

NCSS Volunteer Management Network 2023

Session #2 Learning Report

The Volunteer Management Network 2023 Session #2 was held on 15 November 2023 on the topic **How to Conceptualise and Formulate Your Volunteer Strategy**. 232 Volunteer Management Practitioners (VMPs) from various organisations attended the in-person event to learn about **the key components of an effective volunteer strategy and the best practices and critical steps that VMPs can take to develop such strategies**. Since this was the first in-person session since the pandemic, it was also a great opportunity for participants to reconnect with familiar faces and build new connections!

Opening Address

Ms Amy Hing, Deputy Secretary (Community and Youth), MCCY opened the session by emphasising that Singapore's societal landscape is undergoing significant transformations, characterised by demographic shifts, an aging populace, a decline in interpersonal communication, and the growing influence of social media. As these changes unfold, it is anticipated that there will be a surge in the need for SSAs. She called upon VMPs to play a pivotal role in this evolving context. In addition, she shared that they will be instrumental in fostering social engagement, directing concerted efforts towards supporting the underprivileged, and bolstering partnerships and contributions as fundamental drivers of change.



Event Poll

Challenges Organisations Faced in Developing a Volunteer Strategy

Top 3 responses:

1. **Lack of Manpower**
2. **Lack of Good Insights**
3. **Lack of Clarity on Contents**

Support Organisations Need in Developing a Volunteer Strategy

Top 3 responses:

1. **Templates & Learning Resources**
2. **Workshop & Short Courses**
3. **Mentorship & Consulting Support**



In partnership with:

Key insights from the Panel Speakers:



MS KAREN WEE
 Executive Director
 Lions Befrienders



COL GOH JERICA
 Director Nexus
 MINDEF



MS KATHLEEN CHIN
 CSR & Impact Lead
 EY

Establishing and articulating a purpose that resonates is the cornerstone of an effective volunteer strategy.



Karen: The desire to be the leading eldercare SSA that helps Singapore's elderly to age actively, healthily and happily serves as the overarching driving force for Lions Befriender's volunteer strategy. The volunteer management roadmap and processes focus on identifying how to deliver top-notch services to beneficiaries and service users amidst the growing challenges of serving an aging population.



Jerica: MINDEF is committed to nurturing volunteerism, establishing connections, and enhancing social cohesion, a mission that is clearly communicated to all stakeholders. To drive both near-term and long-term outcomes, MINDEF's volunteer strategy development addresses both timeframes, each with its own goals and objectives.



Kathleen: Ripple, EY's social impact programme, is guided by a clear mission: to impact one billion lives globally by 2030. All volunteer initiatives are thus designed to maximize the number of lives positively affected. Having this clearly defined also allows EY to prioritise and focus on the types of activities and programmes that will help achieve this goal.

Volunteer strategies need clearly defined and measurable outcomes to allow organisations to evaluate how well the strategies are being executed.



Karen: Setting clear objectives and success metrics is crucial to aligning with the organisation's purpose. It is also important to utilise systems and tools that simplify the collection of these success metrics. For instance, Lion Befrienders employs a straightforward performance management guideline to evaluate the service quality provided by their volunteers.



Jerica: A crucial aspect of the volunteer strategy involves gauging success metrics for the organisation. MINDEF is adopting a data-driven approach in gathering measurable outcomes, such as volunteer experience and impact evaluation. The strategy includes a predetermined timeline for collecting feedback from volunteers, SSAs, and beneficiaries, which will be instrumental in shaping future strategies.



Kathleen: 'What gets measured gets managed.' The key lies in understanding how to accelerate success by knowing the metrics and strategising accordingly. For a new programme like EY Ripples, starting with smaller, more achievable targets allowed EY to manage SSAs' expectations. As the organisation gains broader acceptance and participation, more aggressive improvement targets on key metrics can then be set.

Fostering partnerships within the 3P sector that are rooted in genuine care is crucial for the implementation of an effective volunteer strategy.



Karen: Lions Befrienders demonstrates a deep understanding of their service users, treating them with empathy and love. This culture of deep care is emphasised when working with partners, creating an environment that fosters a sense of fulfillment for volunteers. Cultivating this environment of care will result in like-minded partners recognising and come forward to collaborate.



Jerica: MINDEF has successfully established partnerships with SSAs with the support and resources provided by NCSS. To foster a culture of volunteerism within the community, MINDEF and its partners have united various volunteer groups under a single initiative, thereby breaking down the isolation often experienced by SSAs.



Kathleen: EY Ripple embarked on its mission by collaborating with SSAs that resonated with their employees' interests. As they achieved consistent engagement and retention of volunteers, they gradually extended their support to other sectors of society in need. This strategic approach to partnerships enabled EY Ripple to broaden its volunteer impact while fulfilling its commitments to the SSAs in a balanced and sustainable way.

Once established, organisations need to be flexible and regularly review and update the strategy to adapt to on-the-ground realities and industry trends



Karen: It is critical for organisations to establish feedback loops with volunteers and stakeholders for continuous evaluation and improvement of volunteer activities and the overall volunteer strategy. Using this feedback to constantly improve volunteerism and to keep up with evolving volunteering trends requires flexibility and adaptability.



Jerica: MINDEF's volunteer strategy is marked by a commitment to core principles, coupled with a flexible approach to implementation, reflecting a 'go with the flow' mindset. This mindset welcomes diverse perspectives from beneficiaries, SSAs, and volunteers, enabling VMs to deviate from initial plans to execute activities more suitable to stakeholders' needs and incorporate fresh ideas into their future strategy.



Kathleen: Volunteer strategy is very much like 'building the plane while flying it' in EY. The key to this approach is flexibility, allowing for adjustments and refinements along the way. A fully fleshed-out volunteer strategy is not necessary from the outset. Instead, experimenting with various initiatives before settling on the ones that garner the most support from volunteers is a viable approach.



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Breakout Activity: Applying Learned Insights for Future Volunteer Strategy Development

Following the insightful presentations on volunteer strategy, participants were given the opportunity to apply their newfound knowledge. Each group was presented with a future trend that could influence the volunteer landscape. They were then tasked with crafting a volunteer strategy that could effectively respond to this trend. This strategy needed to outline the **objectives, outcomes, and actions** that SSAs and VMPs would need to undertake.

Trend 1: Volunteers are more discerning about causes they volunteer for

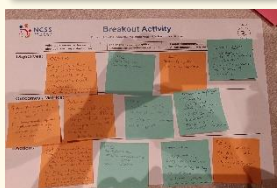


Example outputs from participants:

Objectives: Curate meaningful volunteer opportunities with a call-to-action to entire potential volunteers

Outcome: Increase the number of volunteers across demographic groups most aligned to the organisation's mission & objectives

Actions: Clearly articulate the impact and linkage to organisational cause when defining volunteer roles; change volunteer recruitment approaches to cater to target demographics



Trend 2: Singapore's ageing population will impact both volunteers and users

Example outputs from participants:

Objectives: Encourage seniors to join in volunteering (e.g., Silver Staff Programme)

Outcome: Promote better health, life satisfaction and social connectedness among seniors

Actions: Re-deploy seniors to be mentors to younger existing volunteers to leverage on their life experience



Trend 3: Larger technological trends such as AI can change the way we work



Example outputs from participants:

Objectives: Leverage future technology like AI to serve as enablers to streamline processes and fill gaps

Outcome: Higher efficiency and productivity for VMs to shift their focus onto more meaningful activities

Actions: Start by having a Volunteer Management System with data analytics capabilities that can manage, monitor and track volunteers. Equip existing staff with knowledge of existing and upcoming technologies.

