

Likely Asked Questions (LAQs) for NCSS Volunteer Management Maturity Matrix (VMM Matrix)

This LAQ was compiled to guide readers in completing the VMM Matrix and using the VMM Matrix results for their agency, and should be read as a complementary piece to the [VMM Matrix Information Kit](#) to provide additional tips and insights.

To clarify more questions on the VMM Matrix, email the NCSS Volunteer Resource Optimisation (VRO) team at Volunteer_Resource@ncss.gov.sg.

Before starting to use the VMM Matrix

1) How was the VMM Matrix developed?

The VMM Matrix was:

- 1) Developed in alignment with the [Volunteer Management Framework](#)
- 2) Developed with reference to other diagnostic tools
- 3) Validated and refined with SSAs from varying sub-sectors and sizes, to ensure that it is relevant and user friendly

The VMM Matrix also aggregates local and overseas volunteer management resources, including case examples from Social Service Agencies (SSAs), to provide recommendations to transform volunteer management in your agency.

2) How does the VMM Matrix differ from the self-assessment done in the NCSS Organisational Health Framework for Social Services (OHFSS)?

The VMM Matrix complements the [OHFSS Self-Assessment](#). The OHFSS Self-Assessment covers 7 domains and 32 sub-domains of your agency's organisational health, with Volunteer Management as one of the sub-domains under the People domain. The OHFSS Self-Assessment includes 3 assessment questions which can give a broad indication of the state of volunteer management in comparison to other domains. However, your agency may wish to do a deeper dive into volunteer management by assessing the robustness of specific practices, in order to plan your work to transform volunteer management.

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3) My agency just started involving volunteers in our work. There are only a few volunteers. Should I complete the VMM Matrix now or wait till my agency has a bigger pool of volunteers?

The VMM Matrix takes reference from the [Volunteer Management Framework](#) which guides agencies on all the areas to be effective in engaging volunteers for service delivery. It is a tool for any agency, as long as they engage volunteers.

We recommend that you use the VMM Matrix to develop a 3 or 5-year plan on establishing volunteer management practices. Your plan can take into consideration the current and upcoming resources that your agency has to establish these practices. To help you accelerate your plan, you can also tap on the various support provided by NCSS, which include:

- Various engagements organised by NCSS, including our quarterly [Volunteer Management Network \(VMN\) sessions](#), which are a regular series of networking sessions for Volunteer Management Practitioners (VMPs) to learn from subject-matter experts on volunteer management, share best practices among agencies, and encourage collaborations. The network aims to deepen the knowledge of VMPs and enhance their learning in view of emerging and future volunteer management trends.
- Your agency's VMPs should also attend [volunteer management training courses](#) conducted by the Social Service Institute (SSI), which will equip them with fundamental knowledge and skills on volunteer management.
- For latest updates on engagement sessions, training, resources and initiatives, your agency can join the mailing list of the NCSS Volunteer Resource Optimisation (VRO) team, at <https://go.gov.sg/ncssvro-vmcommunity>. For other volunteer management resources, your agency can refer to the [NCSS Volunteer Resource Hub](#).
- If your agency is a NCSS member agency, you can apply for funding support under the [Community Capability Trust \(CCT\)](#).

4) My agency experienced a large drop in volunteers due to Covid-19, despite putting in place volunteer management practices. Is it really useful to put in place volunteer management practices?

Due to safe management measures and the uncertainty during COVID-19, it is natural that an agency experienced a drop in volunteers during the past few years.

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Since then, the volunteerism landscape has changed. More individuals are keen on virtual volunteering and skills-based volunteerism. By putting in place volunteer management practices and reviewing it, agencies could reactivate, re-engage, and retain the volunteer pool in a more efficient and effective manner. We have observed that agencies with more mature VM practices, are able to bounce back to pre-COVID volunteerism rate at a faster pace.

5) Can we perform self-assessment of the VMM Matrix on a programme level?

The VMM Matrix is recommended to be completed at a whole-of-agency/organisational level. This is because it is essential to standardise VM practices across the agency. It will help deliver positive volunteering experience for all volunteers regardless of which centres or programmes they volunteer in; thus create a strong branding for the agency.

6) How can I get the buy-in from my CEO and other internal stakeholders to discuss about the VMM Matrix and the robustness of our VM practices?

1. You can firstly gain their buy-in on the value of:

(i) **Volunteers:** Use data to show the impact of volunteers. Examples:

- Volunteers can help to enhance service delivery to service users or take on roles that allow staff to focus on more core/strategic work
- Economic value of volunteering, in terms of cost savings enjoyed as volunteers support staff with their work, and
- Using skills or expertise of volunteers to expand organisational capacity, across 7 domains of the [Organisational Health Framework for Social Service \(OHFSS\)](#).

(ii) **Strengthening volunteer management capabilities:** Use data to show that strengthening volunteer management capabilities will yield stronger volunteerism outcomes. For example, sectoral data from the Social Service Sector Survey on Volunteer Management 2021 shows that SSAs who developed VM practices were twice as likely to recruit and retain enough high-quality volunteers to meet organisational needs, as compared to SSAs who did not develop VM practices.

2. You can then explain that the VMM Matrix will facilitate a data-driven approach in strengthening your volunteer management capabilities to yield stronger volunteerism outcomes such as enhancing service delivery to service users and increasing regular volunteers. Therefore, it is essential that the agency is familiar with the VMM Matrix and discusses how the 35 volunteer management practices are conducted based on

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the 4 levels in the VMM Matrix. This will also form a good basis for the agency to plan and develop the annual volunteer management workplan.

3. Recently, NCSS started an engagement series for Board members and senior management of SSAs. It is known as the “Volunteer Management Leadership Series”. The sessions discuss on topics around the importance of volunteers and proper volunteer management, as well as the strategies to enhance these practices within agencies. They also encourage and highlight the roles that board members and senior management play in volunteer management. These sessions are usually hosted by strategic key opinion leaders in the sector, such as DS Philip Ong (MCCY) and SPS Eric Chua (MCCY & MSF).

7) What is the key in allowing and empowering staffs and volunteers alike to support and work alongside one another? Especially when staff might not have the experience in being supported by volunteers.

Your volunteer management team should act as a bridge between the staff and volunteers, especially if they have no experience working with each other. For example, staffs’ perspective on volunteer management can be understood, to plan for volunteer management in a more targeted manner.

Your agency should also be intentional in engaging and recognising your volunteers, and let them know that their contributions are valuable. Examples including conducting regular check-ins to gather volunteer feedback, conducting volunteer appreciation events and using human interest stories and pictures of service users (if available) to show volunteers the impact of their contributions.

You can refer to the “Getting Your Agency Volunteer-Ready” and “Supporting and Recognising Volunteers” sections in the [Volunteer Management Framework](#), for further tips on how to build a volunteer-friendly culture among staff and engage your volunteers effectively.

8) (i) If having volunteers/volunteer management is new to us, where and how can we start on this?
(ii) If we do not have a volunteer manager (just executives and support staffs), where can we get support and guidance to build up the foundation for volunteer management?

- a) Your agency can tap on the various support provided by NCSS, which include:

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- The [Volunteer Management Framework](#), which the VMM Matrix takes reference from. It guides your agency on all the areas to be effective in engaging volunteers for service delivery.
- Various engagements organised by NCSS, including our quarterly [Volunteer Management Network \(VMN\) sessions](#), which are a regular series of networking sessions for Volunteer Management Practitioners (VMPs) to learn from subject-matter experts on volunteer management, share best practices among agencies, and encourage collaborations. The network aims to deepen the knowledge of VMPs and enhance their learning in view of emerging and future volunteer management trends.
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- If your agency is a NCSS member agency, you can apply for funding support under the [Community Capability Trust \(CCT\)](#).

b) Your agency can also tap on skills-based volunteers (eg. volunteer management committee) and volunteer leaders to help with the volunteer management.

9) For the volunteer management practice: “Our leadership team demonstrates and communicates the importance of partnering with volunteers and building a volunteer-friendly culture within the agency.” What does it mean to formally define and document this practice?

It is important to gain the buy-in of your leadership team to help drive a volunteer-friendly culture in your agency. Some of the ways your leadership team can develop this volunteer-friendly culture include being intentional in allowing management and staff to see the value of volunteers, as well as actively encouraging staff to multiply themselves by getting volunteers to help them.

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Formally defining and documenting this practice would mean documenting some of the steps/initiatives your agency is taking to communicate the importance of volunteer partnerships and build a volunteer-friendly culture. You should also actively reach out to your leadership team to provide updates or seek support from them. One interesting way we had observed is through the setting up of a volunteer management committee to strategise and discuss all matters pertaining to volunteer management.

For more ways your leadership team can provide support in building a volunteer-friendly culture, you can refer to the NCSS [Volunteer Management Framework](#).

- 10) For the volunteer management practice: “We have a dedicated volunteer management team / individual.” Our agency has a dedicated volunteer manager. Why do we need to formally define and document that we have a dedicated volunteer manager, and actively inform/remind staff to implement this practice? What does it mean to review and improve this practice consistently?**

As you achieve stronger volunteerism outcomes through strengthening volunteer management capabilities, it is important to consistently review the scope of the volunteer management function within your agency. The purpose is to determine if an expansion of the volunteer management team is required. For example, if your agency has a dedicated volunteer manager and has experienced a large increase in volunteers, there should be an expansion of the volunteer management function in both the strategic and administrative functions. To ensure continual progress in volunteerism outcomes, it may be effective to set up a volunteer management team where team members focus on either strategic/administrative function, instead of having 1 volunteer manager take on all the functions of the volunteer management role.

- 11) For the volunteer management practice: “We have a volunteer continuity plan (VCP) to facilitate continued volunteer partnership during crises.” Do we need to develop a VCP for all of our volunteer roles, to be considered as Level 3/4?**

If your agency is starting on your VCP journey, you can select critical volunteer roles/services to start formally defining and documenting your VCP with. You should actively remind/inform relevant staff to implement the VCP in volunteer programmes, to ensure sustained partnerships during crises. This is equivalent to Level 3.

You should also review and improve the VCP consistently, to ensure it remains relevant to your agency’s needs. This is equivalent to Level 4. For example, you can do a simulated run-through of a VCP scenario with colleagues in your agency. If the planning

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is for crisis such as haze, doing one or two dry runs with the involvement of programme staff, volunteer management team as well as volunteers could also be helpful in terms of visualising the plan as well as refining the workflow.

As the VCP is reviewed and improved, you can then scale it to more volunteer roles/services in your agency.

For guidance in developing a VCP, you can refer to the NCSS VCP Guide:

- [Volunteer Continuity Planning Guide](#)
- [Workbook](#)
- [Likely Asked Questions \(LAQ\)](#)

12) For the volunteer management practice: “We have established channels for volunteer recruitment across a diverse range of platforms, including online platforms and social media.” Do we really need to actively remind/inform staff to implement this practice, since the volunteer management team is the one doing the recruitment? In reviewing and improving this practice, what are the future trends/needs we should look at?

By actively reminding/informing staff (e.g., programme staff) about the established channels for volunteer recruitment, it creates a more streamlined and effective volunteer recruitment process where volunteer opportunities will be consistently publicised on these established channels.

In reviewing and improving this practice, you could dive into data analysis or trends by different demographics. This will increase the effectiveness of each recruitment channel to attract more or the “right” volunteers.

Note: The NCSS Social Service Sector Survey 2021 showed that Word-Of-Mouth (54%) and social media (50%) were the most common sources of information for how general public respondents (n = 2,000) obtain information about social service agencies. Therefore it is recommended for agencies to use Word-Of-Mouth among existing volunteers, social media and online platforms such as [giving.sg](#) and the [SG Cares App](#) to recruit more volunteers.

After completion of the VMM Matrix

13) If most of the 7 VM areas in the VMM Matrix are weak, how do we decide which area(s) to focus on first?

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Your agency should first develop a 3-to-5-year volunteer strategy, which helps to support your overall organisational strategy. Based on the volunteer strategy and pain points, you can prioritise the volunteer management practices that are most important to work on first. If the ratings for “Organisational Readiness” or “Organisational Culture” is low, you might want to consider starting from these 2 areas.

Regardless of the chosen area, there is a list of resources in the VMM Matrix report to support your agency.

14) Understand that it's good to review the VMM Matrix results yearly. What if our agency implements a new programme before the next review? Do we restart the assessment again?

Your agency does not necessarily need to restart the assessment again. Changes in volunteer management programmes during the year are normal. It will also take time for your volunteer management strategy to be implemented, which is why it may be good to review the VMM Matrix results annually to track progress and use the results for annual volunteer management work planning.

Your volunteer management lead (eg. volunteer management staff or equivalent) should also discuss with relevant stakeholders (eg. CEO/Executive Director, programme staff) about the frequency of review of VMM Matrix results and volunteer management work planning (eg. annual basis), that will best meet your agency's needs.

15) What type of sectoral benchmarks for volunteer management will we get through the VMM Matrix results?

As more agencies complete the VMM Matrix, NCSS will use the aggregated data to develop benchmarks, to help your agency understand where your volunteer management stands vis-à-vis the social service sector. Only aggregated findings will be shared with the sector, and your agency's data will be kept confidential. We would like to encourage your agency to complete the VMM Matrix, to allow sectoral benchmarks or baseline to be established. However, for a start, level 3 is the recommended target for all agencies as it means that the practices are institutionalised; instead of being employee dependent.

16) What are future volunteer management trends, and how can we review and improve our volunteer management practices to keep up with these trends?

Some key volunteer management trends which NCSS has identified through sectoral data from surveys/polls include:

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1. **Increase in skills-based volunteerism:** 70% of 182 corporate funder respondents are keen to volunteer and contribute through pro-bono/subsidised technology/skills to build the capabilities and capacity of SSAs (*NCSS Social Service Sector Survey, December to May 2021*).
2. **Importance of volunteer development:** The second biggest challenge faced by most participants' organisations to volunteer development include lack of volunteer development framework as reference (*NCSS VM Network, March 2022*).
3. **Importance of volunteer engagement and appreciation:** From the NCSS Volunteer Engagement Tool 2021 survey results with 633 responses from volunteers across 27 SSAs, the extent to which the agency appreciates its volunteers (8.67, on a rating scale of 0-10) and the quality of communication with volunteers (8.05) are key drivers of volunteer satisfaction levels (8.50).
4. **Importance of digitalisation in volunteer management:** 83% of VM Network participants (out of 236) mentioned these VM efforts by SSAs could best be supported by digitalisation: (i) Administration (e.g. Centralised database to track volunteers), and (ii) Communication and Coordination with volunteers. (*Polls with VM Network participants, NCSS VM Network, August 2021*).

For skills-based volunteerism, you should conduct regular needs assessment to identify what skills gaps your agency is facing (e.g. digitalisation), and proactively seek out new opportunities for skills-based volunteers to partner with your agency. You should also ensure that volunteer management practices across various areas (e.g. Collaboration) are robust, to provide the skills-based volunteers with a quality volunteer experience. To further assist you with this area, NCSS is developing a skills-based volunteerism framework which is targeted for release in June 2023.

For volunteer development, you should continually review and improve volunteer management practices under Volunteer Onboarding and Training area, to ensure that volunteers are equipped with the skills required to perform their roles effectively and are also provided with development opportunities. For example, you can curate a volunteer leader role, and map out a volunteer development pathway to develop more volunteers to become volunteer leaders. For further guidance on this area, you can refer to the NCSS [Volunteer Management Framework](#). NCSS will also be developing a sectoral volunteer development framework, which is targeted for release in June 2023.

For the importance of volunteer engagement and appreciation, you should continually review and improve volunteer management practices under Volunteer Experience and Engagement and Review of Volunteer Management areas. For example, you can enhance your processes to understand volunteer satisfaction levels and identify

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potential areas of improvement. To help you measure volunteer satisfaction levels more efficiently, you can use the [NCSS Volunteer Engagement Toolkit](#).

For the importance of digitalisation in volunteer management, you should maintain an up-to-date volunteer database to help facilitate the matching, training, and engagement of our volunteers, as part of Volunteer Recruitment and Selection. For example, you can implement a Volunteer Management System (VMS). To guide your agency in implementing a VMS, you can use the [NCSS Volunteer Management System – Selection & Implementation Roadmap \(VMS-SIR\)](#). To obtain funding to implement a VMS, Social Service Agencies (SSAs) can apply for the NCSS [Tech-and-GO!](#).