently volunteering and committed to volunteering for the next 12 months	455

The profile of responders in each of the seven pathways (categorised by the stage of readiness to volunteer), and differences between pathways, is presented in the following sections.

[5] https://r1learning.com/blog/2020/5-stages-of-change

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Profile of a Pathway 1 Person: Never Volunteered and not intersted in Volunteering.

These respondents were overwhelmingly male, aged 35-54 years and less likely to be over 65 years of age. The vast majority lived in metropolitan Melbourne, were born in Australia and 18% were First Nations responders. They had the lowest rate of achieving a bachelor's degree or higher, and 96% spoke English at home. Over one- third had a disability.

This group had the lowest response to believing it was important to have concern for and to support communities in need (58%), and to believing it is important to help members of communities in need (62%). This accords with a values framing profile of Self Enhancement; where individuals pursue personal status and success above general concern for the wellbeing of others . Common Cause a values framing consultancy group also identify that these elements are reflective of extrinsic value sets, which are centred on external approval or rewards e.g. wealth, material success, concern about image, social status, prestige, social power and authority.

In keeping with this, values framing analysis, this group was also overwhelmingly neutral to the idea of feeling an obligation to communities in need and certainly did not see themselves as an advocate for communities in need. They had the lowest ratings for seeing themselves as compassionate and understanding of others and motivated to make the world a better place. They were split on the statement that it is important to get to know people in communities in need of support, but their other answers indicated that they did not see it as their responsibility to do anything about those in need.

They saw standing up for themselves and what they believe in as right but had one of the lowest scores for being known as a good citizen who takes responsibility. They had an extremely low score for being religious or spiritual and did not think community and loyalty was terribly important to them.

They had the lowest score when asked if they would be protective towards someone, they saw being taken advantage of. Overwhelmingly they have little or no family history of volunteering and are disengaged from participating in community.

This group believe volunteering is free labour and that it is the government's responsibility to respond and fund the work that volunteers would be doing in an unpaid capacity. In other words, it's the government who should be accountable and not them.

Key considerations in communicating to this group (Pathway 1)

This is not a group you want to target, as the most telling factors here are their disengagement from community, their extrinsic value set, and the fact that they have no personal experience of volunteering to have influenced their thinking and value set about volunteering.

[6] Common Cause Handbook page 17
[7] Common Cause Handbook page 21

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Profile of a Pathway 2 person: I have volunteered in the past and not interested in volunteering again.

This group of respondents were more likely to be over 55 years of age, equally male or female and all spoke English. Over a quarter (28%) were from regional and rural Victoria, 81% were born in Australia and 9% were First Nations responders. They were highly educated with 50% having a bachelor's degree or higher and 28% reported having a disability.

Unlike Pathway 1, more than 75% of this group think it is important to have concern for, and to support communities in need, and to help members of the community in need. This did not translate into feeling an obligation to help communities in need, with this group having the second lowest rating. They did not consider themselves an advocate for communities in need, and only half thought it important to get to know communities in need. This group is a little ambivalent about responding to social justice issues of need.

They scored higher than Pathway 1 on being known as a compassionate person and wanting to make the world a better place, but they were still behind markedly on these factors, compared to those who were more likely to volunteer.

This group did have a very strong rating for standing up for what is right, but they were similar to Pathway 1's lower ratings for seeing themselves as good citizens who take responsibility. Only about half viewed themselves as religious or spiritual, and believing loyalty and community were important. They rated about the same as pathway 1 for going out of their way to help someone, but certainly would be more likely to respond to someone they saw was being taken advantage of.

This group is more likely to know someone who is a volunteer and just under half had a family history of volunteering, however, they were predominately disengaged from community.

When citing why they would not return to volunteering, this group overwhelmingly reported that they had a good experience in their time volunteering but cited time as the greatest reason not to return. These were long-term volunteers with nearly one-half having volunteered for 10 years or more. When asked what would encourage them to re-engage, they answered, "nothing, getting paid, professional organisations and purposeful opportunities to volunteer in".

This group is ambivalent in their attitudes towards community and wanting to help those in need. They seem to have some extrinsic values, similar to Pathway 1, but they don't stand out on the values framing framework as being particularly socially minded and prioritising the wellbeing of others and community. This could reflect the fact that some of this group were quite disillusioned by their volunteering experience, or the fact that volunteering was achieving more for their personal goals than any intrinsic values of helping others and society.

Key considerations in communicating to this group (Pathway 2)

This group is likely not to re-engage, so appealing to their previous volunteering is not going to change their minds overall, whether that experience was positive or negative. Their ambivalence around social justice issues would suggest they may have prioritised what they got out of volunteering, over the impact it had on others, or they felt their contribution had been enough. Interestingly, they were not people who saw themselves as active participants in community. There is a sense here that volunteer labour should be paid for, similar to Pathway 1, and a critical lens on the VIOs and what they had offered. Would they recommend volunteering in a word-of-mouth campaign to younger people? They may, and this might be an angle to appeal to this group. "You've made your contribution, so spread the word so others can make theirs!"

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Profile of a Pathway 3 person: open to consider/learn/ understanding about the concept/culture of volunteering.

This group had a mix of ages and a higher female response rate, overwhelmingly spoke English but did not have a significantly higher attainment of a bachelor's degree compared with the previous two pathways. They had the lowest rating of people with a disability, (11%), 13% were First Nations responders, 73% lived in metropolitan Melbourne and 71% were born in Australia, one of the lowest rates reported.

Most of this pathway (90%) thought it was important to have concern for and to support communities in need, and that they should help those in need. This is markedly higher than the previous two pathways. There was also a big jump in having a sense of obligation to help communities in need, compared to Pathway 2 (44% to 64%). They weren't stronger on viewing themselves as an advocate for those in need, but there was a huge jump in them viewing themselves as compassionate people, bringing understanding to others. They thought it more important to get to know people in need, than previous pathways. They wanted to make the world a better place, far more than previous pathways. They wanted to stand up for what was right more than previous groups, and valued community and loyalty more. They are more likely to stand up for a person they see being taken advantage of, and we can see here a growing sense of social justice and action, than in previous pathways.

This group, however, does not have a greater experience of a culture of volunteering in the family, than previous pathways or knows someone who volunteers. They do, however, have a higher rate of participation in their community. Two-thirds of the group had not accessed volunteer information before, but the group was keen to get information on volunteering.

Key considerations in communicating to this group (Pathway 3)

This group has a social conscience but has not had the experience of a culture of volunteering, to leverage their involvement. They are more likely to hold values about having an impact on the wellbeing of others and community, than previous pathways, and this messaging could focus on some key words, such as obligation to help those in need, make the world a better place by volunteering, and have an impact on your world. Appealing to how volunteering might empower them to do good and address social issues is useful values messaging. This group is also likely to contain some people with extrinsic values as per Group 1 and 2, so messaging about how volunteering can help them will also still be necessary.

This group needs navigation help to know where to access information on volunteering and is most likely to respond well to place-based information which is easily accessible in their community. This group is also more likely to need information on the culture of volunteering and why it is so important.

The recruiter has both an educational focus in the marketing messaging as well as marketing the volunteering opportunity. This is the group most likely to be converted to volunteering but there needs to be foundational work undertaken, to demonstrate pathways into volunteering, which will match how people want to volunteer.

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Profile of a Pathway 4 person: I have volunteered in the past and open to reconsidering volunteering.

The majority of this group were between 35-64 years of age and predominantly female. English was spoken at home by 95% and 82% were born in Australia. This group had a higher rate of bachelor's degree and above qualifications. A third came from rural and regional Victoria, 86% have a car and 96% have a driver's license.

As we are seeing in the previous pathways, there is a growing percentage of people, as we progress through the stages of 'readiness to volunteer', who believe it is important to have concern for and to support communities in need (97%), and to help people in need (95%). This is a significant leap from Pathway 3 and indicates strong extrinsic values with a focus on the wellbeing of others. There was a huge leap in reporting that they have an obligation to help communities in need, 82% compared to 64% in Pathway 3, and less in the others. This indicates a solid commitment or using values framing; most probably a Universalism or Benevolence value set, which prizes understanding, appreciation, tolerance and, protection for the welfare of all people and for nature and/or preservation, and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact.[8] This group did think it important to get to know people in communities of need.

There was overwhelming response to making the world a better place and standing up for what is right. Only 62% saw themselves as an advocate, and this throughout is not a strong predictive factor in people's views on volunteering. This group doesn't see itself any more compassionate than Pathway 3 (86% compared to 83%), but it views itself as far more compassionate than those who are unlikely to volunteer.

This group, compared to Pathway 3, valued loyalty and community more, and thought they were good citizens who took responsibility. They were more likely to go out of their way to help people, which is consistent with their views of themselves and what they value. They had slightly higher rates of a family culture of volunteering, (but it was still only 57%), while 91% of this group knew someone who was volunteering, and they were more engaged in community.

On the whole, this group reported positive experiences from their previous volunteering and were supportive of volunteering. Lack of time, lack of confidence and the costs of volunteering were the major factors in their disengagement from volunteering. When looking at what would re-engage them, words such as flexibility, engagement, matching skills and interests, improved health and ability, money, more respect, reduced administration on joining and more time, were cited. More than half were familiar with SEEK Volunteer and Volunteering Victoria.

Key considerations in communicating to this group (Pathway 4)

This group has a strong sense of social agency and having an impact on the world. They are externally focussed and concerned about others and hold value sets which are open to messaging about compassion and caring for the world. At 82% they have the second strongest sense of obligation. So, appealing to this sense and their view of themselves, as compassionate people and good citizens, not advocates, is important in messaging to re-engage them. They wanted to give back to community but also felt a personal sense of achievement. Like other groups moving forward in their readiness to volunteer, this group had a high level of knowledge of other volunteers, so word-of-mouth campaigns is likely to influence this group to re-engage. This group will re-engage if the right and flexible opportunities exist to meet their needs and stages of life. This group may in some instances access online opportunities. Time limited and affordable opportunities may convince them to re-engage.

[8] Common Cause handbook page 14-15

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Profile of a Pathway 5 person: I am starting to think about if and how volunteering may be part of my world.

Half of this group were in the 50-64 years of age range, 72% were female, 94% spoke English at home and 69% were born in Australia. Fourteen per cent reported a disability, 63% had a bachelor's degree or higher, and 39% lived in regional or rural Victoria. The majority (81%) had a car with 89% having a driver's license.

Like the two previous Pathways (i.e., 3 & 4), there is a huge jump in response from Pathway 1 and 2, in this group's belief about the importance of having concern for and support of communities in need and their members. All respondents felt this was important. Fewer felt it was an obligation, compared with Pathway 4 (78%), and they certainly did not see themselves as advocates for people in need. They were the strongest in wanting to get to know people in need (94% thought it important), so personal connection / relationship may have been important to this group.

Pathway 4 and this group rated equally highest for being seen as a compassionate and understanding people, but not as highly as other pathways who are likely to volunteer or who are wanting to see the world a better place. Community and loyalty were important to 91% of this group, and this disposition grows over the pathways as intent to volunteer becomes more obvious.

This group were equally strong on wanting to assist people who were being taken advantage of. However, there was not any significant difference to highlight in factors related to understanding others and good citizenship that would be important to engage this group over others.

This group had less community involvement than Pathways 4, 6 and 7, and of those pathways were less likely to know someone who volunteered. They did not have particularly a strong family culture of volunteering compared to other Pathways.

More of the group had motivations to give back and help those in need, than to get anything for themselves from volunteering. They did want to feel a sense of personal achievement but were less focussed on personal connections and improving skills.

Many had volunteered before but over a third had not done so for at least 10 years. Reasons for not re-engaging were, lack of knowledge and resources on how to get started and, what is available and how they would find an opportunity to match their skills. Half of the group knew about SEEK Volunteer and Volunteering Victoria.

They reported that they had looked for volunteering opportunities by chatting with a volunteering information person, participating in a trial volunteering opportunity, reading, or listening to information online and visiting a website

Key considerations in communicating to this group (Pathway 5)

This is a group who could be re-engaged easily. Appealing to what they would get out of volunteering is likely to be less successful than framing messaging about how they could help the community, and give back, and have a real sense of achievement in their impact. Navigating is really important for this group; giving them a range of identifiable pathways to find volunteering opportunities is vital. The word-of-mouth channels remain key to finding the right opportunities, and place-based information remains a strong strategy. Some of this group will be able to find their way to volunteering through online resources. Time is a barrier, and flexible opportunities that can match their time and skillset are important here, similar to other Pathways.

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Profile of a Pathway 6 person: Planning to start volunteering in the next month or have started volunteering in the last 6 months.

Twenty-one per cent of this group were aged 18-34 years, 46% were aged 35-54 years and 17% were in the 55-64 year age group. Their level of education was more akin to those in Pathway 1 with 46% having a bachelor's degree or above. This being the second lowest proportion registered across the seven pathways. They had the highest representation of TAFE educated people (34%). Females comprised 71% of this group, 96% spoke English at home and 71% were born in Australia. The percentage of those who lived in regional or rural Victoria was 46%. This group had the second lowest car access at 75% of the group. This is akin to Pathway 1.

Like Pathway 5 everyone in this group had a strong belief about the importance of having concern for and support of communities in need and their members. However only three-quarters felt an obligation to help communities in need. They weren't as high in their ratings on the need to get to know someone who is in need i.e., relationship-based engagement. They were also the lowest rated group who would be engaged to volunteer when defining themselves as compassionate people (80%). They strongly wanted to make the world a better place (91%) but were the lowest rated group for wanting to stand up for what is right. They did not see themselves as advocates. Community and loyalty were valued at 92%, the second highest rating, only rivalled by those who are volunteering now (Pathway 7). Of the pathways who are likely to volunteer, they rated around the same (84%) for viewing themselves as good citizens. They were not any more likely to go out of their way to help someone, than the other groups who would engage in volunteering, but they rated highest in stepping up to help someone they thought was being taken advantage of. They had the second highest proportion of all pathways who had family or friends who volunteered, although this remained low at 58% but had the second highest rating for knowing someone who is volunteering (96%). They weren't exceptionally more likely to be engaged in community.

This group wanted to engage in volunteering primarily to give back, with one-third wanting to develop skills and confidence through volunteering and look for social connectedness. This group wanted to make new friends.

Less than half of this group knew about online pathways to view volunteering opportunities. Those who started volunteering in the past six months were doing so in welfare and community, health care and arts, and culture. There was no one distinct pathway that was identified for how they found their way to volunteering. Of those yet to find a position (57% of the cohort), many had started looking but wanted a more direct connection to opportunities, and their motivation was leaning more to social connectedness and wanting to make a difference. This group were most interested in volunteering in welfare and community and health care.

Key considerations in communicating to this group (Pathway 6)

The closer one gets to thinking about volunteering responses focus more on social connectedness as well continuing to want to make a difference in the world. There remains that strong sense of wanting to help people and communities in need, those less well-off than themselves. This group prized community and loyalty but did not see obligation as so important. The alignment with where they wanted to volunteer i.e., organisations with a social justice impact is not unexpected.

This group also needs navigation support to find those volunteering opportunities. Relying on online opportunities will not reach this group overall. Localised pathways to finding opportunities including word-of-mouth will be important.

In messaging to these groups, an equal focus on what they can achieve from the opportunity, individually, and what their impact will be on the world or social issue, will be important.

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Profile of a Pathway 7 person: I am currently volunteering and committed to volunteering for the next 12 months.

This Pathway was the largest group by far (n=455) and there were some surprising results. Although 52% of the group were in the 35-64 year age group, this group had the highest representation of older volunteers over 65 years of age. This is not unexpected given that groups of post-retirement age represent one of the largest groups of volunteers generally. Seventy-one per cent were women and 96% spoke English at home. Those Australian born were 79%. And this group had the second highest rating (64%) for a bachelor's degree or above. There was roughly equal representation of those living in metropolitan areas (53%) to rural and regional Victoria (47%) with 90% having had access to a car.

Whilst still scoring high on the importance of having concern for and support of communities in need and their members (96% and 97% respectively), it was less than the 100% of previous pathways who were considering volunteering, and more like that of Pathway 4 who had volunteered before. It is undeniably still high but the gradual trend of increasing commitment to this belief did not eventuate in Pathway 7. There is something about the strength of this message on wanting to help those in need, which appeals slightly more to those thinking about volunteering, than those who have volunteered. They were the group most likely to see themselves as advocates (71%) and a large proportion felt obliged to help those in need (86%). They thought it was important to get to know people in these communities (88%) indicating an emphasis on relationship-based engagement. They rated around the same as others likely to volunteer, as seeing themselves as compassionate (84%). Ninety-five per cent wanted to make the world a better place and they had the highest rating (96%) for wanting to stand up for those who were being taken advantage of. This equates with this group's valuing of community and loyalty which was the highest of all groups (93%). They wanted agency and impact over their world.

This group knew people who volunteered (97%), not unusual, given they are currently volunteering themselves, but they had the highest rating for having family or friends who have volunteered (65%). Although this is not high, this group, of course, were more engaged in community.

Word-of-mouth was how 38% of this group found their volunteering opportunity. All other pathways to find information on volunteering including online were not significant for this group. A third of this group have volunteered for between 1 and 3 years, whilst 21% have done so for over 10 years. This is a reasonable mix of experienced and newer volunteers. The method of engaging with volunteering is therefore not a generational one entirely i.e., older people are less likely to use technology.

Of the group, 43% were informally volunteering and 93% formally volunteer, indicating many people do both. This is supported by the fact that 44% volunteer multiple times a week, whilst 30% do so only once a week. Only 2% could be said to volunteer episodically i.e., once every six months.

When asked what was it that made them want to volunteer in the first place the answers in order of priority were:

- **Wanting to give back to community (89%)**
- **Personal sense of achievement (79%)**
- **Making a personal connection with family / making friends (70% and 60%)**
- **Improve my skills (50%)**

This is telling in that the individual gains one gets from volunteering are more valued here than in other pathways. One could argue, that obtaining a sense of achievement is linked to that need to create a better world and assist those in need, but the need to feel these outcomes is clearly important to those who currently volunteer. There is also a wider spread regarding skills and social connection. It may well be that what we are observing here, is that social justice messages are what gets people interested in volunteering, but once you are volunteering, it is the more personal benefits that are prized.

Forty-seven per cent of the group were involved in volunteering in welfare and community organisations. The predominance of this sector for volunteering is expected, given the motivation of people to want to have a social impact, but it also highlights the vulnerability of this sector to changes in volunteering workforces.

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Key considerations in communicating to this group (Pathway 7)

This group are your messengers. They are your ambassadors in community, spreading the word about volunteering to their friends and connections and maybe more formally as promoters of volunteering. These are your storytellers, who, with support and a sense of organised strategy can speak to people in Pathways 3-6 to engage and re-engage them.

Place-based volunteer support services are best placed to co-ordinate and take advantage of the power of this group. It is unlikely a centralised online strategy could achieve this level of empowerment and engagement in promoting volunteering on an ongoing basis.

There is also something in the data that the social justice motivations of previous pathways may well be less of a factor here, as the individual gains people get from volunteering become prized also.

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

Overall conclusions about the volunteer side of the coin

People who volunteer have capacity to do so. This is seen in the data on an educational level, the focus on having time and capacity to volunteer, and the primary motivator of wanting to contribute to social justice outcomes i.e., wanting to have agency on the world and make it a better place, and assist those in need at the individual and community level. What if you don't see yourself as having any agency over your world currently? Does this preclude you from volunteering or are you more likely to informally volunteer? How does one's experience of participating in community influence the desire and confidence to volunteer? What is the impact of exclusion on the potential to volunteer? The fact that the groups attracted by this online survey were more highly educated (a characteristic of volunteers), generally provides us with valuable insights as to how to message and support many of them back into volunteering. It does not however, provide an analysis of what might attract people who come from more vulnerable communities. This would be a useful future research focus. The higher level of First Nations and those experiencing disability also allows for further interrogation of the existing data from this research. This level of analysis was not possible with the funding for the current work.

It is clear, that appealing to one's sense of agency on the world, the belief in wanting to assist people and communities in need, is a strong value message to integrate into all volunteer opportunity design and recruitment strategies. This is particularly valuable at the point when people are thinking about volunteering, whether to engage or re-engage. It is not just about messaging at the marketing level either, but about how and what is offered to entice people to volunteer. How will people be able to see the impact of their volunteering on social issues, and how do you communicate this in the job roles, advertisements, and opportunities. Is it more important to focus on this aspect of the work, than for a paid employee? These data would suggest it is because paid employees can work across many different domains, whether they like it or not, but volunteers want to see the impact their contribution is making, it is their primary motivator to get into volunteering. This raises issues of how an organisation or group can quantify that outcome for volunteers, and how they can design opportunities that would produce those outcomes.

The current volunteering group also demonstrated that once a person is actively volunteering, the social justice impact they have remains important, but their own sense of achievement and the skills and connections they get from volunteering, become more important. Is this what keeps them engaged? How can organisations reinforce for current volunteers both the impact they are having on the world but also the positive benefits they are achieving as individuals.

How someone sees themselves can be important in the engagement and re-engagement messaging. For those open to being re-engaged, their impact on their world, their view of themselves as compassionate and their sense of obligation are important. Those who have never volunteered but are thinking about it, want to get to know people in need; they want those relationships which will assist to demonstrate their impact if they volunteer. They strongly see themselves

Trends in the Volunteers Side of the Coin

as compassionate people standing up for what is right and just, with a sense of community and loyalty. Those who could be open to considering volunteering, see themselves strongly standing up for what is right and making the world a better place. These are the likely messages which would cut through this group.

Appealing to people's religious or spiritual motivations or the need to be an advocate for those in need are not going to be useful messages to pursue to engage people into volunteering.

Word-of-mouth and place-based pathways to finding opportunities, remain critical to keep in the mix of how people are expected to find out about opportunities. It is also clear from the data, that values messaging to attract volunteers needs to be segmented to those things the various groups value more highly. These data can guide local recruiters in their values-based messaging. It is also clear that values-based messaging and its research can contribute to the thinking about engagement and re-engagement of volunteers.

Harnessing a family culture of volunteering to attract people is not a strong strategy but is worth pursuing for those who have such a culture. Do not rely on

it however, as a main strategy. There is certainly a relationship between volunteering and engagement in community, but the research data did not interrogate whether the community engagement preceded volunteering, and therefore was a strong motivator, or whether it resulted from volunteering. It is clear however, in Pathway 1, that disengagement from community involvement is a key factor in identifying those who will never volunteer and should never be targeted. Let people go who are in Pathway 2 also. They have done their bit and are unlikely to be as successful in spreading the word about volunteering as those in Pathway 7, who are currently volunteering.

Time remains a barrier to volunteering as does family commitments and compliance. This research was not testing enablers and barriers, but it became clear that time was the consistent barrier. This was also found in the Victorian State of Volunteering Report[9] , which showed 41% of volunteers cited it as a barrier and 32% of non-volunteers did the same. Volunteer opportunities which are flexible and allow people to commit the time they have to the task, is increasingly going to be necessary in the design of volunteering opportunities by VIOs.

The other side of the coin: The volunteer involving organisations

The quantum of data on this side of the coin was less than for the volunteers due to time and resource constraints. Nevertheless, the messages which came out of the Forum and interviews were telling. Those key messages were:

1. Organisations do not always identify as Volunteer Involving Organisations, and therefore don't hear the messaging or access the support needed to adapt to changes in the way people want to volunteer.

This was an overwhelming finding. We can have the most sophisticated research on how people want to volunteer and how to engage them, but if an organisation that has a volunteer workforce does not recognise or acknowledge its identity as a VIO, it remains oblivious to the messaging and to the thinking.

Fundamentally we need to change the identity of these organisations and community groups to acknowledge that they are VIOs. We need to stop talking about VIOs, a jargon word, and develop language which speaks to the fact that organisations and groups utilise volunteer workforces. The right words need to be investigated with organisations who clearly don't see themselves as VIOs.

2. Related to this is the depth and breadth of investment organisations and groups have in their volunteer workforces.

An organisation may well see themselves as a VIO, but their investment is shallow. This also goes to how volunteer workforces are seen and valued at all levels of the organisation or group. Are they gap fillers? Are they a valued workforce resource, adequately supported, and not just with half a day added onto someone's existing role to manage them.

The depth and breadth of investment in volunteering is a key factor in whether organisations will listen and adapt to the changing trends in volunteering. The shallow investors are less likely to adapt and respond appropriately.

3. The cost of investment in volunteers

It costs to resource a volunteer workforce, and the forum participants raised many examples of the resourcing burden for facilitating the placement and support of volunteers, costs which are not always funded especially compliance costs. This acts as a barrier to organisational willingness to invest deeply and widely in a volunteer workforce. Compliance costs were in fact raised as a chief concern and the group explored the concept of the volunteer passport to reduce compliance costs. There are major jurisdictional barriers to such a passport but the issue of compliance in both its costs and lengthy processes remains a critical barrier for organisations and volunteers alike.

The investment required to bring on and train volunteers was raised here also. The cost in time and resources was queried if volunteers only stayed a short time. The funded capacity to manage this was not there in most organisations.

The other side of the coin: The volunteer involving organisations

4. Capacity, capability, and leadership

When talking about investment in workforces, one is talking about strategy, management, and leadership. If organisations utilising volunteers are going to identify as such and invest appropriately so they are open to listening and responding to research messages on volunteering, then management need to be on board. Targeted executive management strategies need to be in place so that organisations of this level understand their identity as VIOs and support the depth of investment which is strategically needed for their workforce mix. Likewise, committees of community groups or the key decision makers also need this level of understanding and need to be supported to gain this capacity.

Part of capacity and leadership in larger organisations was the role and the valuing of the role of Volunteer Managers. Funding was seen as key to this, as was government policy support beyond just an individual department of strategy.

Capacity also went to issues of the flexibility of volunteer opportunities, and organisations capacity to actually respond to this need to be more flexible. It was clear it takes conscious resourcing and time to design and consider how flexible opportunities can be offered. This was also discussed in response to issues of diversity and inclusion. Groups and organisations need time and support to look at their culture and practices and change. The role of Volunteer Resource Centres in managing this at a place-based level was also discussed. The loss of this capacity is key here as is clear policy support to drive this sort of change consistently across the state.

Workplace culture needed to support a one-workforce approach, an integrated paid and volunteer workforce.

COVID was explored re its impact on capacity and capability. There were many examples of loss and adaptation cited with new opportunities emerging in how organisations could do things differently. Many of these adaptations and innovations have remained post COVID and have contributed to a more flexible approach to volunteer workforce. There remains a challenge to engage and re-engage people into volunteering especially in areas of work requiring face-to-face contact.

5. Workforce resourcing

Many participants talked about issues related to very practical resourcing of volunteer workforces. Having the computers available for them or the equipment, necessary to support their work more broadly. Having funding to provide an IT system which assists with and manages onboarding and compliance. Having time to obtain testimonials and develop refined marketing strategies for volunteers. This speaks to the above points also. If an organisation does not see itself as a VIO, or has sufficient depth and breadth of investment, then it is unlikely to allocate the necessary conditions and resources to allow this volunteer workforce to succeed to its potential.

The other side of the coin: The volunteer involving organisations

Overall conclusions about the other side of the coin

The research on this side of the coin, whilst less rigorous, has raised some critical areas for further investigation, but also clearly demonstrated that a much broader lens needs to be applied to thinking about how organisations will adapt, over the coming decade, to the changing face of volunteering.

It is also abundantly clear that this side of the coin will need resourcing by government, in both funding and consistent policy, if volunteering opportunities, especially in the welfare, community and health sectors, are going to meet the challenge of responding to community need.