



# Volunteer Management Activity

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What does the new Volunteer Management Activity look like?

- From 1 July 2021, the Australian Government will distribute around \$40.1 million (excluding GST) over five years under this new Volunteer Management Activity (VMA), through the state and territory volunteering peak bodies (peak bodies).
- This includes \$33.5 million (ex. GST) over five years for the peak bodies to develop and implement strategies that will:
  - Deliver online services to build the capacity of Volunteer Involving Organisations (VIOs) within their relevant jurisdictions and;
  - Break down barriers to volunteering faced by identified priority groups, including, People with Disabilities, First Nations People, and Newly Arrived Migrants.
- Through the 2021-22 Budget, additional one off funding of up to, \$6.6 million (ex. GST) was provided to support a smooth transition to the redesigned VMA in 2021-22.
- Grant agreements with the peak bodies are from 1 July 2021 until 30 June 2026, with a review of the effectiveness and efficiency of the program to be undertaken after three years.
- The new model focuses on building the capacity of VIOs, primarily through online volunteer management services, and breaking down barriers to volunteering for identified priority groups including People with Disability, First Nations people, and Newly Arrived Migrants.
  - The online services delivered to VIOs will focus on implementing best practice recruiting and training of volunteers, retaining volunteers, volunteer management and understanding regulatory obligations and risk management. There will also be online resources.

- Increasing the accessibility of volunteering opportunities for people in priority groups includes building the capacity of VIOs to engage volunteers from these groups and providing face-to-face and other services to support these groups to participate in volunteering.
- Peak bodies know their state or territory's needs and are best placed to work closely with their local volunteer organisations. This new approach will enable volunteering peak bodies to respond more efficiently to the current and emerging needs of local volunteer organisations and their volunteers.

## 2. Who will receive funding through the redesigned program?

- Under the new VMA, funding of up to \$40.1 million (excluding GST) over five years will be provided to the peak bodies.
- The peak bodies will be responsible for effective channelling of VMA funding to meet needs and priorities across their jurisdiction.
- Peak bodies are best placed to work closely with the volunteering sector within their own jurisdiction, guided by a thorough understanding of local issues and needs.
- Peak bodies are developing appropriate strategies and mechanisms to ensure equitable service coverage, using existing localised services and structures where possible. They are required to partner with relevant local organisations to develop service delivery strategies.
- The new approach enables peak bodies and their partners to respond more effectively to the current and emerging needs of local volunteering organisations and their volunteers.

## 3. Will any previously funded VMA Volunteer Resource Centres/Volunteer Support Services be funded under the new Volunteer Management Activity model?

- Only the seven volunteering peak bodies were invited to apply for funding under the new VMA.
- Peak bodies may decide to partner with some previously VMA funded Volunteer Resource Centres (VRCs)/ Volunteer Support Services (VSS) organisations. However, there are clear guidelines for the new program that require experience and expertise in priority areas. The peak bodies will need to partner with the most appropriate organisations to deliver the specified services.
- Peak bodies are responsible for determining funding amounts provided to any VRC/VSS they may partner with.
- Additional funding of up to \$6.6 million provided through the 2021-22 Budget has ensured peak bodies were able to work with previous VMA providers to harness their expertise and resources in establishing the new program in its first year.

- VRC/VSS organisations have been encouraged to engage with their relevant peak body in relation to how they could support the new VMA program over the next five years.

#### 4. How was funding made available to the peak bodies?

- Funding was made available to the peak bodies through the department's standard grant making process via the Community Grants Hub.
- The department published the Grant Opportunity Guidelines on GrantConnect and the Community Grants Hub website at <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/volunteer-management-activity-2021>.

#### 5. How has the Government supported organisations through this transition?

- The Department of Social Services (the department) worked with previously funded VMA organisations about the changes since July 2017.
- An independent review of the Activity informed government decisions on the redesign; and lead to nationwide stakeholder consultations on the VMA in early 2020.
- In February 2021, the department held stakeholder workshops with all currently funded VMA providers to seek feedback on the challenges and opportunities within each state and territory regarding the roll out of the new VMA.
- The Government announced additional funding of up to \$6.6 million in 2021-22 to support a smooth transition to the redesigned VMA in the first year.
- The department worked with the peak bodies to ensure adequate information and support was provided to previously funded VMA organisations during the transition to the redesigned VMA.
- The department is also meeting on a regular basis with state and territory government officials to discuss the new VMA program and to work collaboratively in ensuring a smooth transition and minimal service delivery gaps.

#### 6. Were any previously funded VMA organisations given funding extensions to allow for transition?

- No. From 30 June 2021, all previous funding agreements under the VMA ceased. These funding agreements did not receive any form of extension, as the Government did not have the Constitutional authority to continue the program in its previous form.
- As a requirement of their funding agreements, under the new program, the peak bodies are required to partner with relevant local organisations in the delivery of the VMA.
- The Government announced additional funding of up to \$6.6 million in 2021-22 to support a smooth transition to the redesigned VMA.

- VRC/VSS organisations have been encouraged to engage with their state/territory volunteering peak body in relation to how they could support the new VMA program over the next five years.

## 7. Why did the Government choose to defund VSS organisations and its face-to-face services, and shift VMA funding to an online model of support?

- The Government has a responsibility to ensure that activities undertaken by VMA funded organisations are aligned to a Commonwealth head/s of power under the Australian Constitution. The redesigned VMA program has addressed this issue.
- The Government also has a responsibility to ensure that funded programs deliver services efficiently and effectively to Australian communities.
- The sector has been undergoing constant change for the last 20 years.
- A review of the VMA found the current model could lead to duplication and confusion amongst volunteer organisations, and there was varying support depending on location.
- The review found that, in its current state, the VMA led to an inconsistent use of resources, IT infrastructure, and application of best practices.
- The Government is prioritising vulnerable target groups and regional and rural Australia through the new model. This will:
  - reduce barriers for priority groups, e.g. People with a Disability, First Nations people, and Newly Arrived Migrants in accessing volunteering services
  - guarantee service coverage of rural and remote areas.
- The new model will grow the sector's resilience and adaptability.
- Under the redesigned VMA, not all services will be online. Peak bodies will work with other organisations to build the capacity of VIOs to decrease barriers faced by priority groups.
- This means that the peak bodies can, as part of their strategies, include face-to-face delivery of services, but only to priority groups that the Government has the power to fund. These groups include:
  - People with Disability
  - First Nation Peoples
  - Newly Arrived Migrants

## 8. How will the Government support VRCs/VSS in the future?

- From 30 June 2021, all previous funding agreements under the VMA ceased. These funding agreements did not receive any form of extension, as the Government did not have the Constitutional authority to continue the program in its previous form.
- Under the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) the peak bodies are required to work in partnership with other relevant organisations to deliver the new VMA program. Where peak bodies need to leverage the knowledge and resources of the existing VMA providers, they may choose to sub-contract additional services.
- This means that any funding decisions, under the new program, are a matter for the peak bodies. Organisations that the peak bodies partner with will be required to adhere to the requirements as outlined in the GOGs.

## 9. What does the additional funding for the VMA in the 2021-22 budget mean for the program?

- The Government announced in the 2021-22 Budget that an additional up to \$6.6 million would be provided under the VMA.
- The additional funding of up to \$6.6 million is for the first year of the new VMA program.
- This additional funding is being used to support a smooth transition to the new program and will help ensure the new program is properly developed and embedded.

## 10. Why did the Government decide to add the additional \$6.6 million funding to the VMA?

- The Government recognises that moving to a new model requires a period of learning and adjustment. Leveraging the expertise and resources of previous VMA providers is an important part of this process.

## 11. How has this additional funding been distributed?

- Peak bodies are responsible for the management and distribution of the additional funding to leverage the experience and resources of currently funded organisations in their jurisdictions.
- Funding for the transition period was made available to the peak bodies through the department's standard grant making process via the Community Grants Hub.
- Previously funded VMA organisations have been encouraged to work with their relevant peak body during this transition period.

## 12. How will the additional funding be utilised by the peak bodies?

- Peak bodies are required to develop and implement strategies that:
  - Break down barriers for identified priority groups and;
  - Build the capacity of VIOs through online management services.
- To assist the peak bodies with developing and implementing these strategies, they can use this additional funding to collaborate with previously VMA funded VRCs/VSSs to support a smooth transition to the new VMA program.
- Any activities undertaken by peak bodies and organisations they partner with must align with the redesigned VMA program.

## 13. What will the \$3.4 million one off investment in IT infrastructure be used for?

- The Government invested a one off sum of \$3.4 million in 2020-21 to develop and improve volunteer management IT infrastructure for the program. The aim of this investment is to support national consistency in volunteer management.
- This one off investment in IT infrastructure will support organisations by reducing cost barriers to information, training materials, governance materials etc.

## 14. Will Data Exchange Reporting be a requirement under the new VMA?

- The Government is working with the peak bodies to develop an appropriate performance measurement framework that will outline measureable targets that demonstrate the outcomes achieved under this program.

## 15. What factors were taken into consideration when determining the new funding model and jurisdictional split?

- From 1 July 2021, the Government will distribute up to \$40.1 million (ex. GST) over five years under the new VMA model.
- The new VMA funding model is a simple yet robust population based model that takes into account the following factors:
  - State and territory population of formal volunteers (pre COVID-19)
  - Diversity of each state and territory's population and remoteness of the population
  - A base rate to ensure financial viability – particularly for the smaller states and territories.
- In addition, the Commonwealth Government has invested a one off sum of up to \$3.4 million in 2020-21 to develop and improve volunteer management IT infrastructure associated with the delivery of the program.

# Volunteer Management Activity - Grant Opportunity Guidelines

**Grant opportunity Guidelines (the Guidelines) can be found here -**

**<https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/volunteer-management-activity-2021>**

## Which State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies were invited to apply?

- New South Wales – The Centre for Volunteering
- Australian Capital Territory – Volunteering and Contact ACT
- South Australia + Northern Territory – Volunteering SA and NT
- Queensland – Volunteering Queensland
- Tasmania – Volunteering Tasmania
- Victoria – Volunteering Victoria
- Western Australia – Volunteer Centre of Western Australia

No other organisations were invited to submit an application for this round.

## What was the assessment criteria the department used to assess applications?

- There were four (4) equally weighted assessment criteria. These were:
  1. Implementation – the peak bodies will need to demonstrate their ability to implement the new VMA in their respective jurisdictions and ensure state wide consistency.
  2. Partnership – the peak bodies need to demonstrate their ability to select relevant local organisations to deliver the new VMA, ensuring these organisations can effectively engage with priority groups and build the capacity of VIOs.
  3. Governance and Administrative Structures – the peak bodies will need to demonstrate their ability to identify and manage risks, including mitigation, and ensure business continuity planning.
  4. Technical Ability – the peak bodies will need to demonstrate their ability to utilise online volunteer management systems/tools and develop programs/strategies that break down barriers to volunteering for priority groups.

## What is the department doing to ensure peak bodies choose appropriate service partners?

- Under the Guidelines, the department stipulated that the peak bodies must partner with relevant local organisations to deliver services under the new VMA. Peak bodies will communicate the process and requirements for potential partner organisations.
- Further to this, the department has also stipulated that the peak bodies will need to seek the department's approval, in writing, of any funding partnerships that are established over the lifetime of the grant. This is to ensure that organisations adhere with the Guidelines, are financially viable, and comply with other Federal Government requirements.
- These organisations must meet any reporting requirements and must perform to the standard expected to meet the needs of VIOs and volunteers.
- With the additional investment of up to \$6.6 million to ensure a smooth transition to the new VMA, peak bodies undertook an Expression of Interest process to distribute this funding to previously funded VMA providers to leverage their experience and resources.