

Discussion paper

Volunteering Strategy for SA Working Groups: Leading collaborative impact

This paper has been developed, with the support from the secretariat, by:

- Christel Mex, Independent Chair, Volunteering Strategy for SA (VSSA) Partnership Board
- Tracey Fox, A/CEO, VSA&NT and VSSA Partnership Board member
- Karen van Gorp, Senior Policy Adviser, Business SA and VSSA Partnership Board member
- Michael Feszczak, Local Government Association Volunteer Managers Network
- Rod Dolling, Senior Policy and Programs Officer, Strategic Policy & Reform, DHS

Background

In 2014, the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia 2014-2020 was released in partnership with the Government of South Australia, Volunteering SA&NT, Business SA and the Local Government Association of SA. This strategy expired in December 2020.

In March 2018, the Marshall Liberal Government committed to continue support for this partnership for the next stage beyond 2020 (2021-2027).

A partnership board, comprising representatives of each partner and an independent chair, oversee and monitor implementation of the strategy. The board is not incorporated and is accountable to each partner of the strategy.

Since March 2019, a refreshed governance model has been in effect for the strategy and was formally endorsed by the partnership board on 25 June 2020. Under the new model, the board operates in a less formal environment encouraging grassroots implementation through networks and community partners. This approach has led to:

- increased engagement and collaboration
- better alignment
- more innovation
- increased trust between the board and networks and their decision-making abilities
- leverage of cross-sector knowledge base.

On 17 May 2021, the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia 2021-27 was officially launched. The strategy will be supported by action plans that describe new and existing initiatives. These will be living documents that will be reviewed every two years throughout the life of the strategy (Attachment 1).

Working groups

To support the delivery of actions, topic-driven working groups will be established with representatives from local and state government, non-government organisations, networks and community partners. Working groups will report to the board.

The Volunteering Strategy Partnership Board, together with the independent chair (with assistance from the secretariat), will identify members of working groups from the existing networks through an expression of interest process, outlining key selection criteria.

Three working groups will be formed to deliver actions in the following four work areas:

1. Communications (new)
2. Capacity building (new)
3. Youth volunteering (existing)

Purpose of working groups

Working groups facilitate actions relevant to the priorities of the strategy. They draw in targeted knowledge, skills, capabilities and lived experience relevant to the work areas, leading to collective impact.

Potential working group participants will come from existing networks, including: Public Sector Volunteer Policy Network; Local Government Volunteer Manager Network; Regional and Central Volunteer Manager Networks; Business SA networks. Working groups will:

- confirm terms of reference
- scope projects and find / suggest possible partners
- work out priorities, resources and timelines
- drive the activities to deliver project outcomes resourced through partnerships
- provide regular reports to the board on activity progress
- measure the success of the projects.

Structure of working groups

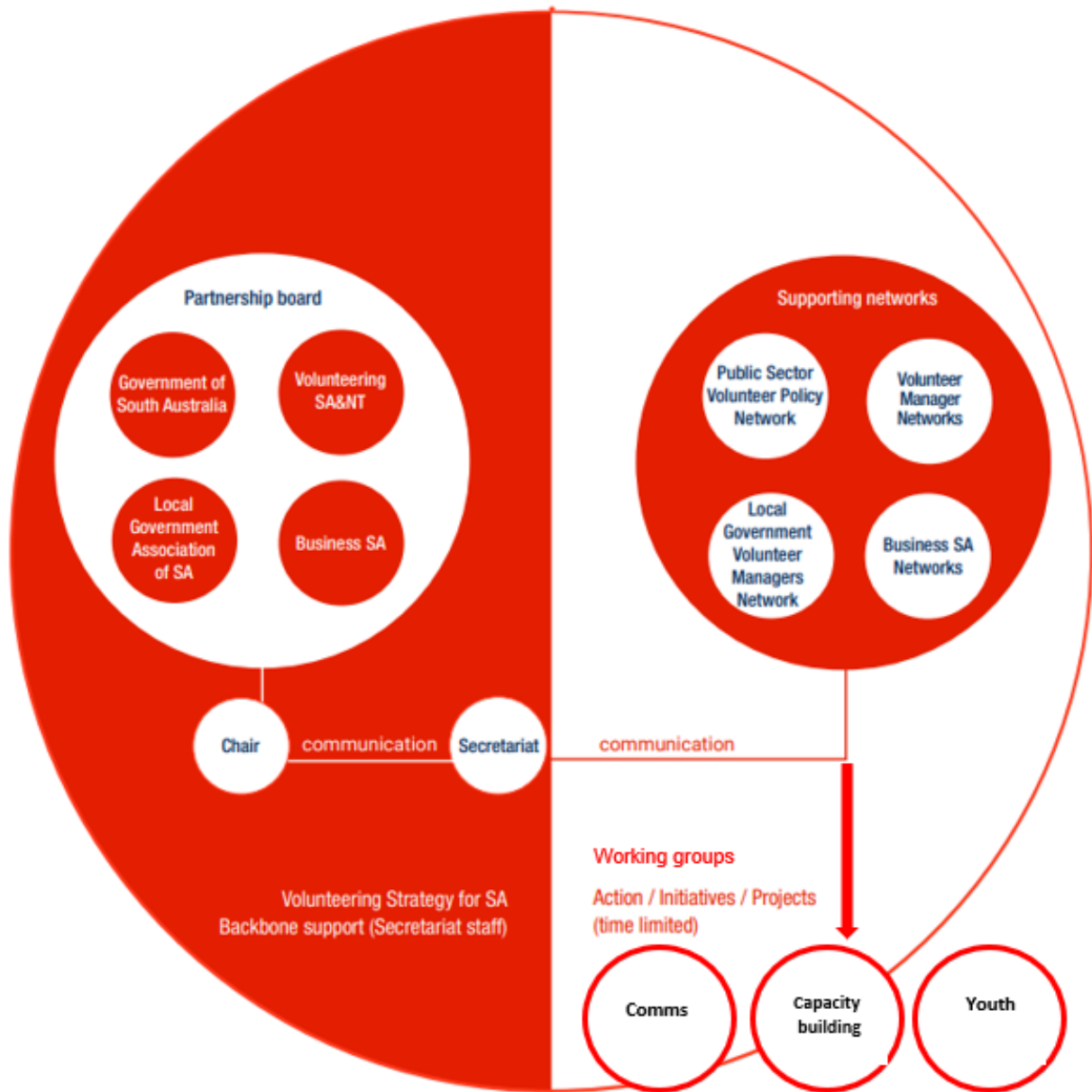
Each working group will elect a chair or co-chairs to lead the group and be supported by the secretariat.

- The **chair(s)** will decide on the group's working methods in consultation with group members
- The **secretariat** will provide appropriate administrative, and technical support to the working group.
- The **chair(s) and the secretariat** will be in regular contact with members of the working group to ensure smooth running of the group and any sub-working groups and progress towards delivery of actions from the Action Plan. In addition, the chair(s) will work with the secretariat to ensure that the group's activities are aligned with and provide outcomes to help deliver strategy outcomes.
- **All members** of the working group will participate in activities and make contributions in their areas of expertise.
- **External experts** may be invited to attend working group meetings on an ad hoc basis to provide expert input on specific issues.

Sub-working groups

Subgroups may be formed for accomplishing specific actions and include existing working group members or expert individuals external to the main working group.

FIGURE 1. WORKING GROUP STRUCTURE



Characteristics of members

- Have firsthand experience with the issue
- Are genuinely interested in affecting the issue
- Are action-oriented “doers” who commit to attending meetings and reviewing pre-read materials
- Have the authority and trust to represent and influence their organisations, agencies, peers, and/or communities

Characteristics for chair(s)

- Can commit time (two to three hours monthly in addition to regular meetings)
- Represent different perspectives among the group
- Are collaborative leaders and facilitators, fostering an inclusive culture rather than serving as the deciders
- Are willing and able to perform key tasks (e.g., facilitate meetings, plan meeting agendas, report to the Partnership Board)
- Are not simply symbolic leaders; the success of the working group hinges on the commitment of the co-chairs to pitch in during and between meetings

Number of members

Working groups will have approximately 12 to 25 people, however numbers are flexible based on expressions of interest received. Sub-working groups should have roughly five members in each group.

The overall number of the group may expand to include temporary members who participate for a limited amount of time.

Category of members

There will be two categories of members:

- Fixed-term members (one - two years) who constitute the core of the group
- Temporary members who are additional participants and contributors to short-term initiatives or who may be unable to commit time beyond a certain prescribed timeframe.

Duration of membership

Working group members will be selected to serve for **two years or less** based on the needs and duration for the working group. Members may be re-selected to continue beyond if the skill set and contributions continue to meet the working groups' need.

Reporting

Updates on the progress from sub-working groups will be sent to the working group chair(s). The chair(s) will provide updates to the partnership board at least quarterly via the partnership board's independent chair.

Budget and resources

There is no budget for working groups. Securing funding for strategy activities requires leveraging from existing programs, partnerships and/or networks. The Government of South Australia, through the Department of Human Services, funds the secretariat for the Volunteering Strategy.

Ways of working

Working groups can accomplish their work either virtually or through face-to-face meetings, as decided by the individual group. Working groups shall meet at least four times per year ideally prior to the quarterly partnership board meetings.

Review

The working groups will continuously review their activities to make sure they are meeting the objectives detailed in the terms of reference, which will be reviewed at least every two years.

CASE STUDY – V.Y.P.I. WORKING GROUP (Volunteering. Youth. Participation. Impact)

Focus area 1: Invest in the foundations of volunteering

Key priority 1.3: Support organisations to find new ways to keep and encourage regional and metropolitan volunteers, as well as targeting young people

Action 1.3.1: Establish a working group to identify state-wide issues and opportunities around how young people can connect with and participate in the community, as well as encouraging young people who give their time freely to feel supported and valued for their contributions.

<p>MAKING THE CASE</p>	<p>A need was identified to establish a working group to drive the delivery of activities to grow opportunities to help young South Australians to participate in meaningful volunteering.</p> <p>In exchange for participants expertise, the working group would allow for professional development of members, gain new content knowledge, make new connections for their organisation, and help delivery of strategy outcomes.</p>
<p>STRIVING FOR DIVERSITY OF PERSPECTIVES</p>	<p>Through an expression of interest process, the secretariat actively sought out members from many segments of the community, including those who bring deep issue experience but may not always be heard, for example: educators from across Catholic, Independent and government schools; tertiary institutions; members of the business community; local councils; not-for-profits; youth; and other stakeholders who are not commonly represented in formal change initiatives.</p>
<p>THE APPROACH</p>	<p>A workshop was held with recruited members to discuss the scope of the group and brainstorm potential projects to support the participation of young people in volunteering.</p> <p>Subsequently, the working group developed: terms of reference; identified project scope, resources, timelines, actions; developed a two-year action plan referencing identified projects and tasks for noting / approval by the partnership board.</p> <p>To lead and manage group activities two members volunteered to co-chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanita Schwarz, Capacity Building Project Officer, Community Centres SA • Trent Heaver, Tea Tree Gully Youth Leadership Group
<p>ENABLING PARTICIPANTS</p>	<p>Quarterly meetings were scheduled to ensure effective progress towards the goals of the group.</p> <p>For working group members who are employed in organisations that work on the issue, participating can be considered as part of their day job. For other members, for example community representatives, who are not directly compensated for their time, it has been</p>

	important for the secretariat to come up with a system of support, which might include transportation (ie cabcharge), mentoring, etc.
CULTIVATING SHARED OWNERSHIP	<p>Once the working group began to take shape, transition from relying solely on the secretariat to relying on co-chairs or other members to support and manage group activities has developed.</p> <p>Sub-working groups were formed within the working group to deliver identified projects, providing quarterly updates to the Volunteering Strategy Partnership Board.</p>
ALLOWING MEMBERSHIP TO EVOLVE	While an underlying issue focus of the group is initially determined, the specific areas of focus and goals will change over time. As the group forms and settles and as members' availability changes or new issue expertise is needed, it is possible that working group membership will evolve.
OUTCOMES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working group established February 2021 and was a merging of existing student volunteering working group under the first volunteering strategy and the student volunteer champions network, led by the Department for Education. • 23 members from across education sector (schools and tertiary institutions); local councils; state government agencies; non-government organisations; volunteer resource centres. • Two co-chairs appointed • Three meetings held • Three projects identified to help grow opportunities to help young South Australians to participate in meaningful volunteering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Best practices showcase Develop approach to showcase existing practices / models to help people connect with information, and collaboration or knowledge sharing and learning tools ○ Social impact assessment Develop assessment method for new initiatives and to identify areas where further consideration is required to increase social impact through youth volunteering ○ Young changemakers Young people work together to plan and lead a project to create positive change in their communities. • Three sub-working groups formed to drive the activities to deliver identified project outcomes (sub-working group members agreed amongst themselves for one member to lead and manage group activity) • Deeper collaboration among people who may traditionally work in isolated efforts and organisations.