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weVolunteer

Supporting communities when
they need it the most

2020-21

 **volunteering**
VICTORIA

BACKGROUND

[weVolunteer](#) was established and launched by the Premier of Victoria on 29 August 2020 in response to the growing social impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and the need to mobilise volunteers to support local communities. During this time, many volunteers have been unable to continue their volunteering roles with as many as 70 per cent of volunteers having ceased due to program changes or personal circumstances.

INTENT

weVolunteer is a Volunteering Victoria initiative designed to support both volunteers and Victorians through the pandemic and beyond by strengthening the volunteering sector as a whole. weVolunteer will help build community resilience and aid social recovery. Following emergencies such as the pandemic and natural disasters, communities can take years to recover and volunteers are involved in much of that community-based work.

weVolunteer will attract people to join a Community Recovery Volunteer pool. Emergency Response Volunteers, those volunteers who are recruited and trained well in advance of being deployed to respond to a disaster situation, will not be the target volunteer audience for weVolunteer during the first 12 months of the project. However, the project will be designed to enable the inclusion of further target groups with their own funding.

The weVolunteer portal is powered by technology partner MyPass and is designed to facilitate a rapid response in times of need. It allows individuals to register to join the Community Recovery Volunteer pool and provides credentialing of volunteer skills and certifications such as working with children checks to help organisations to source and engage volunteers quickly.

weVolunteer will also help manage surges in volunteer enquiries as they occur during

disaster situations. For example, at the time of a bushfire when many people are wanting to help, emergency management agencies need to focus their attention and resources on emergency response.

Directing people to register for volunteering with weVolunteer and communicating the need to remain patient until the community recovery tasks commence, helps emergency management teams stay focused on the task at hand.

The project is currently funded until June 2021 with learnings from the first 12 months used to design ongoing support or a renewed focus, pending government funding.

The aims of the project are to:



STRENGTHEN the supply of skilled and available volunteers to support community recovery in Victoria



SUPPORT volunteer involving organisations to access a pool of credentialed volunteers that are motivated to assist in community recovery across all regions of Victoria



STRENGTHEN place-based volunteering which is best placed to respond rapidly and appropriately to future urgent need



HELP BUILD community resilience through prepared volunteers and volunteer involving organisations



SCOPE

weVolunteer is designed to complement existing services, tools and platforms being used to support, recruit and manage volunteers, for example Go Volunteer, Viktor/Vira.

weVolunteer is being designed as an agile response grounded in the expertise of Volunteering Victoria which will provide guidance on quality and safety of volunteering experiences, expertise on keeping volunteers engaged, and training and workshops for volunteer involving organisations in collaboration with Volunteer Support Organisations.

Volunteering Victoria is a foundation member of Volunteering Australia and part of a national and international network of volunteering peak bodies.

By keeping focused on a volunteer-centred and community-directed approach to community resilience, the project's unique point of difference is the utilisation of four key tools (the 4 Ps):

01 POOL

a new pool of volunteers, known as community recovery volunteers, who are motivated to respond quickly to urgent community need

02 PASSPORT

a new Volunteer Passport which is a portable credentialing record that will empower volunteers to build their own volunteering record, as well as reducing duplication and administration costs

03 PREPAREDNESS

training and resources to equip and prepare community recovery volunteers, including delivery of tailored programs led by Volunteer Support Organisations

04 PLACE

a place-based volunteering model which leverages the expertise and knowledge of Volunteer Support Organisations through the delivery of tailored programs led by Volunteer Support Organisations and the provision of extra training and resources

The Volunteer Passport and Volunteer Pool are managed within MyPass, the project's technology partner. MyPass is an award winning, Australian-owned software platform allowing organisations to digitally manage their workforce. The volunteer-owned & controlled passport sits at the centre of the platform, ensuring that as individuals engage with different organisations, the same verified information travels with them.

Volunteer Support Organisations are pre-existing partners of Volunteering Victoria and deliver preparedness and place-based services and support. By incorporating them into our work, we maximise their outreach into local community needs, approaches and feedback loops.

OUT OF SCOPE

weVolunteer is not designed to manage emergency response volunteering, that is volunteers recruited and trained by emergency management organisations for front-line disaster response. These agencies continue to manage their own volunteer recruitment processes.

WHAT DOES IT COST PARTICIPANTS?

The weVolunteer pilot project is funded by the Victorian Government through the Department of Health and Human Services.

It is free for volunteers to register and create their volunteer passport, including having their certificates credentialed. It is also free for organisations to utilise the platform and promote volunteer opportunities so that they can source community recovery volunteers.

Beyond the life of this project, covering the further costs for participants and VIOs will be dependent on on-going support from the government.

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Volunteerism enables individuals to work together, shaping collective opportunities for dealing with risk and connecting individuals and communities with wider systems of support. Volunteerism as a universal social behaviour is therefore a critical resource for community resilience.

weVolunteer is designed to improve the coordination, engagement and response of volunteers for community recovery purposes.

By forming complementary partnerships with communities, we help to balance risks more equitably and appropriately pool resources and capacities across communities to take longer-term preventative approaches to dealing with risk.

A successful pilot project will provide the evidence for continued Victorian Government funding to:

- » Scale the numbers of volunteers registered for community recovery work,
- » Develop portable credentials accepted and trusted by volunteer involving organisations,
- » Better prepare volunteers and organisations, and
- » Improve local coordination of volunteers to address community needs.

Data gathered from the Volunteer Support Organisations that received funding to provide local, tailored programs, will also inform future investment.

The success of the pilot project relies on:

- » the expertise of peak body Volunteering Victoria in establishing a framework to support safe and quality volunteer experiences
- » timely health advice and effective working relationships with the Department of Health and Human Services and other government departments
- » the expertise of project technology partner, MyPass and utilisation of volunteer management platforms

- » the expertise and integration of place-based volunteering programs and models both led and utilised by Volunteer Support Organisations throughout Victoria
- » additional support and training for volunteer involving organisations and volunteers that require it.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

weVolunteer promotes and supports organisations to re-engage with volunteers safely as Victoria recovers from the social and economic impacts of the coronavirus.

The state-wide initiative uses an online portable credentialing solution known as a Volunteer Passport, powered by project partner MyPass, to provide a platform for people looking for volunteer roles to register their credentials and be referred to Volunteering Victoria vetted organisations that have roles that meet their skills, interests, and availability.

Volunteers can register on weVolunteer.org.au (which connects to the MyPass platform) to create their Volunteer Passport, listing their skills and experience and uploading documents and evidence of certifications like the working with children check, police check, first aid certificate etc.

Volunteer involving organisations can register on the weVolunteer platform, discuss their needs with the weVolunteer project team and upload volunteer roles that are required for ongoing projects. Volunteers from the weVolunteer pool will have their credentials verified before being referred to volunteer involving organisations to screen and place. The project will also explore integrations and linkages with existing volunteer management platforms such as Viktor/Vira for the recruitment and management of volunteers.

Volunteer Support Organisations can also offer additional services and local insights to assist both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations, thereby facilitating a faster response.

BEYOND THE PILOT

The Victorian Government will be considering proposals for extension of funding beyond the pilot project period.



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