



Volunteer Management Activity

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What will the new Volunteer Management Activity model 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) will support a smooth transition to the redesigned VMA in 2021-22.
- Grant agreements with the peak bodies will be 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 will focus 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 will develop appropriate strategies and mechanisms to ensure equitable service coverage, using existing localised services and structures where possible. They will be required to partner with relevant local organisations to develop service delivery strategies.
- The new approach will enable 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 current Volunteer Resource Centres/Volunteer Support Services be funded by the department under the new Volunteer Management Activity model?

- Only the seven volunteering peak bodies will be invited to apply for funding under the new VMA.
- Peak bodies may decide to partner with some existing 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 will be responsible for determining funding amounts provided to any VRC/ VSS they may partner with.
- Additional funding of up to \$6.6 million in 2021-22 provided through the Budget will ensure peak bodies are able to work with existing providers to harness their expertise and resources in establishing the new program.

- VRC/ VSS organisations are encouraged to engage with their relevant peak body in relation to how they could support the new VMA program.

4. How will funding be made available to the peak bodies?

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

5. How will the Government support organisations through this transition?

- The Department of Social Services (the department) has been working with currently funded VMA organisations about the impending changes since July 2017.
- A recent 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 has announced additional funding of up to \$6.6 million in 2021-22 to support a smooth transition to the redesigned VMA.
- The department is working with the peak bodies to ensure adequate information and support is provided to currently 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 work collaboratively in ensuring a smooth transition and minimal service delivery gaps.

6. Will any currently funded VMA organisations be given funding extensions to allow for transition?

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

- VRC/ VSS organisations are encouraged to engage with their state/territory volunteering peak body in relation to how they could support the new VMA program.

7. Won't the timing create a gap between when the current VMA funding ceases and when the peak bodies commence their work?

- The new model will be a different way of supporting the volunteering sector with the one off investment of \$3.4 million (ex. GST) providing an online solution facilitating responsive service delivery.

8. Why has the Government chosen 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, and is now more aligned to a head/s of power.
- 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 recent 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

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

- From 30 June 2021, all current funding agreements under the VMA will cease. These funding agreements will not receive any form of extension, as the Government does not have the Constitutional authority to continue the program in its current state.
- Under the Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) the peak bodies need 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.

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

- The Government has announced, in the 2021-22 Budget that an additional up to \$6.6 million will 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 will be used to ensure a smooth transition to the new program and will help ensure the new program is properly developed and embedded.

11. Why has the Government now decided to add additional 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 existing VMA providers is an important part of this process.

12. How will this additional funding be distributed?

- Peak bodies will be responsible for the management and distribution of the additional funding to leverage the experience and resources of currently funded organisations in their jurisdictions.
- Funding will be made available to the peak bodies through the department's standard grant making process via the Community Grants Hub.

- Currently funded organisations are encouraged to work with their relevant peak body during this transition period.

13. How can the additional funding be utilised by VMA organisations?

- Peak bodies will be 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 existing VRCs 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.

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

- The Government will invest 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.

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

- The Government will work with the successful applicants to develop an appropriate performance measurement framework that will outline measureable targets that demonstrate the outcomes achieved under this program.

16. 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.
- This is equivalent to the total funding previously provided under the VMA (\$33.5 million (ex. GST)), plus an additional \$6.6 million (ex. GST) to support transition to the new model. This funding includes the equivalent of Social and Community Services wage supplementation, which will be rolled into base funding going forward.
- 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 will further invest 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>

What is the current timeline for the new VMA round?

- The round will open for peak bodies on Tuesday 27 April 2021 and close at 9:00pm (AEST) on Monday 17 May 2021.
- It is anticipated that successful grant applicants will be notified by Mid-June 2021.
- The activity start date for the new VMA will be 1 July 2021.
- For a more detailed timeline please see the Guidelines.

Which State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies have been 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 have been invited to submit an application for this round.

What are the assessment criteria the department is using to assess applications?

- There are four (4) equally weighted assessment criteria. These are:
 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 will 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 has 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 may choose to distribute this funding to currently funded VMA providers to leverage their experience and resources.