

NCSS Volunteer Management Network Learning Report

The fourth edition of our Volunteer Management Network this year was held virtually on 7 March 2024 on the topic “**Strategic Volunteer Deployment: Integrating Volunteers Effectively Within Service Models**”. During the sharing and discussions, speakers and participants discussed the importance of integrating volunteers into their services/programmes. They explored both the benefits and challenges associated with integration. Additionally, they discussed strategies for organisations to elevate the role of volunteers within the process, particularly in programme development and delivery.

Opening Address

NCSS Deputy CEO, Mr Yoganathan Ammayappan opened the session by highlighting **the importance of volunteers as part of service delivery**.

Integrating volunteers for key roles within services is no longer a luxury; it has become a necessity for organisations. Volunteers should no longer be limited to performing supporting tasks but **be empowered** to take on larger roles.

Their **diverse experiences and perspectives are valuable resources** that organisations can leverage on. He affirmed the role that **Volunteer Managers play as catalysts; driving sustainable services** within their organisations and in our sector.



Event Poll

What is the value of including volunteers within programmes in your organisation?

Top 4 responses:

1. Increase outreach to more service users (66%)
2. Staff can be redeployed for more strategic roles (63%)
3. Increase efficiency of programmes (58%)
4. Increase service quality (50%)



What are the strongest success factors in integrating volunteers within your programmes?

Top 3 responses:

1. Programme staff are receptive to working with volunteers (81%)
2. Having dedicated Volunteer Manager(s) (80%)
3. Good support from senior management (79%)



Key Insights from the Panel Speakers:



MR GARY LIM
Deputy Director
Care Corner
Singapore



MR ERIC SNG
Assistant Director
SHINE Children &
Youth Services



MR JEREMY KHOO
Senior Manager
Caritas Singapore

Curate Volunteering Opportunities to Optimize Volunteers' Impact



Gary emphasised the significance of providing opportunities for volunteers to contribute beyond their usual activities. By fostering an environment of co-creation and leadership, volunteers might take the initiative to develop and lead programmes like KidsCount and Mandarin Counselling Hotline at Care Corner. Having this space for growth and involvement allows volunteers to act as champions for the organisation.



Eric shared the advantages of prioritising volunteers during the design of volunteer programmes at SHINE. By adopting a volunteer-first framework, SHINE has successfully crafted multiple opportunities for passionate volunteers with varying skill levels. These opportunities allow volunteers to assume a range of leadership roles.



Jeremy highlighted the benefits of Caritas's community-focused volunteer programmes, which harness the passion of like-minded community members to serve the community through volunteerism. This approach has enabled Caritas to create volunteer-led programmes, even transforming service users into volunteers themselves.

Participants considered the challenges in integrating volunteers and explored solutions in the engagement activity.

Participants shared about challenges faced within their organisation and how they overcome these challenges to facilitate volunteer integration into their services.

Common Challenges	Potential Solutions
Perceived lack of commitment by volunteers	Build that long-term trusting partnership with volunteers in the organisation through open communication
Volunteers lacking in knowledge and experience	Create volunteer training and development programmes to better equip and empower them
Availability of suitable volunteers for more specialised roles	Match skills and interest of volunteer to roles and develop their capability internally

Training and Support is Key to Nurturing Volunteers to take on Key Roles.



Gary shared that the key to success lies in establishing a process where volunteers are empowered to take the lead. Equipping them with the necessary tools and resources is crucial for fostering a strong organic partnership between volunteers and the organisation. This approach enables integration of volunteers into the organisation's service value chain from an early stage.



Eric recognised the challenging necessity of training volunteers to assume roles of increased responsibility without compromising on service quality. He firmly believes that commitment is essential not only from the volunteers themselves but also from the organisation. SHINE offers training programmes that vary in commitment levels to cater to volunteer's needs. It is vital to establish clear expectations with volunteers from the outset to foster mutual trust and successful partnerships.



Jeremy highlighted the significance of establishing partnerships with external organisations to equip volunteer leaders with knowledge and tools as staff in the organisation lack the capacity to train volunteers effectively. Additionally, having well-designed systems in place is crucial for supporting and appreciating both volunteers and staff, fostering a unified 'one SSA' mindset.

Nurture a Culture of Trust where Volunteer Leaders can take on more Shared Responsibilities together with the staff in your organisation.



Gary highlighted that successful volunteer integration hinges on securing buy-in from organisational leaders. These leaders play a crucial role in strategically shaping the internal framework that allows volunteers to assume more significant responsibilities. Additionally, Gary emphasises the importance of considering the experience of staff when working with the volunteers. Positive interactions between volunteers and staff members serve as a critical catalyst for effective volunteer integration.



Eric emphasised that SHINE consistently prioritises volunteers in its programme design. He advocates for considering how volunteers can contribute value right from the outset, shaping the programmes accordingly. This approach not only garners stakeholder support but also facilitates the integration of volunteers throughout the entire organisation, beyond just delivery roles.



Jeremy emphasised the significance of fostering a culture of sharing among volunteers and staff. This collaborative environment enables mutual learning, uplifting the overall atmosphere. He recognises the importance of succession planning; mentoring and coaching future volunteer leaders. This ongoing coaching cycle ensures the continuous integration of volunteers within the organisation.