

NCSS Volunteer Management Network Learning Report

Effective Risk Management for Volunteer Managers : Identify, Assess, Control & Review

The Volunteer Management Network was held virtually on 17 January 2024 on the topic **Effective Risk Management for Volunteer Managers: Identify, Assess, Control & Review**. Sharing and discussions between speakers and participants were on the areas of **importance of risk management for volunteers, types of risks associated to volunteering**, principles of risk management and how to develop strategies to identify, assess, control and review these risks for your organisation.



What is Risk Management and How does it apply to Volunteers?

Risk Management for your organisation's volunteering activities is about identifying potential hazards arising from those activities that could impact your organisation, staff, service users and the volunteers themselves.

A well-devised risk management plan would include a robust strategy, governance and process that aims to prevent and minimise risks, and also offer direction and guidance on how the volunteering activities should be better conducted. Establishing these structures in your risk management plan would ensure a secure environment that supports volunteers to contribute their best to serving your organisation's cause.

Event Poll

What challenges do participants have in developing a Risk Management Plan?

Top 3 responses:

1. Participants recognise the need but are unsure how to develop one
2. Participants have initial ideas but don't know how to implement one
3. Participants are unfamiliar with the concept of Risk Management

What are some of the common risk participants' organisation faced?

Top 4 responses:

1. People Risk
2. Confidentiality Risk
3. Reputation Risk
4. Compliance Risk

In partnership with:

Key insights from the Panel Speakers:



PROF HO YEW KEE
 Professor
 Singapore Institute
 of Technology



MR MELVIN LOH
 Counsel
 Peter Low
 Chambers LLC



MR JEFFREY TAY
 Volunteer Manager
 Samaritans of
 Singapore

Risk identification and assessment is the foundation to having an effective risk management plan for the organisation.



Prof Ho highlighted the use of Enterprise Risk Management Toolkit and the importance of identifying the key risk that is most relevant to your organisation. He emphasised the necessity for organisations to stay informed about both current and emerging risks. He advocated for a robust risk management system that continually assesses and adapts to the ever-changing risk landscape.



Melvin acknowledged that some risks that SSAs inadvertently encounter could be legal in nature. He stressed the necessity for SSAs to identify these potential legal risks and prepare the necessary resources and avenues, such as seeking legal advice from Pro Bono SG. He also emphasised that being prepared for legal risks is not just an option, but a requirement.



Jeffrey discussed how SOS identifies and assesses the risks faced by their volunteers in the context of their roles. He emphasised that the risks SOS face are specific to the organisation, and that each SSA has its own unique contextual risks. He highlighted the importance of understanding the context of volunteer exposure and identifying and assessing the risks accordingly.

Hands-on approach to risk identification and assessment in a given scenario.

Assess the risk from the scenario



In this hands-on activity, participants actively engaged in identifying and assessing risks within a given cybersecurity scenario. The exercise emphasised their crucial role in shaping their organisation's Risk Management Plan.

Drawing from their professional experiences, participants shared standard operating procedures (SOPs), codes of conduct for volunteers, and set expectations for both volunteers and Volunteer Managers. This collaborative learning experience not only enhanced their understanding of risks but also fostered a culture of knowledge sharing and mutual growth.

Effectively managing risks involves prioritising the identified risks and establishing control measures to be activated should these risks materialise.



Prof Ho identifies the key-man risk as the most significant risk faced by all SSAs and emphasises the importance of having a succession plan for both the Volunteer Manager and the volunteers to ensure service continuity. Furthermore, he advocates for a comprehensive Enterprise Risk Management Plan with standard operating procedures to be robust and clearly communicated to maintain service quality.



Melvin advises SSAs to proactively explore various resources and avenues to control and mitigate the impact of risks. Examples: Insurance can provide a financial safety net; seeking legal advice can help SSAs understand the potential legal implications of their actions and develop strategies to manage risks effectively; acquiring prior knowledge about potential risks can enable SSAs to anticipate, prepare for, and control risks before they materialise.

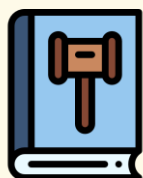


Jeffrey provided an example of how SOS implements control measures for their SSA. Their Volunteer Managers will proactively ensure that the volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities. They will also regularly monitor their wellbeing and health, acknowledging the importance of these factors in their ability to perform their duties. This approach is taken because SOS recognises and understands the specific risks that their volunteers are exposed to.

Be proactive and collaborative in implementing established measures to mitigate volunteer risks.



Prof Ho stated that a rigorous screening process is essential to evaluate the suitability of volunteers. This, coupled with ongoing performance management, ensures that volunteers are reliable and trustworthy, capable of upholding high service standards. Such measures are crucial in mitigating risks to individuals and safeguarding the organisation's reputation.



Melvin emphasised the necessity of effectively communicating risks to volunteers. Volunteer Managers cannot solely rely on liability waivers to absolve themselves of all responsibility. It is imperative to regularly update and revise the volunteer code of conduct to address emerging risks.



Jeffrey highlighted that risk mitigation is not the responsibility of an individual. It requires the whole organisation to review and mitigate risks. Volunteer Managers must adopt a collaborative approach, managing risks in tandem with their volunteers. They must be proactive and prepared to intervene when necessary to protect both volunteers and service users from potential risks.