

The future of sport volunteering

April 16 2021

Sport Australia engaged an external third party to conduct the research.



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Introduction



Background

Sport volunteering in Australia

Sport is commonly recognised as a key part of the Australian identity. Whether it's at the community sport or high performance level, the power of sport to yield positive outcomes is well understood.

It is a major source of entertainment across the country, and a significant contributor to positive social and health outcomes.

Sport could not have become so firmly embedded within the social fabric of Australia without its volunteers. Volunteers in sport fill an enormous diversity of roles, from coach to club president to canteen staff, and everything in between.

The sport ecosystem is diverse with organisations from national, state and club sport and across all levels of government all with vested interests in sport volunteering. Together they drive greater participation, awareness and capability in sport.

The estimated value of sport volunteers in terms of the labour they provide is \$4 billion per year.

Why now?

Why now?

The world is changing

The sport sector has witnessed the impacts of a constantly changing world. Many environmental changes such as busy lifestyles, desire for more flexibility (e.g. surge of online physical activity content) and constant distractions with technology (e.g. gaming, social media) are creating new challenges for sport and sport volunteering. The impacts of COVID-19 have rippled into sport. There is a risk many will not return to play sport or volunteering.

The changing world also brings about a series of opportunities for the sport sector and volunteering. A growing focus on gender equality and the increase of women in sport, the focus on community cohesion, the growing interest in health and wellbeing, and the spotlight on cultural diversity and inclusion could all have a positive influence on sport volunteering.

It is becoming increasingly clear, however, that traditional ways of engaging with volunteers are not effectively responding to or embracing these shifts.

There is a coalition of support

While the sport sector has suffered from fragmentation and a lack of clear roles and responsibilities, there is a strong recognition across the sector that things must change.

COVID-19 has shaken the sector with immediate concerns about the return of volunteers to sport. For many, this is the burning platform for change that is needed.

To consider this position, Sport Australia brought together diverse stakeholders from across the sport and volunteering sectors. Together they are the beginning of a coalition of support that will enable change to happen.

This is a team effort. While this report has been commissioned by Sport Australia, it is designed for everyone, whether you are a National or State Sporting Organisation, community sport club or a volunteer seeking to make change.

Our approach

Our approach

Workshops

We co-facilitated three workshops with a total of 44 participants. We included people across the sector as well as allies outside the sector with a strong connection with volunteering.

The first workshop was focused on better understanding the current state of sport volunteering.

The second workshop focused on the desired future state and generating ideas to create change.

The final workshop involved validating the draft vision, and the framework for action. It also provided an opportunity to delve deeper into some of the ideas that emerged in the second workshop.

Stakeholder interviews

We conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with sport volunteering experts. Most stakeholders had direct experience with volunteering in addition to experience working in the volunteering/sport sector.

The interviews were an opportunity to better understand the sport volunteering 'ecosystem' and the key challenges it faces. They also surfaced participants views on the desired future state for sport volunteering and what needs to happen to get there.

Online engagement platform

We used an online platform to engage with participants asynchronously outside of workshops and interviews. The platform ensured that people who weren't able to attend all the workshops had an avenue to contribute their thoughts and ideas at a time that suited them.

We used the platform to share our synthesis of workshop and interview outputs and seek feedback.

Who we spoke to

- National Sporting Organisations (NSOs)
- State Sporting Organisations (SSOs)
- Community sport clubs
- Academics
- Industry
- Not For Profit sector, including volunteering and sport peak bodies
- Federal and State/Territory government

51

Total participants

The tools

This document provides a series of actionable insights and tools that can bring about immediate, and long term change across the sector.

Overview of current state

The overview provides a consolidated view of the current state of sport volunteering. This can be used to quickly communicate the current state and the key challenges facing the sector.

A vision

The vision is the north star for sport volunteering.

It can be used to help coordinate and prioritise action across the sector.

A framework for change

At the volunteer experience level, the framework contains five key elements for a good volunteer experience. These are agnostic to the volunteer, sport or club.

These can be used across the sector to guide the design of volunteer experiences, inspire thinking and evaluate progress.

At a sector level, the framework highlights key shifts in ways of working required across the sector to enable the vision and key elements to be realised.

Archetypes and journey maps

Archetypes represent a group of people with similar goals and motivations. Journey maps demonstrate how the five elements can be reflected for different archetypes.

These tools can be used to consider the diverse needs and motivations of sport volunteers and support the design of tailored experiences.

Six key opportunities to take action

The opportunity areas are particularly promising avenues through which the sector might reach the vision. These can be used for identifying ways to get started and create change. It provides suggested actions based on the organisation and role it occupies.

The framework in action

A guide to using this report

The tools are designed with both a short and long term view. In the short term, you have a range of actions that can be implemented immediately. In the long term, you can use the tools to stretch your thinking and discover new ideas.

The tools are designed to be used across the sector so that Government, NSO/SSO and community sport clubs can all benefit.

The tools can be put to use in a number of ways:

1. Workshops, meetings and discussions

Pull them out when having collaborative conversations to make sure decisions are grounded in the research and help spark good ideas.

2. Strategic, workforce and budget planning sessions

Use the tools to make sure volunteers are prioritised in strategic planning sessions.

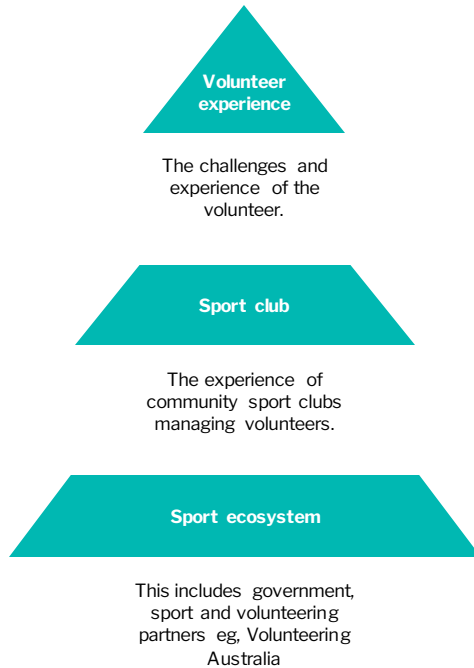
3. Inspiration

Print them off and put them in your office or clubhouse to make sure you consider the vision, framework for change and archetypes when making decisions.

What we heard about the current state



Introducing the current state



What is it?

The current state brings together pockets of knowledge into one place to tell the story of why change is required.

We have broken down what we have heard into three levels; volunteer experience, sport club and sport ecosystem.

It is important to recognise that the challenges experienced at each level are interrelated and often self fulfilling e.g. the challenges clubs are experiencing are related to both volunteer and ecosystem challenges.

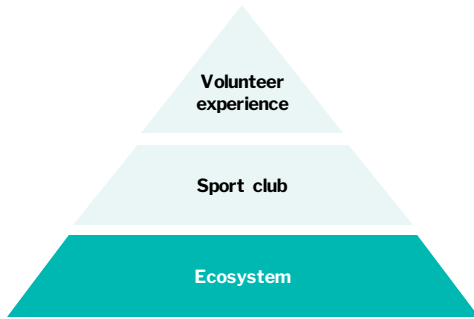
How can it be used?

The current state summary can be used to:

- Tell the story of change that is required
- Build shared understanding and alignment with diverse stakeholders
- Spark conversations and build deeper levels of understanding of the current state

Current state: Ecosystem

Current state: Ecosystem



The sport ecosystem is highly fragmented and does not have clear roles and responsibilities

While there are many organisations who see themselves as actively supporting sport volunteers, there isn't a coordinated approach across these organisations. The roles and responsibilities of each organisation often isn't clear leading to confusion, inefficiencies, and duplication of effort and resources e.g. each sport develops their own set of resources.

Clubs often feel as though they are left to their own devices when it comes to managing their volunteers. They feel that governing bodies can have different goals and objectives and are disconnected from the reality 'on the ground.'

There is an absence of a systems approach to sport, health and wellbeing and community building

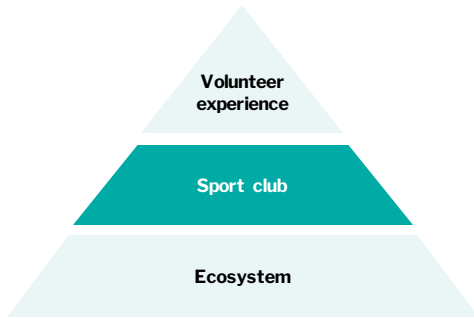
The sport ecosystem is comprised of a large number of diverse stakeholders, all of which have similar but slightly different goals and objectives. For example, NSOs are focused on the promotion and professionalisation of sport, while local government are focused on infrastructure utilisation and community health and wellbeing.

Clubs deliver a lot of broader social outcomes such as health and wellbeing and community connectedness. However, this is often a by-product of clubs running competitions rather than something intentionally designed for.

Deliberately engaging in this 'bigger picture' dialogue could help align organisations to shared goals, boost impact further, attract more people to the sport and contribute to social and wellbeing outcomes.

Current state: Ecosystem

Current state: Community sport club



Club cultures can inhibit participation

Parts of the sport sector have entrenched ways of doing things, making them less adaptable to emerging volunteer needs and societal trends. Some sport clubs are resistant to new people, new ideas, and exploring new ways of doing things.

Additionally, club cultures are not always perceived as welcoming or inclusive. This is a significant barrier for many cultural groups in the community.

Sport clubs do not have a complete understanding of what volunteers need and how to respond to these needs

Clubs rely on word of mouth and relationships to understand who their volunteers are. They do not have the systems or tools to understand the nuance in individual motivation and needs of volunteers (current and potential). They also find it difficult to translate these needs into actionable strategies so these needs can be met.

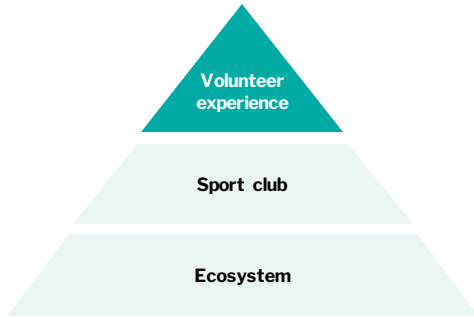
Sport clubs may not have the systems, tools and processes to effectively manage volunteers

Many sport clubs do not have access to systems or tools that facilitate more seamless communication with, and management of, their volunteers. Planning and tracking volunteer tasks, including the development of weekly rosters, can become burdensome without the appropriate systems and tools. It also means volunteers encounter many roadblocks, causing many to withdraw their interest.

Whilst in some cases there is an absence of tools and systems, in other cases tools and systems have been needlessly duplicated, which is tying up funds that could be more usefully put towards other resources.

Current state: Ecosystem

Current state: Volunteer experience



Sport volunteering is currently limiting the pool of potential volunteers

Volunteer roles tend to be time-consuming and rigid, making some people less willing to get involved. Volunteers often feel as though they are expected to be involved with the club for a long period of time, and there is a lack of casual or flexible opportunities. A lot of roles are functional and relate directly to the sport or competitions e.g. coaches, scorers.

For many, they do not see themselves and their individual goals reflected in the current volunteer offering. They see sport volunteering as something that 'others' participate in. Many feel that sport volunteering needs a new language, brand and framing to appeal to diverse audiences. For example, some clubs have experimented with the titles 'supporter' or 'action agent' as alternatives to volunteer.

The volunteer experience does not meet individual needs

Sport clubs do not have established ways of understanding and designing for different cohorts. This leads to individuals being matched to roles that do not align with their individual interests and motivations and a one size fits all approach to volunteer management.

Volunteers are often left to undertake roles with little support or training. For many, this limits their ability to achieve personal and club goals. Volunteers need both training and support to a mix of functional e.g. how to do the role; and emotional e.g. how to get to know the club community.

Sport volunteer roles often expand over time and leave people feeling stretched and burnt out. For many they feel a deep sense of obligation to the sport and the club and a sense that there isn't anyone else who would step in if they were to resign.

Vision for the future of sport volunteering



The vision

Introducing the vision

What is it?

The vision is the north star for sport volunteering. It is aspirational and provides a unified perspective for all stakeholders to move forward with.

The vision has been co-created with participants. It was drafted based on activities and conversations and validated in a workshop.

How it can be used?

The vision can be used to:

- Continue to unify stakeholders and create a shared purpose
- Evaluate ideas and progress
- Spark thinking and ideas to enable the vision

Consider:

- Printing it off and placing it in your clubhouse or office
- Bringing it to meetings when volunteering is on the agenda

Vision for the future of sport volunteering

People from **all** walks of life see and realise opportunities to contribute to individual, club and community goals in a way that suits them

Vision for the future of sport volunteering

Everyone can participate in volunteering, whether you are from a culturally diverse group, connected/not connected to the sport, young, older, committed/time poor.

Volunteer opportunities must be visible to diverse groups of people. It isn't enough to say you are inclusive - volunteers need to see how they can contribute and see other people like them.

Realising opportunities means clubs have inclusive cultures and the sufficient structure in place to support people to be effective e.g. training, job descriptions.

People from all walks of life see and realise opportunities to contribute to individual, club and community goals in a way that suits them

Volunteering needs to be flexible to accommodate different needs. This could include virtual volunteering, project based roles and completely flexible roles where people opt in on a week by week basis.

Volunteering roles need to balance individual, club and community goals so everyone gets something out of it. This value needs to be clearly understood and communicated.

A framework for change



A framework for change

Introducing the framework for change

What is the framework for change?

Realising the vision requires a change in how we think about the volunteer experience. Five elements have been identified that should underpin all volunteer experiences and are agnostic to the sport, club, role or individual. These have been developed and iterated based on discussions with stakeholders.

The five elements are:

- Make it feel like I belong
- Make it easy to get involved
- Tailor roles to my needs
- Support me
- Create value for me, the club, and the community

To support systemic change at the system level and enable the vision and elements to be realised, the framework calls for three key shifts in ways of working that are required across the sector.

These include:

- Working collaboratively
- Trying new things
- Leveraging data and insights

How to use the framework?

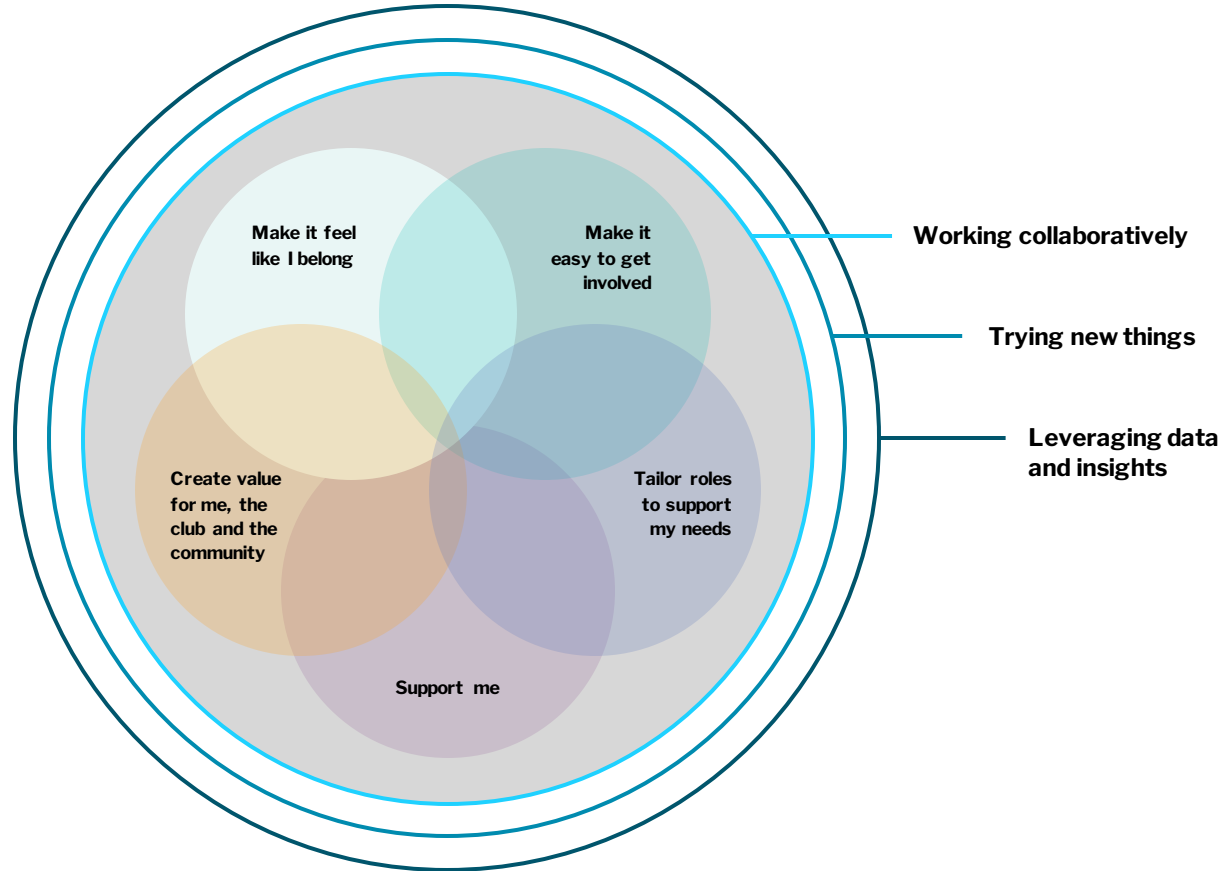
The framework has been designed to be used by everyone including government, NSO, SSO and community sport clubs. Whether you are a Project Manager responsible for implementing a new volunteer recruitment system or you are a President writing a job advertisement, the framework should be used to help guide your approach.

It can be used to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of current volunteer experiences
- Evaluate current practices, tools and resources
- Generate ideas to support clubs and the volunteer experience
- Monitor progress over time

A framework for change

A framework for change



A framework for change

Make it feel like I belong

Volunteers need to see themselves reflected and included in sport volunteering. All types of people, whether they are younger, older, passionate about sport, belong to a cultural group, a job seeker or a retiree, need to see that they belong. Sport volunteering needs to be a place for inclusivity where everyone feels accepted and they have something to contribute and gain.

“A lot of recruitment happens through 'mates' - they all become the same demographic and thought process. It creates a lot of biases”

Why is it important?

- The sport sector has seen the endurance of traditional perceptions of volunteering, including rigid and time consuming roles that are held for many years, and a 'type' of person who tends to occupy these roles. This may be deterring potential new volunteers.
- Creating a more relatable volunteer brand and opportunities will increase the number and diversity of volunteers, leveraging new skills and perspectives.
- Clubs require diversity of volunteers if they are to attract new players to their club e.g. teenage volunteers could help to attract their peers who may have left the sport.
- There is significant untapped potential for engaging new volunteers who do not currently see themselves reflected in sport volunteering including students, retirees and people looking for work experience.
- If sport volunteering continues to use the same people, it can contribute to burnout, stagnant cultures and ongoing skill gaps.

Make it easy to get involved

It needs to be easy to find sport volunteering opportunities, and signing up to get involved. Signing up should require no prior connection to the club. It should be easy to start, stop, change roles, and recommence volunteering depending on what else is going on in the volunteer's life.

“The trouble is sport, they think their doors are open, but they're not. They're really a closed up shop ... in terms of letting others into their clubs to take on roles.”

Why is it important?

- Currently it is not easy for volunteers to learn about and undertake opportunities. It relies on people being associated with the sport club and human effort to connect people with the opportunity. For many, it is not clear how they can contribute, how to get involved and what would be expected of them. For those that do pursue opportunities, they often encounter a series of dead ends.
- Making sport volunteering easy will increase the number and diversity of volunteers.
- Making it easy, will support clubs with their workforce planning. They will more likely have a pool of volunteers that can be mobilised to meet club needs.
- If sport volunteering is made easier, people will have a more enjoyable experience and will be more likely to recommend volunteering to people from their network.
- Making sport volunteering easy will enable people to more flexibly opt in and opt out of opportunities building more dynamic resource pools.

A framework for change

Tailor roles to my needs

Sport volunteering opportunities need to be aligned to the needs and expectations of individuals. Volunteers should be able to participate in a way that fits with their circumstances and motivations, and makes use of their skills and experience.

“Clubs treat all volunteers the same - they end up putting the young person in the car park taking money when they are seeking to develop skills.”

Why is it important?

- Current volunteer opportunities tend to be rigid, and are designed to meet the needs of the club rather than the volunteer.
- Volunteering often requires a level of involvement that many people cannot commit to, particularly when roles tend to expand over time.
- There is an opportunity to change the way sport volunteer opportunities are designed to better meet the needs of both volunteers and sport clubs.
- More flexible and dynamic roles helps to reduce burnout of existing volunteers.
- Structuring roles around discrete projects and snack-size tasks creates new and creative opportunities to leverage talent, especially for those that do not associate themselves with sport volunteering.
- Breaking roles into flexible components will grow the pool of volunteers.

A framework for change

Support me

Sport volunteers should feel confident about what they are meant to be doing. They should have the training, tools and support to do the role, and achieve their personal goals e.g. social connection, altruistic outcomes.

“Most sport volunteers are there because they play sport or their kids play sport, but they don't have the skills to run a 'small business'”

Why is it important?

- Current sport volunteers will often join a club without being formally onboarded and without clearly defined responsibilities.
- Many volunteers feel they would benefit from training to support them in the delivery of their tasks. Training and support resources can be shared across the sector, rather than duplicating them.
- Many sport volunteers suffer from burnout, as they accrue responsibilities over time and there aren't enough volunteers to help share the load.
- Providing volunteers with technical and emotional support will contribute to quality outcomes for the sport club.
- Supporting people to achieve their personal goals e.g. job hunting, spending quality time with their children and building social connection will lead to higher levels of motivation and engagement.

A framework for change

Create value for me, the club and community

Sport volunteering should create value at the volunteer, club and community levels. Volunteers should have a clear understanding of how their work is contributing to the club's strategic objectives, and to broader social outcomes (such as mental health, or community cohesion). At the same time, volunteers need to feel as though their own personal motivations for getting involved are being fulfilled.

“Sometimes people think of a ... club and again, our purpose is to provide sport. But is it really? Or is it to meet community needs? Especially for community sport clubs.”

Why is it important?

- It currently feels one sided for volunteers who are asked to dedicate time and resources to the community sport club without a clear exchange of value.
- An understanding of the motivations of current and future volunteers as well as possible benefits sport clubs can provide, will lead to higher levels of interest, engagement and retention.
- Volunteers don't expect much in terms of reward, but there is an opportunity for clubs to provide reward and recognition that are better aligned with individual motivations and goals.
- Volunteers want to understand how their contribution supports broader goals e.g. at the club, community, society level.
- Volunteering needs to have a clear exchange of value that is well communicated.

A framework for change

Ways of working

To achieve the vision, the sector will need to employ new ways of working. We have identified three critical shifts in ways of working that will be required.

Working collaboratively

Collaboration across the ecosystem is crucial. It will require both bottom up and top down engagement to bring about the change. It requires clear roles and responsibilities, sharing knowledge and leveraging resources. All parts of the sector will play a role in improving the volunteer experience. This is not something that sport clubs can deliver on their own. They can make changes on the ground but will require support through appropriate scaffolding and resources.

Collaboration should also extend to groups beyond sport, including the broader volunteering, community and corporate sector.

Trying new things

This requires a willingness to change the way things have always been done. Methods such as prototyping, testing, pilots and grants are all ways new ideas can be trialled and built upon.

The infrastructure needs to be put in place to enable innovation to happen at the community sport club level rather than a prescriptive model of volunteer management. These bright spots of innovation need to be actively shared, celebrated and scaled.

Leveraging data and insights

The collection and utilisation of research and insights will enable continuous change to happen. At a club level this can be achieved by creating a rich picture of volunteers. At a systems level it will focus on investing in research and using technology to spot trends and opportunities.

The sport sector will use research and foresight to deeply understand the needs of clubs and volunteers so they can understand and respond to the trends, challenges and opportunities.

The framework in action



The framework in action

Introducing archetypes

What are archetypes?

Archetypes are broad categories of people that share similar attributes. We have designed a set of archetypes for sport volunteering based on existing volunteer groups as well as new groups, clubs could access in the future. Each one represents a group with similar motivations. Within one archetype there will be different demographics represented e.g. ages, geographies.

How to use them?

Archetypes can be used to:

- Empathise with different perspectives and remove blind spots
- Consider different needs, challenges and motivations when designing new products to support volunteers e.g. recruitment systems, handbooks
- Generate ideas to engage with archetypes that are currently not being reached
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current practices for different archetypes

We have designed an activity to support you to use the archetypes.

The framework in action

The 7 archetypes

Currently engaged



The committed
sport fan



The skill
seeker



The obliging
helper



The lifelong
volunteer

Not currently engaged



The friendly
neighbour



The workplace
volunteer



The underutilised
talent

The framework in action

Introducing journey maps

What are journey maps?

For each archetype, a journey map has been included to demonstrate how the volunteer experience can be tailored to respond to the elements in the framework. It includes three phases: preparation, participation and ongoing engagement (which refers to any engagement the volunteer has with the club following their direct participation). The journeys are not necessarily linear. It recognises that people will opt in and out of volunteering and join at different points within a sport season.

How to use them?

The journeys can be used:

- To inspire ways to tailor your journeys to different archetypes
- To inspire new ideas
- As a prompt for designing new journeys - see Activity 1

The different phases of the journey (e.g. preparation etc.) are high level, and can be used to better understand the sequence of events.



Each step of the journey is aligned with at least one of the elements. These are colour coded.

The journeys begin with the initial call to action which prompts the individuals to support the club as volunteers.

The framework in action

The committed sport fan

These volunteers tend to be people who have played the sport in the past, or are still playing. The sport is a part of their personal identity. They enjoyed the benefits of volunteers when they were players, and feel it's their turn to give back to the sport.



Likes

- Feeling connected to the sport and the club
- “Giving back” to the club
- Getting to know the players and other volunteers
- Connected to ‘like minded’ people who share the same interest in sport

Pain points

- Insufficient support to do their role
- Administrative hurdles
- They tend to get asked to do jobs like coaching which is time consuming

How to reach them

- Reach out to present players
- Reach out to club alumni
- Identify these motivations and skills in network e.g. parents, grandparents

The committed sport fan

Journey map

Preparation



1. Netball club emails senior players to recruit coaches for the junior league. The email is written by one of the senior players already coaching. It includes photos of them coaching and 'sells the benefits'.



2. Online training is provided by the SSO containing fun games and drills to support coaches.

Key:

- ▼ Make it feel like I belong
- ▼ Easy to get involved
- ▼ Tailor roles to my needs
- ▼ Support me
- ▼ Create value for me, the club and the community

Participation



3. The club directs volunteers to the relevant checks. While they are signing up they fill out a survey about their preferences, motivations and goals. A volunteer passport is created so they can volunteer across different sports and opportunities.



4. Every quarter a coaches vs players event is hosted. For every goal the players get, a donation is made to a local charity (funded through ticket sales).



5. Volunteers are offered free tickets to see their netball team to reward their service.

Ongoing Engagement



6. There is a volunteer that acts as a supporter to the coaches. They check in regularly and identify improvements for the coaches.



7. Volunteer signs up for another season, but decides to job share due to increasing work commitments.

The framework in action

The skill seeker

These volunteers see the value in volunteering to help them progress professionally, or academically. They are seeking opportunities to apply and develop their skills in a practical way that enable them to give back.



Likes

- Formal recognition for their work, such as a certificate or statement of hours worked
- The right opportunity that is aligned to their skills and time commitments e.g. project based work
- Formal, structured and recognised training or mentoring and support
- Building networks

Pain points

- Working on tasks that are not aligned with their existing skill set
- Not feeling they are set up for success e.g. training, mentoring
- Not feeling valued or appreciated

How to reach them

- Schools
- Universities
- Current members

The skill seeker

Journey map

Preparation



1. University posts opportunity for students to 'help out' with social media at a soccer club.



2. Volunteer receives a thorough onboarding and induction, all via video call to accommodate study commitments.



3. Volunteer shapes their own job description, to deliver a discrete project seeking to increase engagement with the CALD community.

Participation



4. Volunteer designs online outreach materials specifically to target CALD communities who have traditionally been less involved with the club.



5. Volunteer has weekly check-ins from assigned 'Volunteer Support Officer' at the club.

Ongoing Engagement



6. When the project finishes, the volunteer receives a 'statement of skills' and completes an exit interview to identify areas to improve volunteer experience.



7. The volunteer shares their experience through their universities podcast. They feel proud to share their learnings with other students.

Key:

- ◆ Make it feel like I belong
- ◆ Easy to get involved
- ◆ Tailor roles to my needs
- ◆ Support me
- ◆ Create value for me, the club and the community

The framework in action

The obliging helper

These volunteers may not think about their service as 'volunteering'. They are more likely to think about their volunteering as informal help, and are more likely to be approached rather than actively seeking out the opportunity to get involved. Parents of children playing the sport often belong to this group.



Likes

- Spending time with family and friends
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- Flexibility
- Social connection and being part of a community
- Lots of notice so they can plan their time

Pain points

- Feel stretched and obligated
- Not aligned with motivations, skills and circumstances

How to reach them

- Through the clubs existing networks
- Reach out to the parents of players and their networks
- Community members

The obliging helper

Journey map

Preparation



1. When a parent of a child signs their child up to a basketball club they are notified of the different options they have to help support clubs including volunteer roles, donation of money or nomination of someone else e.g. grandparent.



2. They are happy to help but don't have much time. The volunteer matching tool is clear and they nominate themselves for a role/s that suits.



3. A three month roster and a calendar of social events is shared with all volunteers.

Participation



4. The parent nominates themselves for two roles, one which is rostered and one which is flexible. They do the canteen twice (fixed) but also do volunteer check-in calls with students that can be undertaken flexibly.

They have access to a ready made guide to support the check-ins with students.



5. There are monthly social events, including trivia and picnics, for the club to recognise and thank volunteers for their help.

Ongoing Engagement



6. All volunteers are invited to an end of season planning day to ensure volunteer needs are being met.

Key:

- Make it feel like I belong
- Easy to get involved
- Tailor roles to my needs
- Support me
- Create value for me, the club and the community

The framework in action

The lifelong volunteer

These volunteers have been involved with the club for years. They initially started in a different archetype group, but over time their motivations, needs, wants, and expectations from volunteering have changed.



Likes

- Opportunities to socialise with other volunteers
- Feeling deeply connected to the sport club and members
- Being involved in key decisions
- Feeling needed and valued

Pain points

- Taking on too much work and getting burnt out
- Not having the option to step back but still being involved in the club
- Observing challenges experienced by the club

How to reach them

- They are already there!
- These volunteers may be in roles that have evolved and expanded over time. It may be worth revisiting their roles to see if their tasks can be shared with the new volunteers who want to get involved.

The lifelong volunteer

Journey map

Preparation



1.
A long serving volunteer at a badminton club has been on the board for five years and decides they need a change.



2.
The club has identified the need for a volunteer support officer which feels like a good fit and a new challenges.



3.
The club organises a BBQ to acknowledge the contributions of the volunteer.



4.
There are big changes in volunteer management. They are excited to be part of an online community where tools, advice and learnings are shared. They also enjoy getting to know people from outside their club.

Participation



5.
The volunteer works three hours per week to coordinate other volunteers and ensure they have the support they need.



6.
In this work, the volunteer learns of skills gaps at the club and pulls together recruitment materials to advertise for 'specialist' volunteers. They are proud to share their learnings more broadly with community of volunteer managers.

Ongoing Engagement



7.
After supporting the club in bringing more volunteers on board, the volunteer takes the opportunity to have a break. They continue to be active on the online community of volunteer managers.

Key:

- Make it feel like I belong
- Easy to get involved
- Tailor roles to my needs
- Support me
- Create value for me, the club and the community

The framework in action

The friendly neighbour

These volunteers are from pockets of the community that have not typically been involved with the sport, or the club. They are likely to be motivated by broader goals such as community connection or altruistic outcomes associated with traditional volunteering. They cannot see how sport volunteering aligns with their motivations.



Likes

- Feeling a part of their community
- Social connection (1 in 3 people at risk of loneliness)
- Broader personal and social outcomes e.g. less interested in competitions and more interested in things like mental health, reconciliation, supporting people living with a disability to participate in sport

Pain points

- Not having opportunities that align with their motivations
- Feeling like they cannot participate unless they are associated with the sport/club

How to reach them

- Targeted communication efforts
- Partnerships with community groups, such as cultural groups or charities
- Events e.g. hosting community open days

The friendly neighbour

Journey map

Preparation



1. A person attends an event at the soccer club for RU OK? day. They see how much the club is investing in mental health and is excited by what they see.



2. They sign their child up and express interest in volunteer opportunities that uses sport to contribute to positive mental health. They sign up to volunteer at a clinic for at-risk youth. They have experience working in corporates and offered to help with sponsorship for the clinic.



3. The new volunteer is introduced to the team at a weekly team event. As they go through the induction they feel confident and empowered to make a difference.

Participation



4. The volunteer is able to build on the partnerships that have been established. They find a restaurant that will host the end of clinic event. The soccer clinic participants all celebrate the week and enjoy a night of fun, laughs and good food.

Ongoing Engagement



5. The volunteer feels great about the impact they have been able to make. They would like to share their experience about corporate partnerships more broadly. They volunteer to create a quick guide to help the next person.



6. They attend a social event at the end of the clinic to thank all of the volunteers who provided support.

Key:



Make it feel like I belong



Easy to get involved



Tailor roles to my needs



Support me



Create value for me, the club and the community

The framework in action

The workplace volunteer

These volunteers work in companies with established volunteer programs. They may not normally engage with the sport or club, but they are enthusiastic about making the most of the opportunities created by the company to support the community.



Likes

- Giving back to the community
- Sharing their skills and expertise where useful

Pain points

- Wasting time
- Working inefficiently
- Unclear expectations

How to reach them

- Through partnerships with corporates and local businesses

The workplace volunteer

Journey map

Preparation



1. An employee notices an advertisement on their intranet to use their two days of volunteer leave to help a cricket club train people how to use a new scoring app. They have been interested in doing more training so the role sounds perfect.



2. They email the club and organise dates. The club does all the coordination to support the training. All they have to do is design and facilitate the training.



3. They are sent information prior to starting volunteer role about the new app and the training requirements. They get to download and practice prior.

Participation








4. They deliver the training to over 20 volunteers at the club. The volunteers all feel really confident and excited about the app.

Ongoing Engagement



5. The club gives the volunteer a call afterwards to thank them and check-in on the experience. The volunteer shares an idea to digitise the training and offers to get involved to help streamline it in future.

Key:

-  Make it feel like I belong
-  Easy to get involved
-  Tailor roles to my needs
-  Support me
-  Create value for me, the club and the community

The framework in action

The underutilised talent

These volunteers are highly skilled but for a variety of reasons, such as family commitments or retirement, are currently not applying these skills. They are interested in keeping these skills current and giving back to the community but may not associate professional volunteering with a sport club.



Likes

- Giving back to the community
- Keeping their skills fresh and feeling like they are continuing to learn
- Using their skills in a way that suits them
- Using skills to achieve broader outcomes

Pain points

- Lack of alignment of roles to individual needs and motivations
- Lack of flexibility; they may not want to commit ongoing
- Working inefficiently

How to reach them

- Through targeted campaigns and messaging
- Partnerships with local groups e.g. maternal health centres or retirement groups

The underutilised talent

Journey map

Preparation



1.
A physio has taken time off following the birth of their child. They think it could be a good time to use their skills in a way they wouldn't have the opportunity to at work.



2.
In an online search, they find a website where you can search for opportunities based on skills, time and interests. They are excited when they see they are looking for volunteers to design a stretching program for club members.

Key:

- Make it feel like I belong
- Easy to get involved
- Tailor roles to my needs
- Support me
- Create value for me, the club and the community

Participation



3.
The volunteer doesn't have skills in developing content or creating videos but is excited to collaborate as part of a team. She can do it in her own time.

Ongoing Engagement



4.
The volunteer returns to work after a period of time. She doesn't have much time anymore but enjoys staying in touch through the club's newsletter and helping out at ad-hoc events.



5.
When the online stretching program is launched, the club send it over with a thank you note.

Opportunity areas for action



Six key opportunity areas for action

The opportunity areas

What are the opportunity areas?

Through co-design, six key opportunity areas have been identified that will enable the realisation of the vision. Each opportunity area is aligned with at least one element from the framework for change.

The areas are broad and are not designed to be prescriptive but instead prompts to inspire and guide stakeholders across the sector to take action and bring about change.

How to use the opportunity areas?

- Use them to help develop a business case and get funding for an idea
- Implement any of the ideas/actions listed
- Inspire other ideas/initiatives that respond to the opportunity area
- Use them as a starting point for collaboration with others in the sector

Getting started

We have provided a selection of actions and ideas that emerged over the course of our research as ‘first steps’ for different players in the sport sector. These may be actions that your organisation is equipped to implement straight away, or they may be more useful as prompts to inspire other actions which are not listed here.

Lower effort and higher effort

We have indicated which actions appear to be simpler to implement, and which may require more time, resources and investment. This is just a guide; it may be the case that the higher effort actions are more feasible for your organisation despite their increased complexity.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity One:

Partnerships between community sport clubs and local organisations

What is the opportunity?

There is an opportunity to establish partnerships between sport clubs and other community organisations to leverage their skills, experiences and resources. It will also help to build more diverse club cultures and stronger community cohesion.

Partnerships could be formed between a sport club and a charity, a volunteering peak body, corporates, local faith groups, local government, veterans, schools and universities, local businesses, or service clubs such as Rotary.

For example, a sport club may partner with a local charity who combine running events with helping their community. A group of runners may jog together to visit elderly people who live by themselves. A partnership like this could provide each organisation with access to a new pool of volunteers, and tackle social isolation and loneliness at the same time.

Why is this idea important?

Many clubs feel pressure to do everything themselves, and may not always have the skills, resources or reach. Partnerships create opportunities to leverage the skills and experience of others in a way that is mutually beneficial.

Creating partnerships can:

- increase the pool of possible volunteers and attract people who are not already connected to the sport
- equip clubs to develop a more inclusive club culture, by engaging people through diverse networks and not exclusively through word of mouth
- create new forms of value for volunteers, especially those who may be interested in more altruistic outcomes than sport competition
- help to build social cohesion in the community, by creating connections between different kinds of organisations
- enable clubs to contribute more deliberately to broader social outcomes, such as good mental health

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity One:

Partnerships between community sport clubs and local organisations

Related elements:

Make it feel like I belong

Partnerships will help to bring in a more diverse pool of volunteers, making it feel more relatable and inclusive for others.

Easy to get involved

Tailor roles to my needs

Partnerships could support the creation of new volunteer opportunities that better align to individual goals e.g. altruistic outcomes.

Support me

Partnerships will help to bring in more volunteers, who will help to share the load of existing volunteers and mitigate burnout.

Create value for me, the club and the community

Partnerships with social impact organisations will enable the club to more deliberately contribute to social outcomes.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity One:

Partnerships between community sport clubs and local organisations

What does this need to succeed?

Partnerships need to be strategic - the partnership should be built from mutual interest and benefit and not as a reactive decision.

Written parameters - parameters include commitment, stated objectives, guidelines, timeframes, metrics to measure the success of the partnership, and key contacts on either side.

Training - reaching out to cultural and faith groups in particular will require the involvement of existing volunteers from those cultural or faith groups to assist in making sure engagements are culturally safe.

Minimal red tape or administrative burden - partnerships should be easy to establish and impose no extra burden on volunteers, or either organisation.

Active partnership leadership - through someone with sufficient time and skills to dedicate to managing and nurturing the partnership.

Communication and promotion - Communication and promotion of the partnership and its successes along the way.

Values alignment - Values should be aligned across both organisations.

Risks

- Partner's expectations of the arrangement are not met
- Partnerships take time to build and nurture over time and not seen as worthy
- Partnership may be based on personal relationships of club member, which could fall over once there is attrition
- Misalignment of values or objectives of the partnered organisations
- Potential damage to reputation if the partnership is not a good match

Considerations

- Sponsorship models could donate time instead of traditional monetary contributions
- Certain partnerships may be at the NSO or SSO level (for example with universities) to facilitate arrangements that multiple clubs can benefit from

Six key opportunity areas for action

Getting started:

Partnerships between community sport clubs and local organisations

Lower effort

Higher effort

Community sport clubs

Access existing guidance from volunteer resource centres, for example on establishing [corporate volunteer partnerships](#).

Identify objectives for a partnership (i.e. attract volunteers, build social cohesion etc.) and scope possible partners.

Establish and participate in strategic partnerships, including with organisations from outside the sport sector.

NSO/SSO

Conduct audit of existing tools and resources to support clubs in developing partnerships.

Scope possible partnerships at the association level which would create opportunities for multiple clubs to participate, for example with a large university.

Form strategic partnership to create value for multiple clubs.

Government

Conduct audit of existing tools and resources on Game Plan, and other platforms, to support clubs in developing partnerships.

Facilitate round tables/ innovation events with possible partners to brainstorm initiatives that would have mutual benefit e.g. events, initiatives.

Create a 'bank' of novel partnership ideas to help inspire others.

***Gameplan is a digital platform supported by sportAustralia designed to help sport clubs understand their current capability and provide support*

Idea in action

An NSO or SSO could establish a partnership with a university to provide sport management students with opportunities to gain valuable, hands-on work experience. This would save clubs from having to independently reach out and establish similar arrangements, and could function as a rich source of skilled volunteers.

Imagine if...

Students had access to a portal that was practical, educational and inspiration. Imagine logging on to see volunteer opportunities that provide tangible avenues to demonstrate skills, showcases of previous students work to inspire others on what's possible and, videos on how to get the most out of the opportunity to make others feel equipped.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Two:

Collaboration between community sport clubs

What is the opportunity?

In addition to forming partnerships with organisations from outside of sport, there is an opportunity to introduce mechanism/s for sport clubs to collaborate more effectively with one another. This will create a forum in which clubs can share knowledge and resources.

For example, this type of collaboration could support the development of novel concepts like shared local community events, applying for shared grants or sharing of resources for winter and summer sports.

Why is this idea important?

The sport sector is fragmented with many community sport clubs operating independently, and often without sufficient support. This prevents clubs from learning from one another, and often results in needless duplication of effort, for example in independently delivering training to their respective volunteers.

Collaboration can support:

- more efficient use of limited resources
- consistency across the sector which makes it easier for volunteers to move between clubs
- sharing inspiration and innovation with other clubs
- prioritisation of collaboration over competition, which could ultimately translate into a boost in volunteers for everyone
- collaboratively building the practice of volunteer management

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Two:

Collaboration between community sport clubs

Related elements:

Make it feel
like I belong

Easy to get
involved

**Tailor roles
to my needs**

**Support
me**

Create value for me, the
club and the community

Clubs could collaborate by sharing volunteers. This would provide volunteers with more choice when it comes to choosing a role that suits them.

Collaborating with other clubs will create opportunities for sharing knowledge and opening up training opportunities so that more volunteers feel equipped with the skills they need to do their role.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Two:

Collaboration between community sport clubs

What does this need to succeed?

Goals - Clear objectives, not just collaborating for the sake of it.

Prioritisation - Before clubs take the steps to collaborate, they need to prioritise their collaboration efforts so efforts can be targeted.

Resourcing - There is a need for a dedicated position who can manage collaboration, to prevent this from falling to existing volunteers and risking burnout.

Measurement - A way to measure the success of the mechanism

Flexibility - Different ways for people to engage, i.e. time of day, day of week, remote/in person.

Diversity - Diverse membership, including different types of volunteers.

Easy - It needs to be as easy as possible for volunteers to collaborate.

Risks

- Sport forums and other collaboration mechanisms can be an avenue to spark collaboration, but without coordination and leadership, ideas and actions are not prioritised or implemented
- Leading on collaboration often falls within the remit of a club board or president, who is already very busy and may not have the time to take on more work
- Collaboration that is not purposeful or goal orientated can feel like a waste of time

Considerations

- Collaboration does not need to be limited to the sport sector. There is an opportunity to engage more broadly with volunteer hosting organisations outside sport

Six key opportunity areas for action

Getting started:

Collaboration between sport clubs

Lower effort

Higher effort

Community sport clubs

Reach out to other clubs in the area for an informal catch-up.

Use existing channels, such as the peak bodies for sport, to attend events, learn from other clubs, and share learnings.

Consider recruiting a shared volunteer to lead and manage the collaboration between clubs.

NSO/SSO

Shift the narrative to 'collaboration over competition' in communications with community sport clubs.

Host events for clubs to meet each other and learn from one another.

Establish pilots with a group of clubs to help implement innovations and build relationships.

Government

Conduct audit of existing tools and resources on Game Plan, and other platforms, to support clubs in developing partnerships.

Create forums to bring clubs together to support volunteer management.

Clarify roles and responsibilities and re-design governance between federal, state and local government and NSO/SSO.

Idea in action

Sport Australia hosts a monthly meetup called 'covering all bases in sport volunteering' for clubs.

The event could be a way of sharing updates e.g. new tools developed, showcasing best practice from different sport clubs, networking, and co-designing new initiatives/supports.

It could be recorded and posted as a webinar for others to view after the event.

Imagine if...

An event was able to bring together early adopters/innovators to share knowledge, collaborate and support one another.

Imagine government as an active supporter of grassroots change at a club level, scaling up ideas and sharing learnings.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Three:

Reframe sport volunteering

What is the opportunity?

There is an opportunity to rebrand sport volunteering and use distinct engagement methods, collateral and tailored messaging to appeal to different volunteer groups.

This includes more deliberate efforts to bring sport volunteering into the broader volunteering community, for example by advertising roles in the same places, and drawing attention to the broader impacts of sport that extend beyond competition and game play.

Why is this idea important?

Sport volunteering does not resonate with certain groups within the population. It is perceived by many as exclusive, and less dynamic and engaging than other volunteer opportunities. Many volunteers who engage with non-sport volunteer opportunities wouldn't consider volunteering for a sport club.

Reframing sport volunteering will help to:

- reposition sport volunteering as an exciting and desirable opportunity
- attract new volunteers and increase the pool of support
- attract different types of volunteers, with different skills and experience

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Three: Reframe sport volunteering

Related elements:

**Make it feel
like I belong**

Reframing sport volunteering will ensure that people from all walks of life feel as though there is a place for them to volunteer at a community sport club.

Easy to get
involved

**Tailor roles
to my needs**

Taking the time to better understand different types of volunteers, and their distinct needs and motivations will enable clubs to more effectively cater to them.

Support
me

Create value for me, the
club and the community

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Three:

Reframe sport volunteering

What does this need to succeed?

Start small - Commence with the groups who are already engaged in some form, such as parents who come to watch their children, or former club members.

Tailored - Language, channels and content types that appeal to each volunteer group and is shaped around their respective motivations.

Testing - Messaging, designs and channels should, where possible, be tested prior to implementing.

Informed - An understanding of who the target audiences are, where they are, and their interest in volunteering.

Educational - Support for clubs on how to use different collateral effectively e.g. channels, timing, audiences.

Iterative - Measure changes in engagement over time and make improvements.

Risks

- There are too many different messages in the market and they are not coordinated
- Not testing messaging and it not 'landing' as intended
- Lack of skills; copywriting, social media and graphic design
- The volunteer experience does not align with expectations communicated e.g. if the advert promotes the training and support provided and this is not a reality this will lead to disengagement

Considerations

- As much as possible, clubs should use research and data to inform their segmentation. The archetypes may be a useful prompt in this process

Six key opportunity areas for action

Getting started:

Reframing sport volunteering

Lower effort

Higher effort

Community sport clubs

Consider establishing a club presence on different social media channels based on the audiences the club wants to reach.

Reframe volunteer opportunities to use language that appeals to the volunteer groups you are trying to attract. For example, using different titles for volunteer roles such as 'action agents'.

Involve different cohorts in the design of collateral and messaging e.g. get students to write the university adverts or a retiree to send material out to their networks.

NSO/SSO

Recruit communications students as volunteers to create sport specific messaging to different audiences.

Design sport specific events that will attract new audiences to the sport e.g. social sport for adults who have stopped playing sport or mums and bubs bowling.

Consider partnerships with other organisations that have successfully engaged particular cohorts e.g. universities, community/cultural groups.

Government

Create a pilot campaign, targeting a particular cohort e.g. students who are seeking to build new skills.

Support research to better understand what's needed in reframing sport volunteering.

Build a set of reusable materials, collateral and messaging that resonates with different groups especially those that are hard to reach that clubs can use.

Idea in action

Sport peak bodies could design a set of materials and collateral that sport clubs can tailor. This could include social media advertisements, printable materials, reusable photography and key messages. The collateral would be tailored to appeal to different audiences so people can see themselves reflected in sport volunteering e.g. someone volunteering at home, older people, students and different cultural groups.

Imagine if...

A sport club felt brave and empowered to reach out to new audiences to volunteer and support their clubs. Imagine a future where sport volunteering reflects the diversity of the community it operates.

Imagine sport clubs using these materials in creative ways to build awareness, interest and engagement.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Four:

Redesign volunteer roles

What is the opportunity?

There is an opportunity to re-imagine and re-design volunteer roles so they are more accessible and bring new skills and diversity to sport volunteering. This includes breaking down roles, aligning them to archetypes, and creating more flexible opportunities for people to opt in or out of roles.

For example, there may be project based roles that volunteers can lead for a designated period of time according to their availability. Alternatively, there may be volunteers who are happy to engage regularly, but require remote engagement opportunities.

Why is this idea important?

Currently volunteer roles are limited and time intensive. This is a barrier for people joining sport volunteering, who may not see any opportunities to suits their interests, motivations, or life circumstances.

At a minimum, people should be provided with small opportunities that require non ongoing commitment e.g. if someone turns up to a sport club to watch their child, there should be opportunities to get involved e.g. cleaning up rubbish, extra pair of hands at canteen or providing drinks to umpires.

It is also important given how often volunteer roles evolve and expand over time, which is causing burnout for existing volunteers.

Redesigning volunteer roles will:

- reduce burnout
- increase the overall number of volunteers by designing roles that meet their needs
- ensure volunteers have roles that align with their motivations and interests
- increase the diversity and skills of volunteers by drawing in different kinds of people with different roles

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Four: Redesign volunteer roles

Related elements:

**Make it feel
like I belong**

Easy to get
involved

**Tailor roles
to my needs**

Support
me

Create value for me, the
club and the community

Redesigning roles that align with individual needs, motivations and goals will make people feel welcomed and valued making them more likely to get involved.

Re-designing roles will mean there are more opportunities for people to find a role that meets their needs.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Four:

Redesign volunteer roles

What does this need to succeed?

Easy - Any workforce planning and design tools need to be easy to implement.

Education - Skill development and support is required for clubs to switch to this way of working.

Relevant - It needs to be supported with inspiration to demonstrate the benefit of redesigning roles e.g. how early adopters have reinvented roles.

Start small - It needs to be enable clubs to start small and build new roles over time - they can't do it all at once.

CRM - Capturing of data on members skills, motivations and circumstances to help drive the design of new roles.

Risks

- Club cultures will impact willingness to try different ways of structuring volunteer roles.
- Clubs are time limited and may not possess the required skills to implement workforce planning/role redesign
- Workforce planning/ role redesign is not going to be a priority for a lot of clubs

Considerations

- The design of roles at different levels e.g. club, local community and NSO/SSO level
- Clubs will require workforce planning tools and resources so they can actively consider the needs and requirements of their clubs before designing new roles

Six key opportunity areas for action

Getting started: Redesigning roles

Lower effort

Higher effort

Community sport clubs

Use a free survey form to understand skills, motivations and circumstances of current members.

Design 1-2 new volunteer opportunities, using templates and resources made available by government or supporting sport organisations.

Share learnings about new roles that can be scaled.

NSO/SSO

Create position description templates that clubs can pick and choose from.

Design volunteer positions at the NSO/SSO level e.g. social media, events design, finance.

Host workforce planning events that support clubs to consider their needs and re-design roles based on those needs.

Government

Build and share resources on Game Plan. This could include workforce planning templates/tools as well as position descriptions developed in collaboration with NSOs/SSOs.

Offer a grant or coaching/consulting package to early adopter sport clubs to undertake workforce planning and design new roles. Use as a case study to inspire others.

Build a CRM that identifies the skills and needs of current volunteers to help design new volunteer opportunities.

Idea in action

People often need some inspiration and examples to get themselves started. A set of position descriptions that reflect 'new' ways of sport volunteering e.g. small bite-sized roles, project based or virtual volunteering would help people take the first step forward. These templates would be clear, respond to different archetype needs and motivations and clearly communicate the value to the individual, club and community.

Imagine if...

A community sport club could 'try' advertising new roles without too many burdens placed on them. Imagine if position descriptions continue to evolve over time based on learnings from sport clubs.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Five:

Catalyse innovation, creativity and new ways of working

What is the opportunity?

There is an opportunity to provide continued support to community sport clubs to help them innovate. Sport volunteering requires a significant re-frame in thinking and practice to respond to changing individual and societal shifts. While tools and resources are important, these will have minimal impact without changing the way things are done. Incentivising and promoting innovation is at the core of change.

For example, government as well as NSOs/SSOs can provide the scaffolding to support innovation by co-designing new approaches with 'early adopters', developing tools and resources to make innovation easy as well as scaling and sharing learnings.

Why is this idea important?

There is a strong acknowledgement that volunteer recruitment and management is not meeting the needs of clubs and volunteers. Community sport clubs are time poor and often do not have the skills to implement changes. Creating the infrastructure and conditions for innovation will be incredibly important.

Increased innovation and creativity will support:

- A boost in confidence for sport clubs in implementing changes
- Professionalisation of volunteer management
- Reduced duplication across clubs and sports, creating efficiencies
- Increase in the number of volunteers
- Improved volunteer experience

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Five:

Catalyse innovation, creativity and new ways of working

Related elements:

**Make it feel
like I belong**

**Easy to get
involved**

**Tailor roles
to my needs**

**Support
me**

**Create value for me, the
club and the community**

Finding innovative and creative solutions to problems has the potential to create significant impact across all five of the elements.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Five:

Catalyse innovation, creativity and new ways of working

What does this need to succeed?

New mindsets - Resources, tools and training cannot replicate existing mindsets about sport volunteering e.g. designing position descriptions in the same way it has always been done.

Champions - Innovation requires champions who are willing to try new ways of doing things that can be shared with others.

Bottom up and top down - Innovation needs to happen on the ground and resourced/scaled at the top.

Coordination - Scaling and turning innovation into reusable tools requires a high degree of support and coordination.

Incentives - Innovation requires a set of incentives such as grants, the opportunity to get involved in something new and exciting.

Balanced - Any tools and resources developed need to balance generic vs bespoke (ie. for each sport) ways of doing things.

Risks

- It is not resourced and supported reducing opportunities to scale impact
- People do not have the time or skills to participate
- Clubs feel that the content is too generic and doesn't relate to their sport
- It is hard to navigate and feels overwhelming. People don't know where to start
- Clubs do not have the time to implement changes

Considerations

- The roles and responsibilities for innovation so it is clear who does what and ensure work is not duplicated
- Continuing to understand where people are at so change can be introduced gradually and at a pace that clubs are comfortable with

Six key opportunity areas for action

Getting started:

Catalysing creativity and innovation

Lower effort

Higher effort

Community sport clubs

Access existing tools and resources provided on Game Plan.

Participate in knowledge sharing about how the tool was used e.g. podcast or case study.

Contribute feedback on the effectiveness of tools and what else should be developed.

NSO/SSO

Identify ways to contextualise existing resources to reflect nuances in different sport.

Partner to create and update tools and resources. Support the promotion of tools and resources.

Use the resources to experiment with new ways to support the clubs e.g. design new roles at NSO/SSO level.

Government

Upload elements of this report e.g. activities, vision to Game Plan.

Conduct audit of existing tools and resources on Game Plan, and other platforms. Adapt/iterate based on insights from co-design project,

Establish a design sprint where clubs can learn and action ideas simultaneously with the support of their peers.

Develop a grants program to support volunteer innovation that can then be scaled.

Idea in action

Sport/volunteer peak bodies could facilitate a six week action learning programme/sprint on volunteer management/engagement with sport clubs.

This could be a course type model where participants complete tasks with the support of their peers.

Imagine if.....

You could build capability, test new approaches and build a group of early adopters simultaneously. Imagine the ideas generated and developed through the learning program are used to showcase what innovation in sport volunteering looks like.

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Six:

Use shared systems to streamline recruitment and support volunteer experience

What is the opportunity?

There is an opportunity for the sector to use shared systems, for example through a digital platform, to streamline processes. Processes might include end-to-end volunteer recruitment, and the ongoing management and recognition of volunteers. The platform could exist at the national level, across all sport and jurisdictions.

For example, a shared system that matches volunteers to roles based on their skills or experience would ensure clubs are getting the resources they need, whilst volunteers are filling roles that align with their interests.

Why is this idea important?

Recruitment and management of volunteers is currently done manually, and independently by each club. The process is resource intensive, often results in roadblocks for volunteers, and misses many opportunities to engage with people outside of the sport club.

A shared system will:

- enable more personalised volunteer experiences; including matching to suitable opportunities
- create efficiencies in the volunteer recruitment and management process, by bringing all tasks into the one place
- create access to broader audiences outside of sport club relationships by replacing word of mouth recruitment with an online platform
- facilitate innovation, such as sharing of volunteers across clubs
- create opportunities to develop volunteer profiles or passports, and gamify rewards

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Six:

Use shared systems to streamline recruitment and support volunteer experience

Related elements:

Make it feel
like I belong

**Easy to get
involved**

A central system which manages all sport volunteer opportunities would simplify the recruitment experience for volunteers, and ensure advertisements are seen by more people.

**Tailor roles
to my needs**

A shared system could seamlessly match volunteers with roles that align with their interests, skills, motivations and the time they have to contribute.

**Support
me**

A shared system could function as a centralised repository for tools and resources that could be easily located by clubs and volunteers.

Create value for me, the
club and the community

Six key opportunity areas for action

Opportunity Six:

Use shared systems to streamline recruitment and support volunteer experience

What does this need to succeed?

Capable of integration - Any system needs to be able to integrate with other systems. For example, when players pay their fees they are able to sign up to volunteer opportunities at the same time.

Easy - A shared system needs to be easy for clubs to use, and meet their individual needs, otherwise they will not gain traction.

Customisable - A system must be customisable so clubs can adapt certain elements to suit their needs.

Volunteer passport - Provide space for volunteers to save their details and credentials so they do not have to jump through the same hoops each time they volunteer somewhere new.

Flexible - Volunteers must be able to easily update their profile as they move between roles and clubs.

Data capture - A shared system would provide invaluable (de-identified) data for reporting, insights and improvements.

Risks

- It is established too quickly without consultation and does not meet club needs. Any implementation of new technology requires a phased roll out, and comprehensive engagement with end users to ensure it is meeting their needs

Considerations

- Many community sport clubs do not feel confident using technology, and will struggle to engage with a new tool
- Crucially, this opportunity does not necessarily require the creation of something new. There are a number of existing systems and platforms that could be leveraged to create efficiencies for clubs

Six key opportunity areas for action

Getting started:

Shared systems to streamline recruitment and support volunteer experience

Lower effort

Higher effort

Community sport clubs

Consider using existing tools that are free and easy to use, such as survey platforms to gather volunteer feedback, or messaging tools to communicate with the volunteer community.

Participate in a proof of concept and be involved in testing.

Customise system to meet individual club needs.

NSO/SSO

Contribute to the development of a business case e.g. supply of data on number of volunteers.

Develop communications and engagement plan to support the promotion and uptake of digital platforms for volunteering.

Create mechanisms for analysis and reporting of data.

Government

Identify current digital platforms that could be utilised/adapted/procured.

Establish national platform for sport volunteering, where all volunteers and clubs can go to find opportunities and manage their experience, similar to the [Surf Life Saving platform](#). Integrate this platform with existing volunteering platforms.

Create a sport volunteering passport that would enable individuals to move between different clubs and broader volunteering sector e.g. NFP.

Idea in action

One of the most significant challenges in volunteer management is matching individuals unique needs, motivations and skills with roles.

A digital platform that felt personalised and supported individuals to find the right volunteer roles will lead to higher levels of engagement.

Imagine if.....

People can be matched to roles based on their unique motivations, time available and skills.

Imagine being matched to a role that felt so right, it compels you to sign up immediately.

Conclusion

There is a clear need for a more concerted and coordinated effort from the sport sector to improve the volunteer experience and boost volunteer recruitment and retention. As demonstrated by the extensive participation in this research, there is also significant interest from the sector in making this happen.

This report has laid the foundations for change, but more work is needed. Each idea or opportunity area will require thorough scoping before it is pursued, and it is important to continue to engage stakeholders and end users as solutions are designed, tested and refined. The tools in this work provide a guiding framework for the sector, however they may need to be adapted over time to remain relevant.

A collective approach is required to make meaningful change to sport volunteering. Clubs can change their approach to volunteer management, but not without the right support from their governing bodies, and the necessary infrastructure and operating environment. There can be some quick wins, but also some more transformational changes will be required for the sector to progress towards its future vision for sport volunteering. The sector will need to think strategically about how to get there, particularly in regards to roles and responsibilities of those involved.



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Sport Australia engaged an external third party to conduct the research.

[SportAus.gov.au](https://sportaus.gov.au)



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