

Redesigning Programme Delivery for Enhanced Service User Outcomes

Part A: Uncover Gaps & Opportunities



**Volunteer Management
Workshop Series**

A Guide to Rethinking Systems for Strategic Volunteer Engagement

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Introduction

What is it?

This **3-part playbook** serves as **a practical guide to strengthen volunteer management from strategy to execution**. It consolidates key insights, findings, and hands-on tools from the Volunteer Management Workshop Series to help organisations design, test, and implement stronger, and more sustainable volunteer ecosystems.



Why it matters?

Volunteer management is **beyond recruitment numbers**.

It involves:

- Designing meaningful roles
- Aligning stakeholders
- Building volunteer growth pathways
- Creating experiences that retain and empower

Without intentional design, even committed volunteers and capable teams can struggle with misalignment, burnout, and inefficiencies.

How to use this Playbook?



This is not a document to read once and set aside. It is **meant to be used, adapted to your context, discussed with your team, and applied step by step**.

Start where you are. Work with what you have. Build momentum through small, thoughtful actions.

Stronger volunteer ecosystems are not built overnight but they are built intentionally.

Who is it for?

Those who want to create greater impact with clearer systems, stronger alignment, and more sustainable engagement, such as:

- **Programme Managers**
- **Volunteer Managers**
- **Heads of Departments**
- **Leaders and teams working closely with volunteers**

What will you gain?



You will learn how to:

- Review your service model and desired future state
- Identify challenges and operational gaps
- Generate and refine innovative ideas
- Translate ideas into action plans
- Prototype quickly and iterate
- Engage stakeholders with confidence

Legend:



Insights from the Volunteer Management Workshops



Key Exercises

Programme Manager Peter and Volunteer Manager Vidya are wrapping up a yearly review meeting. The numbers look fine on paper, but both sense something deeper is missing. They decided to seek Service Designer Faisal's help.



This is **Part A: Uncover Gaps & Opportunities**. Start here to understand your current service model and how volunteers fit within it. Join Peter, Vidya, and Faisal as they journey through discovery, reflection, and design—learning how to weave volunteerism into stronger, more sustainable service delivery. Once completed, continue to Part B and Part C to explore the next steps.

Chapter 1:

How Your Current Service Model Enables or Limits Volunteer Roles



Before rethinking how volunteers are engaged, **it is important to understand how your current service model shapes their roles in practice.** The way services are designed and delivered affects what volunteers can do, how they interact with service users, and the level of responsibility they can safely take on. A clear understanding of the current service model helps organisations:



1. Safeguard service quality and service users well-being



2. Design meaningful and sustainable volunteer roles



3. Identify gaps where volunteers can add value



4. Support long-term planning and adaptability

By understanding how the current service model shapes volunteer involvement, organisations can uncover gaps and opportunities to engage volunteers more effectively and strengthen the overall service outcomes.

Service Model Map

Selected Programme & Key Activities:		Programme Objectives/Outcomes:			If resources were not an issue today, what would you do differently to improve your service outcomes?			
Current Service Model Mapping								
Stages	Needs Assessment	Service Design & Planning	Resource Gathering	Recruitment	Intake	Programme Delivery	Outcome Evaluation	Case Closure / Transition
	Identifying gaps, challenges, and priorities faced by the target client group.	Developing the programme's goals, methods, and processes to address identified needs.	Securing the people, partners, assets, and channels required to run the service effectively.	Engaging suitable clients who would benefit from the service (through outreach and/or referrals).	Confirming eligibility and suitability through structured screening and assessment.	Executing the core activities, interventions, and support that make up the service.	Measuring the results, effectiveness, and impact of the programme against intended outcomes.	Ending service appropriately and connecting clients to follow-up supports or next steps post-programme.
Activities								
Current State of Volunteer Involvement								
Potential Value of Volunteers								

Template can be found in the appendix.

What is it?

A structured way to map out how the service is designed and delivered today, from understanding service users' needs to closing or transitioning cases. **It shows what happens at each stage of the process** and who is involved (programme managers, volunteer managers, volunteers).

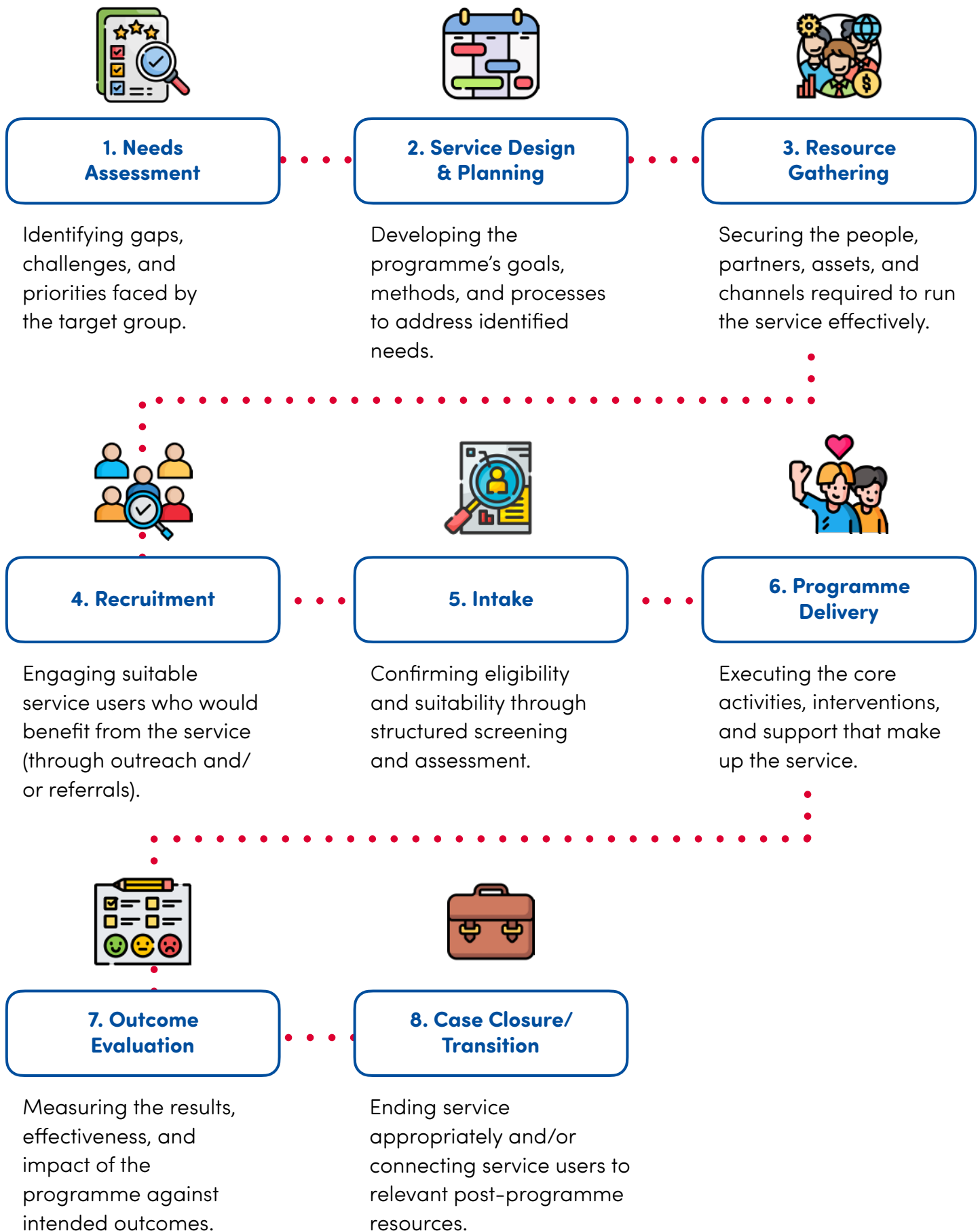
How is it useful?

This activity helps teams get on the same page about how the service is currently running. **It visualises where current efforts are at and how volunteers are involved in the grand scheme of delivering a service.** It provides clarity of where internal efforts could use more volunteer support.

Why does it matter?

By clearly seeing how the service model works today, **teams can spot meaningful gaps where volunteers can play a value-adding role.** This helps identify opportunities for volunteers to support preparation, coordination, follow-up, relationship-building, or continuity of care in ways that strengthen service outcomes.

What are the stages of the service model map ?





Ex 1: Map Your Current Service Model

Find the following template in the Appendix and follow the steps to begin mapping your service model.

Selected Programme & Key Activities: 1		Programme Objectives/Outcomes: 2			If resources were not an issue today, what would you do differently to improve your service outcomes? 5			
Current Service Model Mapping								
Stages	Needs Assessment	Service Design & Planning	Resource Gathering	Recruitment	Intake	Programme Delivery	Outcome Evaluation	Case Closure / Transition
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Activities	3	PM				VM		
Current State of Volunteer Involvement			4					
Potential Value of Volunteers	6							

1

Start by choosing a programme to evaluate.

2

Write down the programme's objectives and desired outcomes.

3

List down the key tasks/activities of each stage of the service model.

4

Map out how volunteers are currently involved at every stage of the journey.

5

Imagine you had the time, people, and capability you needed—what would you start, stop, or change to improve service outcomes?

6

Identify areas where volunteers can potentially create or add value, based on what you outlined in Step 5.



TIPS

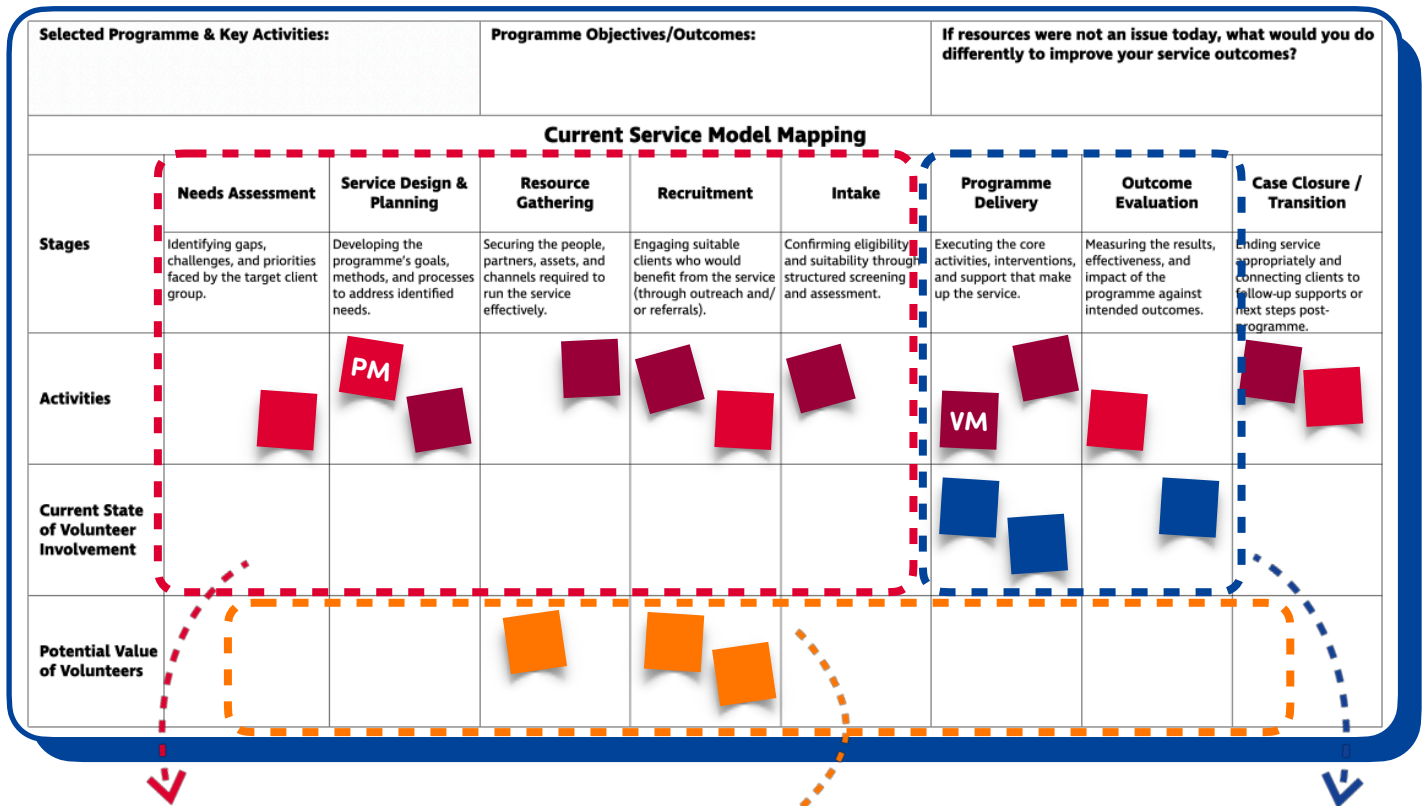
Consider your role as you define the tasks/activities at each stage

- As a Programme Manager, I...
- As a Volunteer Manager, I...





Key insights uncovered through mapping the current service model

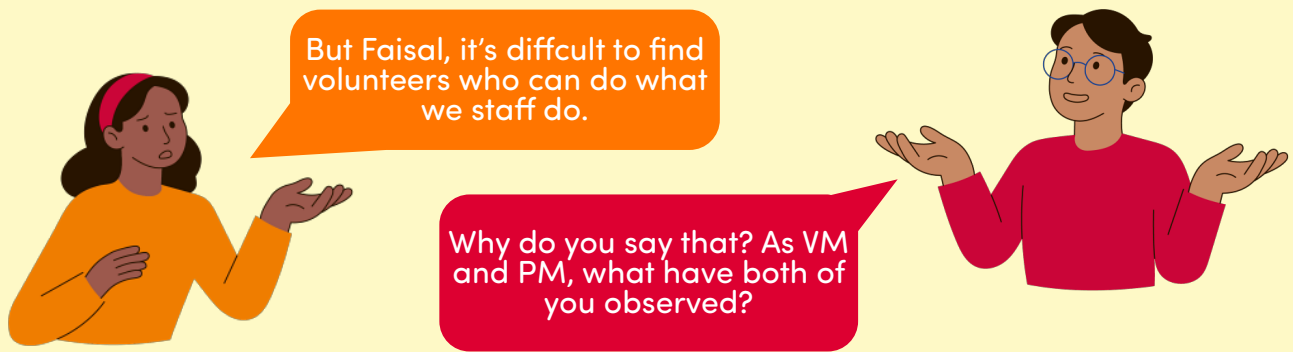


Most of the programme development is done by staff.

SSAs are willing to explore more ways in which volunteers can be tapped on.

Volunteers are typically engaged in mainly delivering the programme.





Ex 2: Identifying Challenges

List down the challenges & barriers you face as volunteer managers and programme managers, and dive deeper into its root causes.

Round 1:

Think about challenges specific to your role.



Round 2:

Swap sides, and discuss how you might be able to support the other role.



TIPS

The solution might already be there!

Round 3:

Dive deeper into your challenges to uncover what is the root cause.



TIPS

Keep asking "WHY?" What is the real issue?



Common challenges identified by **volunteer managers**

Challenges:



Volunteers **struggle to commit consistently due to competing priorities** and vague time expectations, making programme planning difficult.



Volunteers enter roles with **misaligned expectations that do not match programme needs**, leading to poor fit, frustration, and early attrition.



Poor matching into suitable roles, causes disengagement and missed opportunities for impact, resulting in lost potential and wasted effort.



Volunteers disengage over time due to **limited motivation, recognition, and sustained connection** to the organisation.



Volunteer managers **lack visibility into attendance, engagement, and performance**, limiting timely intervention and improvement.



Programmes are not intentionally designed to meaningfully involve volunteers, resulting in limited roles and constrained engagement.

Root Causes:

Commitment levels, time requirements, and duration are not flexible, clearly defined, or communicated.

Roles are insufficiently designed and communicated around actual skills, responsibilities, and growth expectations.

Matching is under-resourced, data-light, and treated as an operational task rather than a strategic process.

Retention and recognition efforts are not systematically linked to meaningful roles, contribution, and volunteer experience design.

Lack of technology capabilities, fragmented or manual systems prevent reliable tracking, data consolidation, and insight generation.

Volunteer involvement is not embedded into programme design, resourcing, and organisational planning.

Some participants hold both VM and PM responsibilities, resulting in overlapping challenges and perspectives.



Common challenges identified by **programme managers**

Challenges:



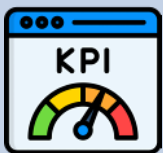
Programme managers **juggle multiple roles and priorities, leaving little time** for volunteer supervision, programme design, evaluation, or partnerships.



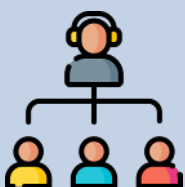
Volunteers instability—not following SOPs, lack strategic execution skills, not the right match for the user, or leave unexpectedly, **disrupts service quality and continuity.**



Inconsistent service user engagement—irregular attendance, low commitment, and external constraints **reduce continuity, trust, and programme effectiveness.**



Programme managers are accountable for KPIs and outcomes but **lack the time, data, and resources needed for proper design, evaluation, and communication.**



Programme Managers are responsible for both service user safety and volunteer wellbeing, while being held accountable for outcomes shaped by factors beyond their control.

Root Causes:

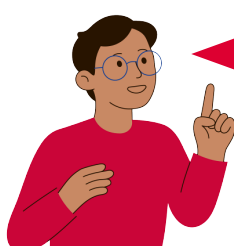
Additional responsibilities and increasing workload force managers to prioritise urgent delivery over strategic work.

Volunteer readiness, supervision capacity, and replacement pathways are insufficiently designed into programme operations.

Programme formats and expectations are not fully aligned with service users' realities, motivations, and constraints.

Evaluation, communication, and improvement cycles are under-resourced and overly dependent on attendance-driven metrics.

Programme accountability does not sufficiently account for external variables, capacity limits, and systemic dependencies.



Now that we can see the challenges clearly, we can better tackle them.

Ahh..I see. We should address the **root cause**, and not just the symptoms!



Chapter 2:

Exploring the Value of Volunteers



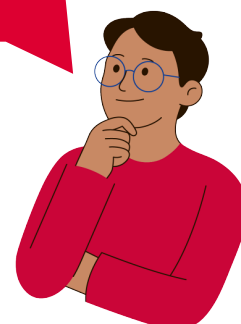
Mentimeter exercise from the workshop series. Question: What is one word that comes to mind when you think of volunteers?

Now that you have unpacked the gaps and challenges within your current service model, **it is time to look beyond volunteers as simply people who help deliver programmes.**

To get the most out of volunteering, roles need to align with volunteers' interests, skills, and availability, and organisations need a clearer understanding of how volunteers can meaningfully contribute.

This starts with taking stock of your current volunteers and recognising the value they already provide, before exploring what more they could offer.

Let's explore where your volunteers are at using the **Ladder of Participation!**



Ladder of Participation



A framework to evaluate and identify opportunities for volunteer participation.



"I set direction, uphold standards, and build the foundations that keep our work sustainable."

Governance & Strategy

Serve on boards, set organisational directions, make policy decisions

"I run the project, develop other youth leaders, and drive new initiatives."

Independent Leadership

Run entire programmes autonomously, manage other volunteers



Co-lead with Staff

Equal partnership in programme design, delivery and management

"I help run the programme end-to-end with staff."



Consulted for Input

Asked for opinions and feedback on existing programmes

"I lend my expertise to fine-tune how the programme works"

Assigned Tasks

Do what they're told, when they're told, how they're told





Ex 3: Volunteers' Level of Participation

Based on how you have mapped volunteers' involvement in your programme today (Step 4 of your Service Model Map), tick the relevant boxes.

- 1 Where do your **current volunteers** sit on the Ladder of Participation?
- 2 Where do you envision your **future volunteers** to sit on the Ladder of Participation?

Current State: **Future State:**



Governance & Strategy

Serve on boards, set organisational directions, make policy decisions

☐
☐


Independent Leadership

Run entire programmes autonomously, manage other volunteers

☐
☐


Co-lead with Staff

Equal partnership in programme design, delivery and management

☐
☐


Consulted for Input

Asked for opinions and feedback on existing programmes

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Assigned Tasks

Do what they're told, when they're told, how they're told

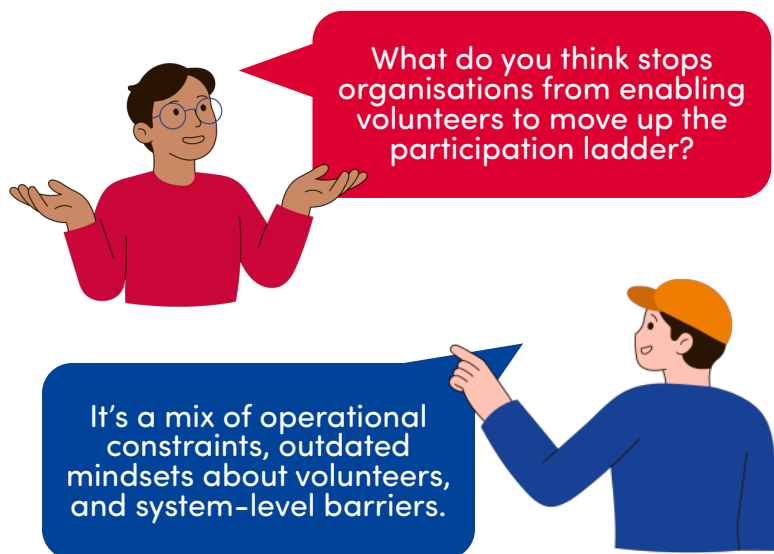
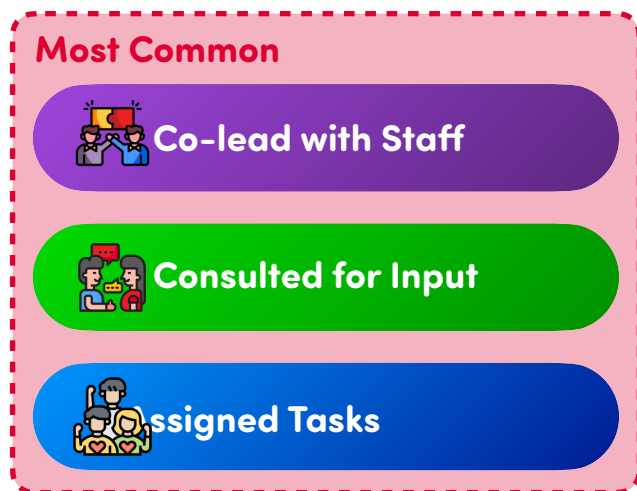
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TIPS

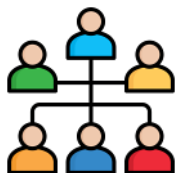
In the current state, If your volunteers fall across multiple rungs, select the rung that reflects where most of them currently sit.



Most common levels on the ladder of participation

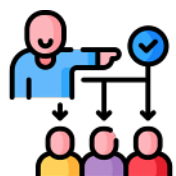


Most SSAs identified their volunteers as operating within the lower half of the participation ladder, primarily taking on assigned tasks, being consulted for input, or co-leading with staff. This aligns with how **current service models are structured, where volunteers are largely positioned as service deliverers** rather than strategic partners.



“We See Volunteers as Support” Not Partners

Many organisations genuinely value volunteers, but still see them mainly as extra help. Roles are shaped around completing tasks, not sharing decisions.



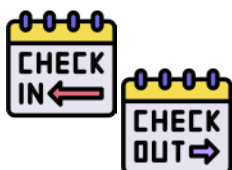
“Our Systems Are Built Around Staff”

Workflows, documentation, KPIs, and accountability structures usually assume staff are in charge. Volunteers are added into delivery points rather than woven into core decision-making.



“We Need Control to Manage Risk”

To ensure safety and quality, staff often retain judgement calls. This naturally keeps volunteer roles tightly scoped.



“We Don’t Always Have the Capacity to Build Pathways”

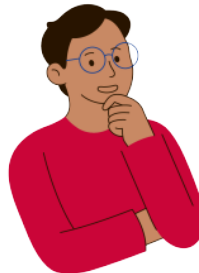
Volunteer management is often stretched. Without time and investment, it is easier to maintain simple, task-based roles than to create progression and leadership opportunities.



Least common levels on the ladder of participation



Is it really necessary for volunteers to take on leadership roles?



That depends on what your organisation is trying to achieve and the level of risk you're prepared to manage.

Moving up the participation ladder often requires **shifts in power, skills, and governance that many agencies are not yet set up to support**. Strategic work such as rethinking models, redesigning services, setting priorities usually sits with staff and boards. These structures of authority and accountability naturally shape how far volunteers can go. As a result, volunteers often remain at operational levels, even when they have the potential to contribute more strategically.



"Strategy Spaces Feel Sensitive"

Boards and leadership teams are responsible for direction, funding, and risk. Opening these spaces to volunteers can feel complex or politically delicate.



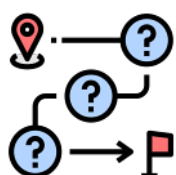
"Governance Requires Specific Readiness"

Strategic roles require long-term commitment, fiduciary responsibility and specific skillsets. Organisations often recruit externally instead of developing volunteers into these roles.



"Funders and Regulators Hold Management Accountable"

Leaders carry legal and contractual responsibility for outcomes. This makes organisations cautious about delegating strategic authority.



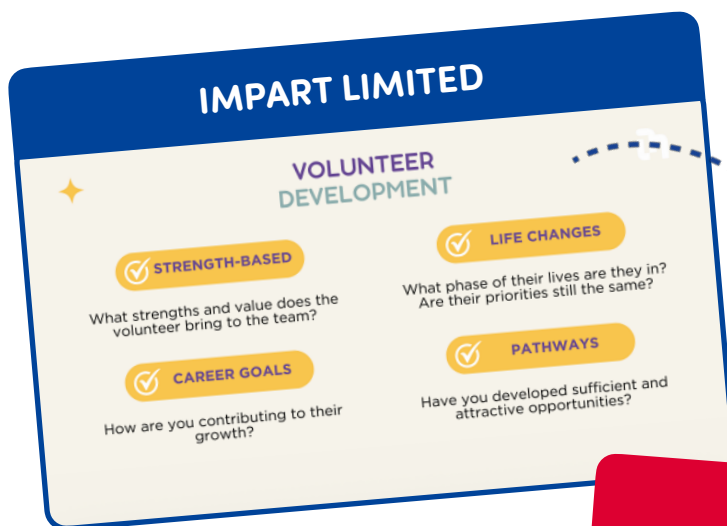
"We May Not Have the Infrastructure for Volunteer Leadership"

Supporting independent volunteer leaders requires clear delegation frameworks and governance pathways, which many organisations have not formally built.

Case Studies

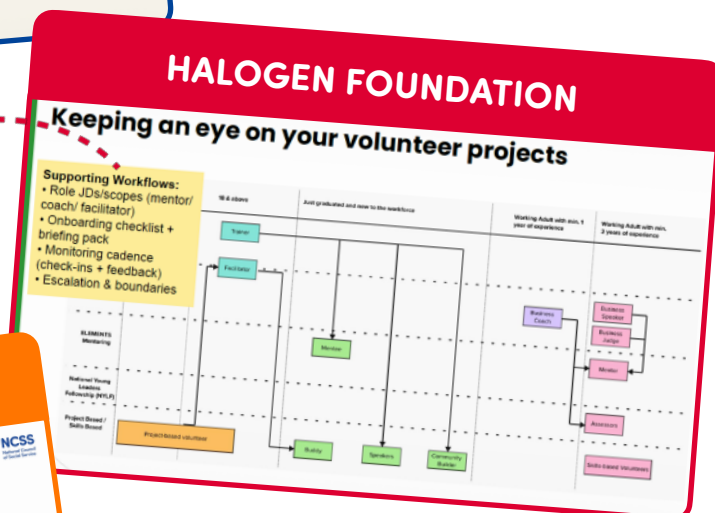
Examples of organisations unlocking the full potential of their volunteers.

Are there real-life cases of organisations expanding their volunteer roles and participation?



Adopt a User-Centric Lens: Understand volunteer needs first, then design for their development so they can grow, contribute meaningfully, and stay engaged over time.

A Volunteer Development Pathway (VDP) to structure and tailor engagement across the volunteer lifecycle, enabling progression, deeper contribution, and sustained commitment.



Volunteer Led Design Approach: Involving skilled volunteers in co-creating a leadership programme to ensure relevance, ownership, and practical impact.

Check out these links for more information:

1. Access the Panel Speakers' deck - <https://go.gov.sg/vmndeck4feb2026>
2. View the video recording - https://youtu.be/eaazwP_cDYk
3. View a graphic recording of the session - <https://go.gov.sg/vmngraphic4feb2026>





Ex 4: Volunteer 2.0 Roles

Reimagine what a future volunteer could look like for your programme beyond what they are doing today. What roles could they play at each level?

Roles/Responsibilities:



Governance & Strategy

Serve on boards, set organisational directions, make policy decisions



Independent Leadership

Run entire programmes autonomously, manage other volunteers



Co-lead with Staff

Equal partnership in programme design, delivery and management



Consulted for Input

Asked for opinions and feedback on existing programmes



Assigned Tasks

Do what they're told, when they're told, how they're told



TIPS

What if you could offload your operational tasks and responsibilities as PM and VM to your volunteers so you can focus on more strategic planning?



Key roles and responsibilities identified by participants

Youth
Advisory
Group

Project
Leads

Governance & Strategy

Serve on boards, set organisational directions, make policy decisions



Volunteer
leaders to
coordinate
with others

Involve in
interviewing
potential
volunteers

Independent Leadership

Run entire programmes autonomously, manage other volunteers



Assist with
training of
volunteers



Co-lead with Staff

Equal partnership in programme design, delivery and management

Programme
Evaluators

Run volunteer
engagements

Consulted for Input

Asked for opinions and feedback on existing programmes



Programme/
Curriculum
Planner

Coordinate &
outsource
with
corporates
for events

Assigned Tasks

Do what they're told, when they're told, how they're told



Youth
Research
Teams

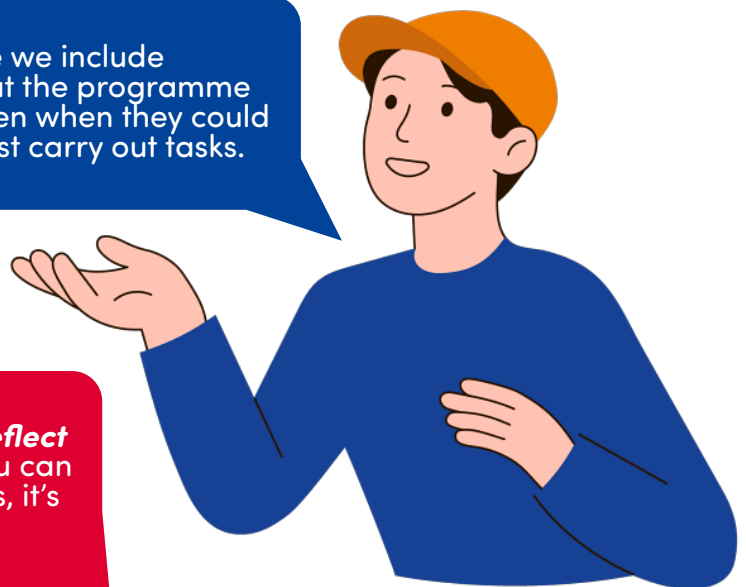
Operational
Support

Peter and Vidya have completed the exercises in Part A, reflecting on the gaps in their service model and having honest conversations about how they view their volunteers and their roles.



I thought our service model was clear. Now I can see where we assign everything to our staff and call it 'efficient'.

And where we include volunteers only at the programme delivery stage, even when they could do more than just carry out tasks.



That's the job of **Part A—to reflect on the current state**. Once you can see the gaps and possibilities, it's much easier to redesign.

Which is where Part B comes in, right?



Yes. Part B helps you use what you've identified here—plus future trends—to reimagine the service model and sketch out new ideas.

Okay. Let's save our hard work somewhere safe before it disappears. Then we can open Part B when we're ready.

Ready for the next step? Continue with **Part B: Reimagining Possibilities**.

Selected Programme & Key Activities:		Programme Objectives/Outcomes:		If resources were not an issue today, what would you do differently to improve your service outcomes?				
Current Service Model Mapping								
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Potential Value of Volunteers								

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