

Volunteering Community Reference Group

Terms of Reference

Final Version June 2024

Context

The creation of the Volunteering Community Reference Group (VCRG) fulfilled a 2017 State Government election commitment to oversee the implementation of the WA Volunteering Strategy and advise the Minister for Volunteering on current trends and issues in the sector.

The first meeting of the VCRG in its official capacity occurred in 2018 and brought together a broad and diverse range of experience, capability and expertise to jointly pursue collaboration as a mechanism to improve outcomes for volunteers across Western Australia.

Purpose

The purpose of the Volunteering Community Reference Group (VCRG) is to provide a direct voice on volunteering issues from the volunteer involving sector to the Minister for Volunteering.

Role

The role of the VCRG is to:

- Provide the Minister for Volunteering with advice and information on trends and issues impacting the community.
- Represent the interests of volunteers and the volunteering community to the Minister for Volunteering.
- Present evidenced based research on current issues and trends in volunteering
- Assist in identifying gaps, barriers, strengths and opportunities to advance volunteering in Western Australia.
- Enable an exchange of information between the representative parties on issues and trends relating to volunteering generally.
- Provide strategic advice and feedback on the implementation of the Western Australian State Volunteering Strategy.
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Key activities

The VCRG will:

- Consider emerging issues impacting the volunteering sector.
- Collaboratively identify key priorities to inform the group's annual program of work.
- Share and connect on strategic priority areas.
- Influence strategy by generating and contributing to discussions about sector priorities, commitments, and performance.

Membership

Appointment

- Membership is by invitation from the Minister for Volunteering and includes stakeholders with relevant knowledge and experience.
- The Chair will be appointed by the Minister for Volunteering.
- The membership profile includes representation from the peak body, volunteering sector, and the Department of Communities (Communities).
- Membership will be a maximum of 15 and a minimum of 12 members, some of whom are appointed through an Expression of Interest process.
- Representatives from Communities who are responsible for the volunteering portfolio and/or State Government agencies responsible for volunteering related initiatives, may attend from time to time, as guests of the VCRG.

Refer to **Attachment 1** for the full VCRG Membership Composition guide.

Confidentiality and Conflict of interest

Members may have access to information that relates to confidential government information. Members must treat this material as strictly confidential and will be required to sign a declaration to this effect at the commencement of their tenure.

In order to address any real or perceived conflicts of interest:

- Communities will provide advice as to what constitutes a conflict of interest, including appropriate steps to disclose and manage if required.
- All members must declare existing and/or new interests on the 'VCRG Declaration of Interests register.'
- All members with a direct or indirect conflict of interest, relating to particularly items to be discussed at a VCRG meeting, must declare this at the start of each VCRG meeting. Upon this disclosure the Chair will take steps to ensure the conflict is managed, in relation to that agenda item, and is documented as necessary.

Attendance

- Metropolitan members are requested to attend all meetings in person.
- Regional members will attend meetings online. If funding is available, regional members will have the opportunity to attend the meetings in person.
- Members from the following organisations or sectors may nominate a proxy to attend meetings:
 - Communities
 - Volunteering WA
 - Organisations
- Individual volunteers (consumers) are not permitted to nominate a proxy.
- The proxy shall be one nominated person within the member organisation or corporate sector without further delegation.
- Members are responsible for ensuring their proxy has appropriate authority and briefing(s) to enable constructive participation. Prior to the meeting, the Chair and Secretariat must be notified of any proxies attending the meeting.
- Where a member is not represented at two consecutive meetings without a formal request or apology, they will be approached in writing and asked if they wish to continue involvement.

Resignation

Members may resign in writing to the Chair and Secretariat.

Duration of term

- The term of membership is two (2) years, subject to compliance with these Terms of Reference.
- The Minister, supported by the Department of Communities, is responsible for implementing a public EOI process at the end of each term or as required due to casual vacancies.
- Members may submit another EOI at the end of their two-year term, however, priority should be afforded to new applicants in the assessment process to ensure a diversity and evolution of community and sector participation is achieved.

Filling a vacancy on the VCRG

Vacant positions on the VCRG will be filled using an EOI process, facilitated through the Department of Communities via the following process:

- Opportunities to serve on the VCRG will be advertised through agreed channels for maximum exposure and interest (e.g., Communities website, Volunteering WA sector newsletter, Volunteering WA website, social media and personal promotion).
- Applicants will provide a written letter in response outlining their reasons for wanting to join the VCRG.
- Applicants may nominate to be considered for the role of Chair. If nominating to be the Chair, applicants must also include a minimum two-page resume.
- The pool of applicants will be assessed by a panel comprised of the Minister for Volunteering (or nominated representative), the Volunteering WA CEO, a representative from Communities, and a nominated VCRG member.
- Interviews may be held as part of the selection process.
- The Minister for Volunteering will invite all new VCRG members.

Please note:

- *The Volunteering peak, Volunteering WA, will be exempt from the EOI process.*
- *Communities representatives will be excluded from the EOI process as the representative will be nominated by the Director General.*

Meetings

Agenda and papers

- Members may submit suggested agenda items to the Secretariat up to 21 days prior to the meeting.
- The draft agenda and papers will be forwarded by the Secretariat, for approval by the Chair.
- Meeting papers will be circulated electronically by the Secretariat at least five business days prior to each meeting.

Chair

- The Chair will be appointed by the Minister for a term of two years.
- The role of the Chair is to provide leadership of the group and to ensure the group delivers its mandate effectively and efficiently, with appropriate engagement of all members. If unable to attend a meeting the Chair may nominate an alternative Chair from the membership, that is not from the Secretariat.
- The Chair must approve the agenda and minutes of all meetings before circulation to the Group.

Expenses

- Out of pocket expenses for parking and travel will be available to metropolitan representatives by Communities.
- Out of pocket expenses for travel may be available to regional representatives by Communities pending funding. If funding is not available for travel, regional members will be asked to attend the meetings online.
- No sitting fees will be paid.

Guests

- From time to time, members may, through the Chair or by meeting decision, invite other stakeholders or experts to participate in discussions or provide presentations on issues relevant to the agreed purpose of the group.
- As noted above, representatives of Communities who are responsible for the volunteering portfolio and/or State Government agencies responsible for volunteering initiatives may also attend, from time to time, as guests of the VCRG
- Guest attendance will be arranged by Communities at the request of the Minister for Volunteering, Chair or by meeting decision.

Meeting frequency

- Meetings will be convened a minimum of four times a year with dates established in consultation with the Minister and scheduled 12 months in advance.
- Meetings will be for a duration of two hours with notification issued four weeks prior to the meeting by the Secretariat.

Meeting location

- Meetings will be hosted at the Minister's Office, located at Dumas House, West Perth, or other locations by invitation.
- Meetings will be delivered in a hybrid model as required.
- The Minister for Volunteering will be invited to attend all meetings.

Secretariat support

- Volunteering WA, as sector peak, provides executive support to the VCRG which includes:
- Meeting notification, agenda papers, minutes and Communiques.
- Supporting Communities in the EOI process for membership by acting as a panel member to assess the pool of applicants.
- The Secretariat (VWA) staff member taking the minutes of the meeting is not a member of the VCRG.

Communicating and reporting

- Members will treat all group discussions as confidential unless otherwise agreed.
- Draft minutes will be sent to members for feedback and confirmation within 21 days of the meeting. Final minutes of the meeting must be approved by the Chair.
- A public Communique will be drafted by the Secretariat, for approval by the Minister for Volunteering.

Review

The Terms of Reference and the performance of the VCRG will be reviewed every two years by Communities in discussion with the Minister for Volunteering, Chair, Secretariat and VCRG members.

Attachment 1: Membership composition guide

Membership of the Volunteering Community Reference Group will be drawn from the following areas:

No. of members	Representing
Standing Representatives	
1	The Honourable Minister for Volunteering
1	State Government Representatives: Department of Communities (Communities), as nominated by Director General
2	Peak Body Representatives: CEO of Volunteering WA (VWA) and a VWA representative
Sector Representatives	
1	The Chair (appointed by the Minister)
2	Volunteer involving organisations (one metro and one regional/remote member)
1-2	Volunteer Resource Centres (one metro and/or one regional/remote member)
1	Corporate sector (a current member of Corporate Volunteering Council Executive Committee)
1	Researcher
1-2	Emergency services volunteers (consumers) (including Surf Life Saving and St John Ambulance)
2-4	Individual volunteers (consumers) Representation to actively seek to include diversity of members. This may include at least one young person under 25 years of age; an older person over 65 years of age; Aboriginal person; Culturally and Linguistically Diverse person, a person with disability and a person that identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual and other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
1	WA Local Government Association

NOTE: This matrix is a guide to fill VCRG vacancies when/if they arise, based on the EOIs submitted, rather than requiring that the VCRG has members from all categories, at all times, to function effectively. The preferred option is to retain up to 50% of the existing members each membership cycle to ensure that experience of the VCRG membership is retained.