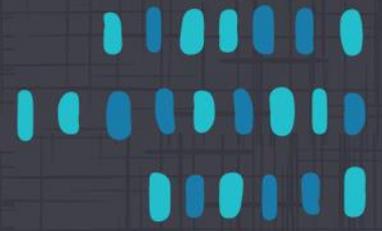




Government of Western Australia  
Department of Communities



# Volunteering Development Services Program Review 2021

## Stakeholder Consultation Report

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## Background

In March 2017, the former Department of Local Government and Communities (DLGC) commenced a review of the Volunteering Development Services (VDS) program. This review found that the future approach to purchasing VDS needed to be more responsive to the changing environment of the volunteering sector. It was proposed that the VDS program be amended with the aim of enhancing the capability of the volunteering sector to deliver State Government outcomes, as well as being able to respond to the priorities, needs and changing environment of volunteering in the State, particularly in regional areas. The [Future approach for Volunteering Development Services](#) report was tabled and endorsed by Cabinet, to be implemented in 2019.

On communicating the intended changes to funded services, feedback received from the volunteering sector suggested a more in-depth consultative review process was needed. This was supported by the then Minister for Volunteering.

In February 2020, the Department of Communities (Communities) commenced a consultation process to re-examine the service model for the VDS program. Communities proactively sought a collaborative approach with stakeholders including existing services, volunteers, volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs), peak bodies and representatives from Communities to identify a cohesive, strengths-based solution that will mobilise local communities to support organisations and individuals in volunteering in every region of Western Australia.

With changing needs in the sector and funding provision from multiple sources, the review sought outcomes focused on providing a place-based, flexible service that is responsive to changes in community needs.

The consultation process was designed in collaboration with the volunteering sector peak body, Volunteering WA. Stakeholders were invited to provide feedback throughout the various stages of the review to inform the design of a new and improved VDS model.

Phase one of the consultation process involved an online survey to obtain information from volunteers and VIOs regarding the usage of resources and supports, services delivered and gaps in service provision. Phase two of the process involved VDS-led consultation sessions and the submission of individual consultation reports (completed by VDS providers). This culminated in a final independent consultant-led summary session with VDS providers to consolidate feedback received and identify key themes for consideration for a future program model.

## Phase one: Survey of Volunteering Development Services users

From 27 July to 31 August 2020, Communities surveyed the direct beneficiaries of VDS (volunteers and VIOs), to identify awareness, usage and the benefits provided by Volunteer Resource Centres. The survey was distributed to all Volunteer Resource Centres<sup>1</sup> (including those not in receipt of Communities' funding) volunteers and VIOs. The survey attracted an impressive 784 responses (64 per cent from volunteers and 36 per cent from VIOs). To honour the collaborative engagement process, Communities committed to sharing a summary of key findings of the VDS Survey with participants who undertook the survey. A copy of the VDS Survey Results Summary can be provided on request.

### Responses – Volunteers

Approximately 70 per cent of respondents were aged 50 years and over with the majority of responses coming from volunteers in the metropolitan and South West areas of Western Australia. Key observations included:

Topic	Summary of responses
Volunteers awareness of Volunteer Resources Centres, including activities	Almost half of respondents were aware of Volunteer Resource Centres. Of those, more than half had used VRC services. Most felt that the service had greatly enhanced their introduction to volunteering, and many commented on the helpfulness and friendliness of VRC staff.
Volunteers' changing needs and preferences	Volunteers' support needs and service preferences change and adapt. Volunteers were asked what other resources they required to support their volunteering endeavours and how they would prefer to access these. Just over one-third of respondents believe that the supports and information currently provided by Volunteer Resource Centres are meeting their needs. However, the responses indicate a need for targeted support on specific issues, including volunteer rights, financial supports and advocacy.
Volunteering-related information access	Respondents identified a preference for accessing in-person information (70.2 per cent) and online information (68.9 per cent) either from the volunteer-involving organisation (40.77 per cent) or a Volunteer Resource Centre (29.5 per cent).

<sup>1</sup> Note that 'Volunteer Resource Centres' (VRCs) include VDS providers. Reference to VRCs was used as it applies to all registered VRCs that are funded by all sources and recommended by Volunteering WA.

## Responses – Volunteer Involving Organisations

The majority of responses were provided by VIOs located in the metropolitan and Southern regions of Western Australia. Key observations included:

Topic	Summary of results
Awareness and use of Volunteer Resource Centres	More than three-quarters of VIOs were aware of Volunteer Resource Centres. Of those who accessed services provided by Volunteer Resource Centres, 75 per cent of VIOs accessed services to assist with recruiting and managing volunteers.
Promoting opportunities and recruiting volunteers	Most VIOs manage their own promotion and recruitment. With respect to promotion and recruitment strategies, word of mouth and online (including social media) advertising is predominately used. Accessing services and facilities to promote opportunities via a Volunteer Resource Centre was also common, with almost half of respondents indicating this. The support provided from Volunteer Resource Centres enhanced organisational ability for most VIOs to engage and recruit volunteers.
Support needs and service preferences of VIOs	VIOs' support needs and service preferences continually change. VIOs were asked what other supports they require and how they would prefer to access these. Respondents indicated that they require additional volunteer related support (other than the support currently provided by Volunteer Resource Centres) on best practice resources, opportunities to connect with experts and assistance with networking.
Volunteering-related information access, training and recruitment	There is a strong preference for both online (85 per cent) and in-person information provision (74.3 per cent). Preferences for accessing volunteer training and recruitment were similar to accessing information and support. There is a clear preference for accessing training and support in person, either on-site or at a Volunteer Resource Centre. There was also support for training delivered by video/tele conference.

### Summary of phase one observations

Awareness and use of Volunteer Resource Centres by volunteers and VIOs is significant and the assistance and information provided by Volunteer Resource Centres is beneficial, particularly with respect to advocacy and recruitment. However, there is a clear desire from volunteers for additional assistance not currently provided, including for volunteers' rights, financial supports and advocacy.

***Finding 1: Service specifications to include broad outcomes to achieve flexibility in services to respond to changing community needs.***

VIOs also expressed a need for additional support with respect to networking, connecting with experts and the provision of best practice resources. A preference for face-to-face training also reinforces the need for this connection with similar networks.

Volunteers and VIOs seek information and assistance online and in-person. The demand for face-to-face support indicates the importance of localised, shopfront services.

*Finding 2: Assistance for volunteers' rights, financial supports and advocacy.*

*Finding 3: Priority focus on a range of face-to-face services.*

*Finding 4: Ensure services are aware of, and encourage participants to engage with, accessible online supports.*

## Phase two: VDS-led consultation sessions

Phase two of the VDS review commenced with the development of a consultation package. This was purposefully designed to suit the varied but individual stakeholder needs and assist organisations to run sessions to facilitate their feedback to Communities<sup>2</sup>. The consultation package included a Consultation Toolkit and Guide, PowerPoint, consultation report templates and online submission forms. This format was designed to encourage candid and specific feedback tailored to the unique needs of each service.

Upon completion, VDS providers were asked to complete a brief Consultation Summary Report, to provide Communities with a greater understanding of the key drivers influencing VDS providers and to gain a sense of how the current model can be improved.

## Consultation Summary Report responses

Key feedback is summarised below:

Issue	Metropolitan VDS providers	Regional VDS providers
Funding model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater visibility over how services are currently funded (geographically and numerically), including cost-benefit analysis.</li> <li>• Preference for funding allocation based on population size, with funding linked to the extent to which the population receives income support.</li> <li>• Additional funding would allow for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ more extensive promotion to reach different volunteer</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding model needs to be equitable, sustainable and reliable, dependent on demography, size of the region and population, allow for forward planning and improved budget decisions.</li> <li>• Additional funding would allow for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ further promotion to increase volunteering</li> <li>○ additional training and resources</li> <li>○ staff to attend community</li> <li>○ engagement opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Where in-depth investigation and consultation on volunteering needs and services had already been completed in a particular region, this information was provided by the relevant VDS provider.

Issue	Metropolitan VDS providers	Regional VDS providers
	<p>cohorts (e.g. CaLD, youth, low literacy).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ demands of a growing population and to provide a high standard of service.</li> <li>○ "Shop front" to share good news stories and encourage further volunteering.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would support a 'hub' or partnership model for providing VDS to incorporate several neighbouring Local Government Authorities (to achieve economies of scale).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ awareness raising.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hub and Spoke model would allow for:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ extension of current successful model to smaller town centres.</li> <li>○ development of a functional online model of value for smaller satellite services to utilise.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion and marketing is an essential component for VDS and successful service delivery.</li> <li>• Support VIOs by providing:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ resources</li> <li>○ recognition events</li> <li>○ matching services</li> <li>○ activities to raise volunteering profile.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase promotion and recruitment of volunteers to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ avoid a small number of volunteers doing the bulk of the work</li> <li>○ provide greater diversity and clarity in volunteering roles/tasks.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships with Local Government Authorities and Community Resource Centres can assist services to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ utilise a collaborative approach in order to increase service accessibility and access more funds (e.g. partner with other entities).</li> <li>○ maximise the quality of services provided to volunteers and maintain a high level of volunteering in the community.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Partnerships may result in conflicting agendas that reduce capacity of VDS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnerships with Local Government Authorities, Community Resource Centres and other agencies are essential to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ maximise the quality of services provided to volunteers and to maintain a high level of volunteering in the community</li> <li>○ build capacity in the community via Local Government Authorities' role of Club Development Officers or a Volunteer Engagement Officer position</li> <li>○ providing opportunity to extend current services within current funding</li> <li>○ improved distribution of volunteering recognition events</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Issue	Metropolitan VDS providers	Regional VDS providers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ adding value to function and allowing for a service across additional days.</li> <li>• Good partnerships should:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ help with distance</li> <li>○ avoid duplication</li> <li>○ identify gaps</li> <li>○ support a hub and spoke model</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Types of service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important to provide services via several different mechanisms (face-to-face, online, print and phone).</li> <li>• Face-to-face approach is essential:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ to increase prevalence of older volunteers</li> <li>○ community connectivity minority groups and to remove barriers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face-to-face approach epitomises the purpose of local community VDS and is essential for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ older volunteers</li> <li>○ increasing community and regional connectivity</li> <li>○ minority groups</li> <li>○ removing barriers.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Barriers for online service delivery include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ unreliable Wi-Fi</li> <li>○ age of user</li> <li>○ socio-economic groups</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Inaccessible physical locations can create barriers for services and impact on service ability to promote volunteering.</li> </ul>
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased shared online resources and training (COVID-safe emphasis) would be useful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for VIOs to provide for their volunteers by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ assessment and screening service that matches and supports volunteers with compliancy requirements</li> <li>○ a concentration on Emergency Services volunteers in regional areas</li> <li>○ upskilling.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase uptake of the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement to improve governance, policies and continuous improvement within volunteer groups.</li> <li>• Promote and encourage the adoption of standardised templates and online models to</li> </ul>

Issue	Metropolitan VDS providers	Regional VDS providers
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ reduce duplication;</li> <li>○ provide support for VIO functions and legal requirements.</li> </ul>

Key findings drawn from the Consultation Summary Report responses not previously identified during phase one include:

*Finding 5: Target existing service gaps where no current VDS exists to reduce barriers for VIOs and volunteers.*

*Finding 6: Increase State-wide promotion and marketing in a way that provides further support for the VDS program.*

*Finding 7: For the VDS program to support the exploration and utilisation of collaborative work practices where there is a benefit to volunteers and VIOs.*

## Summary session with VDS providers

On 22 February 2021, Communities held a summary session with VDS providers and Volunteering WA to provide an opportunity to discuss and consolidate the feedback submitted to date. The session was facilitated by Mr Joel Levin from Aha! Consulting. Communities provided a summary of the feedback and actions to all attendees following the session.

### Part 1: Discussion on VDS community and program outcomes

The VDS community and program outcomes outline the key purpose and value of volunteering services to the Western Australian community. The existing outcomes remain unchanged since the inception of the VDS program in 2001, thus the aim of the first part of the workshop was to discuss the relevance and potential modification of these outcomes to meet current and future community needs.

#### Discussion - Community outcome

##### Current community outcome

Volunteering Development Services (VDS) are funded to develop vital volunteering in local communities. The Department of Communities (Communities) considers that volunteering should be promoted, supported and valued in a partnership approach to building strong, connected, vital and sustainable communities in Western Australia.

Key points made by session participants included:

- Need to state who the audience / service recipients are and who is impacted by the services.
- Require a five-year contract model to provide certainty and security in service provision.

- The word ‘vital’ is misleading and may limit services (Communities’ clarified that terminology originates in historical VDS funding agreements). Wording needs to be inclusive.

*Finding 8: Ensure that the program model clearly articulates the parameters and intended beneficiaries of service delivery.*

## Discussion - Program outcomes

Current program outcomes:

### Current program outcomes

Volunteering Development Services aim to:

- Encourage and assist Western Australians from a range of backgrounds and age groups to engage in volunteering and be enriched by the experience.
- Assist communities through groups and organisations across the State to effectively involve volunteers for their mutual benefit.

Key points made by session participants included:

- Need to ensure that the definition is broad enough to encompass services to minority groups (e.g. indigenous, people with disability).
- Statement is broader than the current funded purpose of the VDS.
- Could incorporate information on the drivers of the program.
- Current funding supports traditional volunteering model despite VDS providing services to many different backgrounds.
- Need to be careful that the outcomes don’t over-commit (need to have achievable outcomes). Service provision often involves work undertaken by, and collaboration with, other agencies.
- In remote areas, partnerships with other organisations are critical to provide local services across a large geographic area.
- The term ‘all’ could be used given that VDS often provide family volunteering services.
- VDS are focused on service provision at a local or regional level (in contrast with Communities’ focus which is State-wide).

## Part 2: Design of a new VDS model

This section of the workshop sought to provide Communities with clarity on which components of a VDS model were critical to ensuring that providers could adequately meet the evolving needs of the community.

## Discussion - Service design considerations

Key feedback is provided below:

### Flexibility

- The model must safeguard flexibility in service provision (each VDS centre has different community needs and barriers).
- Need scope to consider and adapt to changes in how people access and contribute their volunteer time (e.g. increased demand for informal volunteering, need to be able to offer responsive volunteers)
- Ability to support community organisations and groups that volunteer, not just individuals.
- Volunteer portability (to achieve effective spontaneous volunteering, for example).
- Responsiveness (to adapt to changing trends).
- Broad outcomes to allow flexibility in service provision to ensure that the services can appropriately meet the needs of the local community.
- Ability to change service contracts / outcomes to respond to changing community needs.
- Clear and broad outcomes to achieve flexibility in services (e.g. to ensure that services are culturally sensitive and to allow for the provision of informal volunteering services).

*Refer to Finding 1.*

### Partnerships / collaboration

- Forming partnerships to source / leverage additional funding is crucial to maintaining the service as Communities' (VDS) funding does not provide service sustainability (e.g. staff funding for two days per week does not meet community needs in its entirety).
- Partnerships with Volunteering WA, local government or other organisations.
- Given that there is no legislative requirement for local government to provide funding for volunteering, the capacity to leverage off local government varies.
- Encourages collaboration (and does not hinder other partnerships).

*Refer to Finding 7.*

### Face-to-face contact

- The ability to have multiple face-to-face sites as a key point of direct contact for people interested in volunteering.
- While services are currently meeting the needs of the community (and face-to-face contact is a key part of meeting that need), there is also recognition that change needs to occur to meet current / future demands (e.g. online competencies are often important to a younger demographic).
- The model needs to prioritise a range of face-to-face services (which encourages repeat and long-term volunteering).

*Refer to Finding 3.*

### Funding

- Scaled funding (linked to demographics such as population and geographic area).
- Impact of other relevant funding sources.

*Finding 9: Equitable funding should be calculated based on the demography, size of the region and population.*

### Stability and sustainability

- Streamlined reporting.
- Longer contract term to provide security (which also creates flexibility in service provision).
- Avoid duplication of outcomes that are linked to other sources of funding

*Finding 10: Contract terms need to ensure security and confidence in service provision.*

### Reach and accessibility

- Hub and spoke model – to address servicing of large geographical areas.
- Allow for culturally sensitive and cultural secure models of informal volunteering.

*Finding 11: Ensure a focus on inclusive practices throughout funded programs.*

## **Summary of phase two feedback**

Feedback received by Communities indicates that VDS providers consider flexibility in service provision to be a key requirement in developing a new model for the VDS program. The characteristics of each community are different, and therefore, services must adapt to meet the needs of individual communities using a localised, place-based approach.

While the need for online service provision is widely acknowledged by providers, the importance of maintaining face-to-face services was emphasised. Face-to-face service provision meets the needs of particular cohorts, including older persons and those from minority groups (i.e. individuals from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and people with disability).

With respect to funding, there was:

- consensus among providers that this should be calculated based on the population level or geographical size of the region/community serviced.
- a focus on avoiding duplication in funded-volunteering services, with specific references to changes in the Commonwealth Department of Social Services' Volunteer Management Activity Program, with funding now distributed and managed via volunteering State peaks.

*Finding 12: Ensure program service specifications and procurement strategies clearly define service delivery scope, to reduce potential duplication of volunteering services.*

## Summary of Findings

Based on the feedback provided by key stakeholders, including existing VDS providers and Volunteering WA, Communities have been progressing the recommended findings as outlined in this report. Many of these findings have since been incorporated into the collaboratively designed generic draft service specifications, available at **Appendix 1**.

The draft service specifications, which include collated stakeholder feedback and Communities' response, will guide future service provision alongside individual service negotiations.

**Finding 1: Service specifications to include broad outcomes to achieve flexibility in services to respond to changing community needs.**

This includes the scope to consider and adapt to changes in how people access and contribute their volunteer time (e.g. increased demand for informal volunteering, need to be able to offer responsive volunteers) with an intention to:

- support community organisations and groups that volunteer, not just individuals;
- increase volunteer portability (for example, to achieve effective spontaneous volunteering); and
- be responsive to local community needs.

*Outcome: The collaboratively designed draft service specifications include the provision of broad outcomes that can be implemented in a way that is responsive to the individual needs of the local community.*

**Finding 2: Assistance for volunteers' rights, financial supports and advocacy.**

VIOs expressed a need for additional support with respect to networking, connecting with experts and the provision of best practice resources. In contrast, volunteers expressed preferences for additional assistance with volunteer rights, financial supports and advocacy.

*Outcome: Since this survey, the formation of the Volunteering Australia's [Volunteering Hub](#) may provide additional support to VIOs and volunteers in response to this finding.*

*Requirements for this type of support are dependent upon the individual organisations seeking assistance and increased need for flexibility in VDS service provision as stated in Finding 1.*

**Finding 3: Priority focus on a range of face-to-face services.**

Face-to-face services:

- provides a key point of direct contact for people interested in volunteering;
- encourages repeat and long-term volunteering via personal relationships and shared understanding of volunteer need;
- provides opportunity for improved connection to community including minority groups; and
- encourages older Western Australians who may not have consistent access to online services.

Unlike the online focussed outcomes identified in the 2018-19 VDS Program Review, there has been a clear need communicated from all existing services, VIOs and volunteers that face-to-face services are integral to supporting volunteering in WA.

*Outcome: The collaboratively designed draft service specifications include the importance of face-to-face service provision.*

**Finding 4: Ensure services are aware of, and encourage participants to engage with, accessible online supports (also refer Finding 2).**

Online supports can include, but are not limited to:

- video conferencing;
- standardised templates for online forms, recruitment, screening and legal obligations; and
- training and feedback.

*Outcome: The collaboratively designed draft service specifications highlight the importance of adapting to and utilising online services which can assist with volunteer and VIO training, development and support activities.*

**Finding 5: Target existing service gaps where no current VDS exists to reduce barriers for VIOs and volunteers.**

Partnerships and collaboration with Local Government Authorities and Community Resource Centres can assist existing providers, though where a Volunteering Development Service does not exist, VIOs and volunteers can encounter barriers in the promotion and resourcing of volunteering in communities where there is an identified need to increase volunteers.

**Finding 6: Increase State-wide promotion and marketing in a way that provides further support for the VDS program.**

Consultation feedback encouraged an extension of current promotion beyond no-cost word-of-mouth services and social media to draw increased focus to the positive contribution made to volunteering across WA. This can serve to:

- increase recruitment for volunteers undertaking the work;
- raise awareness;
- provide greater diversity and clarity in volunteering roles/tasks;
- target identified minority groups; and
- opportunity to increase partnerships.

**Finding 7: For the VDS program to support the exploration and utilisation of collaborative work practices where there is a benefit to volunteers and VIOs.**

Effective collaboration can:

- assist with limitations based on distance;
- help to avoid duplication of services;
- better identify gaps in service provision; and
- provide opportunity to support a hub and spoke model.

*Outcome: The collaboratively designed draft service specifications include reference to the importance of collaboration where a benefit exists to positively impact service provision to volunteers and VIOs.*

**Finding 8: Ensure that the program model clearly articulates the parameters and intended beneficiaries of service delivery.**

There was an identified need to clarify the intended service target group and who may directly benefit from the service/s provided. This can also assist in reducing possible conflict and/or duplication of services for local communities.

*Outcome: The collaboratively designed draft service specifications have been changed to better reflect the intended program outcomes and incorporate identification of specific service recipients and target groups.*

**Finding 9: Equitable funding should be calculated based on the demography, size of the region and population base.**

Feedback provided suggested that funding allocations relevant to a region's population size, spread and demography would assist with optimal service provision. Appropriate allocation and awareness of funding is suggested to:

- allow for forward planning and improved budget decisions; and
- improve greater visibility over how services are currently funded.

**Finding 10: Contract terms need to ensure security and confidence in service provision.**

Previous 2012 contracts for the VDS program involved continual short-term extensions of the original contract term. Feedback received details that an extended contract of five years would allow for confidence in the sector and an increase of long-term projects that positively impact volunteers in communities.

*Outcome: A five-year contract term will apply to all Volunteering Development Services procured from 1 July 2022, consistent with the [‘Delivering Community Services in Partnership Policy 2018’](#).*

**Finding 11: Ensure a focus of inclusive practices throughout funded programs.**

The importance of culturally appropriate models tailored to meet the varied needs of individuals from diverse backgrounds was highlighted. This was viewed as crucial to encouraging both informal and formal volunteering and targeting services to meet short and long-term community needs.

*Outcome: The collaboratively designed draft service specifications incorporate service level outcomes aimed at ensuring people from diverse backgrounds can access volunteer opportunities, including adequate support to undertake a volunteering role successfully.*

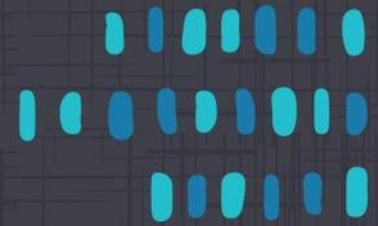
**Finding 12: Ensure program service specifications and procurement strategies clearly define service delivery scope, to reduce potential duplication of volunteering services.**

There is a focus on avoiding duplication in funded-volunteering services, with specific references to changes in the Commonwealth Department of Social Services' Volunteer Management Activity Program.

Providers consider flexibility in service provision to be a key requirement. The characteristics of different communities are unique, and therefore, services must adapt to meet the needs of individual communities using a localised, place-based approach. This clarity can also assist to reduce duplication for VDS in receipt of multiple sources of funding, to ensure no disadvantage.

*Outcome: The collaboratively designed draft service specifications include clearly defined service delivery scope and identification of potential duplication for volunteering services.*

Communities would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank everyone involved for contributing their time, expertise and experience to engage in this collaborative review process.



## Appendix 1

# Volunteering Development Services - Generic Service Specifications

**Please note** – This document is a draft and does not hold any legally binding contractual status. These generic service specifications will inform future requirements for the new Volunteering Development Services program model, in conjunction with appropriate procurement and authorisation processes. Individual service contract negotiations may result in changes to specific service strategies and activities, which will be reflected in individual service agreements with the Department of Communities.

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# What are the services to be purchased?

## 1.1 Background

Services purchased through the Volunteering Development Services (VDS) program contribute to the *Department of Communities Strategic Plan 2019-2023* by helping to create robust, collaborative and inclusive communities.

Services purchased should contribute to the five outcome areas that underpin the nature of the Department of Communities (Communities) work:

- Safe Children: to enable a good start in life
- Empowered people: with valued roles and fulfilling lives
- Inclusive and accessible communities: that enable social, economic and cultural prosperity
- A place to call home: that provides a secure foundation for life
- Strong families and kin: to provide safe and nurturing environments

VDS are an integral part of the WA Volunteering Strategy (launched in 2017) which guides whole-of-community action across the following four focus areas:

1. Responding to emerging trends and issues within the community and the volunteering sector.
2. Encourage and facilitate participation in community life through volunteering.
3. Support volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs).
4. Recognise and value volunteers and volunteering.

## 1.2 Service Requirements

### 1.2.1 Community Outcome

**Note:** The reference to 'vital' in the previous community outcome (*'..are funded to develop vital volunteering in local communities..'*) has been removed to avoid misinterpretation with respect to the type/perceived value of volunteering services provided, consistent with stakeholder feedback.

VDS are funded to develop and support volunteering in local communities.

Communities considers that volunteering should be promoted, supported and valued in a partnership approach to building strong, connected and sustainable communities in Western Australia.

### 1.2.2 Statement of Requirements (Program Outcomes)

The previous program aims are listed below:

- *Encourage and assist Western Australians from a range of backgrounds and age groups to be engaged in volunteering and be enriched by their experience.*
- *Assist communities through groups and organisations across the State to effectively involve volunteers for their mutual benefit.*

**Note:** These program aims have been edited to reflect the importance of adapting to meet changes in demand for services (including the method and type of service).

The VDS Program aims to:

- Encourage and support individuals from all backgrounds and age groups to engage successfully in volunteering opportunities and to provide services that are responsive to changes in community needs.
- Assist organisations to involve and support volunteers in order to maximise the benefits provided to the organisation, the volunteer and the broader community.

Communities funds VDS to assist in meeting these aims and to work towards strengthening and connecting communities through the contribution of volunteers by taking a partnership approach. VDS providers work with community organisations to build the local community's capacity for volunteering. These aims are consistent with the strategic direction of Communities.

VDS providers take on a lead role in developing volunteering in their local community. Services focus on strategically engaging with volunteers and volunteer-involving groups/organisations and working towards building and sustaining a future for volunteering within local communities in Western Australia.

Services are provided on a universal basis in response to the diverse and varied needs of people throughout Western Australia. VDS providers are encouraged to offer service strategies and/or activities that target specific community groups to ensure that the services are inclusive and meet community expectations.

Nurturing volunteer involvement with difficult to reach cohorts may also assist in responding to environmental or national emergencies where spontaneous volunteering can play a critical role in assisting the community.

### **Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) program outcomes**

Under the Department of Social Services revised VMA program specifications, peak volunteer body Volunteering WA is responsible for the deliverables of the VMA program, including management and distribution of the VMA funding, to leverage the experience and resources of currently funded organisations in the State. The new VMA 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 (i.e. People with Disability, First Nations people and Newly Arrived Migrants).<sup>3</sup> New VMA agreements with peak bodies commenced 1 July 2021.

Section 5.4 in the draft Families and Communities Program Volunteer Management Activity Grant Opportunity Guidelines<sup>4</sup> states that a grant is unable to be provided if funding is received “from another government source for the same purpose.” Therefore, the activities/services undertaken by VMA funding recipients to meet the VDS service level outcomes should specifically exclude activities/services that are funded as part of the VMA program. This will ensure that services are not duplicated and that VDS recipients do not jeopardise their eligibility for VMA funding.

However, not all VDS providers are part of the VMA program and as such, flexibility in the nature and application of the service level outcomes is important to ensuring the individual needs of the community are met. A complete exclusion of outcomes that might include VMA activities would mean that VIOs in some communities are not adequately serviced by their local VDS provider.

### 1.2.3 \*Service Level Outcomes

**Note:** The service level outcomes have been adjusted to better reflect the program outcomes. The original service level outcomes are:

- *Individuals develop their knowledge, confidence and skills to be a volunteer in their community.*
- *Community groups and organisations develop knowledge and skills to effectively support and manage volunteers.*
- *Awareness of the value of volunteering is increased in the local community.*

**Note:** The extent to which service level outcomes can be met and/or prioritised will be assessed with applicants at the procurement stage.

\*With respect to VDS providers that are in receipt of funding through the Commonwealth’s Department of Social Services Volunteer Management Activity (VMA) program, activities/strategies undertaken to address Communities’ VDS service level outcomes should exclude activities that form part of the VMA program requirements. These providers should refer to the relevant VMA guidelines in order to ensure compliance.

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from the Australian Government’s Department of Social Services website on 31 March 2021, available at <https://www.dss.gov.au/communities-and-vulnerable-people/programmes-services/volunteer-management>

<sup>4</sup> Grant opportunity Guidelines can be accessed at <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/volunteer-management-activity-2021>

The VDS service level outcomes are included below:

- Encourage and support individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds to volunteer and implement strategies to target services to meet short (unplanned) and long term community needs.

**Note:** This outcome aims to ensure that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability and other minority groups have the opportunity to volunteer and have access to adequate support to undertake a volunteering role successfully. Assisting people from diverse backgrounds to engage in opportunities to contribute to community life empowers the community as a whole.

This outcome also recognises the importance of targeting individual cohorts to provide essential support during unplanned events and maximise the value provided to the local community longer term. One example of this would be a VDS provider developing strategies to encourage/target/support vacationers who have the capacity to provide material assistance to the local community through volunteering on a short-term basis.

- Develop, support and maintain the skills of volunteers and VIOs.

**Note:** This outcome is designed to ensure that individuals have the required knowledge, confidence and skill to volunteer and that VIOs have the confidence and support to ensure that their volunteers can contribute positively to the organisation and the community. Methods of service are not specified under this outcome as the nature of services will depend on the needs of the local community, which are in turn influenced by factors such as demographics and population level.

While face-to-face engagement is an important component of service delivery, service providers will also need to adapt to and utilise online services to some extent and to incorporate various technology options for training, development and support. The development of online services is increasingly important in adapting to changes in the volunteering sector (e.g. in attracting younger volunteers, enabling volunteer portability and facilitating spontaneous volunteering).

- Actively promote the value of volunteering to the local community.

**Note:** It is important that community members (individuals and businesses) are aware of the benefits of volunteering to their local community as this is likely to lead to increased volunteering participation rates and may provide opportunities for financial support (through partnerships etc).

#### 1.2.4 Service Specific Target Group

The direct beneficiaries (service recipients) of VDS services are:

- Individuals in the local community.
- Volunteer-involving organisations operating in the local community (external to the VDS provider – the exception to this is a Local Government Authority that is a VIO and a provider of VDS).

## 1.3 Service Strategies and Activities

### 1.3.1 Encourage and support individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds to volunteer and implement strategies to target services to meet short (unplanned) and long-term community needs.

**Note:** 'Minority groups' refers to all individuals from diverse backgrounds, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, newly arrived migrants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Minority groups also include difficult to reach cohorts (for example, young people and transients) who have the capacity to provide significant benefit to the community (i.e. through volunteering) during spontaneous events or in response to evolving community needs.

Strategies/activities to achieve this could include:

- Engaging and discussing strategies to improve participation diversity with VIOs.
- Obtaining feedback from minority groups.
- Identifying and implementing strategies to address the specific needs of minority groups.
- Engaging with groups focused on improving employment options for minority groups.
- Providing face-to-face services to individuals from minority groups (if required).
- Utilising and adapting technology to improve engagement with minority groups. For example, utilising technology to ensure that difficult to reach cohorts are effectively targeted and supported in undertaking volunteering roles.

### 1.3.2 Develop, support and maintain the skills of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations.

**Note:** Communities' funds Volunteering WA, as the peak body for volunteering, to provide support to VIOs across Western Australia. Accordingly, service providers may need to adjust/prioritise activities to ensure that duplication of support is minimised and to focus on the provision of services to meet local needs. For example, significant support may be required to train and support groups of individual volunteers for short term roles (during emergency events).

Strategies/activities to achieve this could include:

- One-on-one interactions with individuals to provide support and develop volunteer readiness.
- Provision of relevant and informative templates/ guides to assist volunteers and VIOs and to address identified knowledge gaps. For example, information on insurance,

advocacy, taxation and assistance with implementing the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (with respect to VIOs).

- Interactions with VIOs to support them to recruit and maintain volunteers.
- Training and workshops provided to potential volunteers to develop volunteer readiness and provide ongoing education (to support longevity in undertaking a volunteering role(s)).
- Training and workshops provided to VIOs and community groups to assist and support the ongoing management of volunteers.
- Utilise and adapt to new technology to improve the accessibility of support provided to volunteers and VIOs.

### **1.3.3 Actively promote the value of volunteering to the local community.**

Strategies/activities to achieve this could include:

- Volunteer recognition events
- Awareness raising activities
- Networking with community groups
- Providing information online, via social media and printed information about available volunteering services.

## **1.4 Outcome Measurements**

**Note:** The requirement for 'pre and post activity surveys' has been removed from this section, based on strong feedback that they are administratively burdensome, lacking in response rate from users and do not provide material benefit leading to quality improvement.

Organisations use a range of tools to report the extent to which service outcomes have been met. These include but are not limited to:

1. Service Delivery Data and Outcome Progress Reports (provided every six months)
2. Annual Customer Perception Surveys
3. Evaluation and Research
  - Collecting data and assisting Communities in relation to the research and evaluation of the service.
  - Qualitative and storytelling methods.

Organisations will use the template(s) developed by Communities in consultation with the service provider to meet reporting requirements.

### **1.4.1 Output measures (performance indicators)**

Table 1 below provides an indication of the output measures that will be developed as part of the reporting framework for the program area.

**Table 1: Output measures (performance indicators)**

Service Level Outcome	Output measure
<p>Encourage and support individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds to volunteer and implement strategies to target services to meet short (unplanned) and long-term community needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details on age, gender and cultural background of individuals accessing services.</li> <li>• Number and percentage (relative to the total number of individuals) of individuals from minority groups that access/are provided with volunteering services.</li> <li>• Number of face-to-face consultations provided to minority groups.</li> <li>• Description of any specific activities/meetings held with external stakeholders to improve diversity in volunteering participation.</li> </ul>
<p>Develop, support and maintain the skills of volunteers and VIOs.</p>	<p><b>Volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of individuals that access one-on-one consultations.</li> <li>• Number and type of one-on-one consultations (face-to-face, online etc). Uptake of volunteering positions post one-on-one consultations (how many of the individuals that accessed one-on-one consultations commence a volunteering role?)</li> <li>• Number of training sessions/workshops run for individuals</li> <li>• Number of individuals attending training/workshops.</li> <li>• Number of individuals (volunteers) that report increased knowledge, confidence and skills to be a volunteer in the community (Annual Customer Perception Survey)</li> <li>• The extent to which individuals (volunteers) developed their knowledge, confidence and skills to be a volunteer in their community (Six monthly Outcome Progress Report). This performance indicator may also be measured through the Annual Customer Perception Survey i.e. through seeking feedback on key activities undertaken to achieve this service level outcome.</li> </ul> <p><b>Volunteer-involving organisations (VIOs)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of VIOs that receive one-on-one consultations.</li> <li>• Number and type of one-on-one consultations (face-to-face, online etc)</li> <li>• Number and type of training sessions/workshops run for VIOs.</li> <li>• Number of VIOs attending training sessions/workshops.</li> <li>• Number of VIOs that report increased knowledge and skills to effectively support and manage volunteers (Annual Customer Perception Survey).</li> <li>• The extent to which VIOs develop their knowledge and skills to effectively support and manage volunteers (Six monthly Outcome Progress Report).). This performance indicator may also be measured through the Annual Customer Perception Survey i.e. through seeking feedback on key activities undertaken to achieve this service level outcome.</li> </ul>

<p>Actively promote the value of volunteering to the local community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number and type of community education and awareness activities run that promoted volunteering (including recognition events).</li><li>• Number of people who attend community education and awareness activities that promoted volunteering (including recognition events).</li><li>• Number of individuals and community groups/organisations that report that their awareness of volunteering was increased (Annual Customer Perception Survey).</li><li>• The extent (measured on a qualitative basis) to which awareness of the value of volunteering was increased in the local community (Six monthly Outcome Progress Report). This performance indicator may also be measured through the Annual Customer Perception Survey i.e. through seeking feedback on key activities undertaken to achieve this service level outcome.</li></ul>
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**Table 2: Examples of success (relevant to key outputs)**

Service level outcome	Key outputs	Examples of success
<p>Encourage and support individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds to volunteer and implement strategies to target services to meet short (unplanned) and long-term community needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of face-to-face support</li> <li>• Engaging with representatives of minority groups</li> <li>• Obtaining feedback</li> <li>• Undertaking activities that target specific cohorts in the community, to meet spikes in demand.</li> <li>• VDS have the capacity and skill to support spontaneous volunteering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of individuals from minority groups participating in volunteering (as individual volunteers or with VIOs).</li> <li>• Participants from minority groups report that they feel supported and confident in undertaking/maintaining a volunteering role.</li> <li>• Increased number of individual volunteers assisting in emergency events</li> <li>• Spontaneous volunteering is promoted and supported in the community.</li> </ul>
<p>Develop, support and maintain the skills of volunteers and VIOs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-on-one consultations</li> <li>• Training/workshops</li> <li>• Responsiveness to changes in sector trends (community needs)</li> <li>• Pre and post surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers feel confident in undertaking volunteering roles</li> <li>• VIOs feel adequately supported and confident in engaging individuals for volunteering roles.</li> <li>• Volunteers and VIOs are satisfied with the services provided.</li> <li>• Increased participation rate (individual volunteers).</li> <li>• Barriers to participation are addressed/changing community needs are accommodated (e.g. implementing new technologies to allow for volunteer portability and spontaneous volunteering).</li> </ul>
<p>Actively promote the value of volunteering to the local community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community education and awareness</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased participation rate (uptake of volunteering opportunities).</li> <li>• Good community awareness of the value of volunteering to the local community.</li> </ul>

## Combined stakeholder feedback and Department of Communities response

The information captured in the below table was obtained through a two-part consultative process, to ensure the experience and knowledge of existing Volunteering Development Services stakeholders was taken into consideration, to help inform future purchased activities (in conjunction with appropriate procurement and authorisation processes). Feedback was captured both in-person via a Communities-led VDS Summary Session held on 22 February 2021 and received in written format via email.

Stakeholder comment	Communities response
<b>1.1 Background</b>	
Specification is required re 'responding to trends and issues'.	Noted – this section has been amended to specify that this is 'within the community and the volunteering sector'. Note that further information re responding to trends is included under the service level outcomes (e.g. addressing trends in the youth sector to develop targeted volunteering opportunities, adapting VDS to attract additional volunteers during emergency events). Note that the four focus areas are further described in the WA Volunteering Strategy.
<b>1.2 Overarching outcome objective – 'Individuals / community groups have their needs met'</b>	
Is this outcome measurable?	This outcome is a broad driver of the program. Meeting and measuring all needs is not a service level outcome and thus, cannot/does not need be measured. Given that a number of responders had similar issues with this statement, this section has been deleted.
May exceed the scope and capacity of a VDS	Acknowledged – this section has been removed.

<b>1.2.1 Program Outcomes</b>	
Encourage and support individuals from a range of backgrounds – change ‘range’ to ‘all’ as range infers picking and choosing.	Agreed. However, in order to respond appropriately to changing community needs (e.g. targeting young people to address supply deficiencies), particular cohorts of people will need to be targeted/supported from time to time. Communities does not consider that the change to ‘all’ will preclude the targeting of specific cohorts, hence the requested change (to ‘all’) has been made. Feedback from prior consultation with VDS providers (VDS provider workshop) also indicated support for the term ‘all’ given that VDS often provide family volunteering services.
Encouraging and supporting diverse participation: Concern regarding the significant resources required to undertake engagement activities with minorities. Each procurement should be flexible and tailored to individual VDS needs.	Communities acknowledges the funding limitations though notes that this is a suggested strategy and as such may not be undertaken as frequently and / or intensively depending on the cost of undertaking other strategies.
Supportive of the existing text noting the role of local VDS in targeting cohorts to assist with emergencies.	Noted.
<b>1.2.3 Service level outcomes</b>	
Engage and develop partnerships: collaboration creates potential for conflicts of interest (e.g. if particular sectors of the community are serviced to a greater extent than others due to the influence of the organisation with which the VDS has a funding/partnership arrangement).	Communities notes this concern, however, partnerships are key drivers for success for VDS providers (e.g. VCRs) and potential conflicts of interest need to be managed by all parties (including Communities as the funding provider and through its assessment of reporting data). Notwithstanding this response, this requirement has been deleted (see reasoning outlined in ‘key messages’).
‘Developing partnerships’ service level outcome - concern re the burden of having to report on partnerships and the pressure it might create to force these relationships.	This outcome was added on account of strong stakeholder feedback indicating the critical importance of partnerships/collaboration in providing service sustainability and improving the capacity to provide these services. This outcome recognises this and while it encourages partnerships, it doesn’t mandate that partnerships be formed. A ‘partnership’ could simply mean collaboration with a local business to share knowledge. Outcome

	wording could be changed to 'Collaborate and develop partnerships with other organisations to improve service sustainability' to broaden its interpretation. Notwithstanding this response, this requirement has been deleted, noting that providers already have an inherent drive to engage/collaborate/partner with other organisations
Encouraging and supporting diverse participation: Concern re the significant resources required to undertake engagement activities with minorities. Additional funding suggested.	Communities acknowledges the funding limitations though notes that this is a suggested strategy and as such may not be undertaken as frequently/or intensively depending on the cost of undertaking other strategies. There is currently no scope for additional funding for the VDS program, so we are operating within existing budget limits.
<b>1.2.4 Service specific target group</b>	
LGs should not be excluded from being a VIO.	Agreed – amended to clarify this should not be an exclusion.
Community groups and organisations operating in the local community (external to the VDS provider). In situations in which the LG is the VDS provider, business units within the LG could form part of the serviced market.	Noted – the bracket text has been amended to include this situation.
<b>1.3. Service Strategies and Activities</b>	
Consider that some specifications are not appropriate i.e. training should be undertaken by the agency employing the volunteer, not the VDS. Preference generic training requirement.	Training is critical to ensuring volunteers have the capacity and confidence to thrive in the workplace. Communities acknowledges that training provided by VDS providers is likely to be broad and focus on job readiness. The requirement to 'provide ongoing education' has been removed as VIOs are best placed to provide this (in addition to role specific training requirements).
Unable to fund training to develop, support and maintain skills (volunteers and VIOs).	Training is a current service contract requirement so should be conducted as a matter of course.
Adapting to new technology: Replace...to improve the 'quality' of support with: 'accessibility' of support.	Agreed, this edit is appropriate in the context of IT.

<p>Encourage and support the diversity of volunteers: Strategies include 'face-to-face services to individuals from minority groups. Consider that some face-to-face service should always be offered.</p>	<p>Communities recognises face-to-face service provision is a critical part of the VDS business model. The service level outcomes do not limit face-to-face service provision to minority groups only (unlike the VMA model, which limits face to face services to VIOs engaging with specific minorities).</p>
<p><b>1.4 Outcome Measurements</b></p>	
<p>Pre/post activity surveys: Funding is not sufficient to support continuous survey activities (e.g. pre and post activity surveys) and they garner limited response from users.</p>	<p>Strong objection to this requirement from many respondents. Communities notes the feedback and has removed this requirement. A request for feedback on key activities will be included in the Annual Customer Perception Survey. The use of the Annual Customer Perception Survey to seek feedback on key activities has been clearly articulated in the performance measures section of the service specifications.</p>
<p>Pre/post activity surveys: Surveys need to be offered where appropriate (i.e. where the services provided are more extensive in nature) as they may be administratively burdensome for potential users and thus act as barriers to service demand.</p>	<p>Noted – this requirement has been removed.</p>
<p>Currently survey extensively, including evaluation during/after a project; evaluation forms after training, Annual Customer Perception Survey. Additional surveying would cause survey fatigue, overlap and administratively burdensome.</p>	<p>This requirement has been removed.</p>
<p>Use of surveys to obtain information: is this the best mechanism to obtain useful feedback?</p>	<p>As per comments above, the requirement for pre and post activity surveys has been removed. However, Communities and other VDS providers consider that the Annual Customer Perception Survey remains a useful and efficient (from a time and cost perspective) tool to obtaining key feedback on service quality.</p>
<p>Clarity around 'increased participation', difficulties in measuring duration/incidence of volunteering activity.</p>	<p>Increased participation refers to the number of volunteers engaged to work with a VIO post the VDS providing some degree of service/assistance to the VIO. Communities acknowledges the difficulties in measuring the duration and has removed this requirement.</p>

<p>Six-monthly requirement for Service Delivery Data and Outcome Progress Report: consider annual reporting?</p>	<p>Six-monthly reporting for Service Delivery Data is consistent with existing VDS contract requirements. Six-monthly reporting (for both qualitative and quantitative data) is a standard reporting frequency for community services providers and enables Communities to reliably assess performance, despite fluctuations in performance throughout the year.</p>
<p>Actively promote the value of volunteering – Measurement of the extent to which the awareness of volunteering is increased through activities: This is difficult to measure given that individuals often don't utilise VDS services to volunteer, despite VDS promotion being the precursor for the uptake in volunteering.</p>	<p>This is the same output measure that is used in the current VDS contracts. It is a qualitative measure and is addressed through examples of events/activities that enhance community/individual awareness of volunteering. However, in order to provide greater certainty, Communities has amended this output measure to state that it is qualitative in nature.</p>
<p>Monitoring of VIOs (number of VIOs accessing volunteer policy templates and number registered with an online system): VDS providers do not have access to template data (as templates are sourced from VWA). Clarity is needed on the number of users registered for an online system – e.g. does this refer to the VDS provider using Victor?</p>	<p>Significant objection to these requirements from respondents – has been removed.</p>
<p>Monitoring of VIOs (e.g. number registered with online system): Need clarity on this. It may be relevant for larger VIOs but not for smaller ones with limited resources.</p>	<p>This requirement has been removed.</p>
<p>Monitoring of VIOs (e.g. number registered with online system): Strong objection to this requirement from most respondents on the basis that they are unlikely to have access to this information.</p>	<p>Communities acknowledges these concerns and has removed this requirement.</p>