City of DAREBIN

the place to live

The Volunteer Management Action Plan
2022-26

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners & Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Darebin

Darebin City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land we now call Darebin and pays respect to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Council pays respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Darebin.

Council recognises, and pays tribute to, the diverse culture, resilience and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We acknowledge the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the right to self-determination in the spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

Executive Summary

The City of Darebin is home to one of the largest, most diverse communities anywhere in the state of Victoria in terms of cultures, language, religions, socio-economic background, employment status, occupation, and housing needs.

As an organisation, Darebin City Council (Council) recognises and appreciates the depth and breadth of experience this brings. We actively represent our community's diversity and aim to create an inclusive work environment, including a focus on, and appreciation for the generous contribution of those who volunteer at Council.

The Volunteer Management Action Plan 2022-2026 (the framework) is the framework which guides Council to support, manage and promote meaningful and inclusive volunteer engagement, in accordance with volunteering best practice and for all volunteers who volunteer directly at Council.

This framework positions Council to ensure a safe, fair and consistent volunteer experience for our diverse community. It guides volunteer leaders, helps strengthen community connection and skill development, improves our ability to respond to emerging volunteer trends and explore new ways to engage volunteers.

The framework is underpinned by the *Darebin 2041 Community Vision* and is informed by several adopted Council plans and strategies. The Council Plan 2021-2025 has a strong focus on how Council may engage volunteers better, with a specific call to action to support volunteer participation at Council.

> **"Darebin is an equitable, vibrant and connected community [...] that respects and supports First Nations People, values Country, our diverse communities and places [...] and commits to mitigating the climate emergency, creating prosperity for current and future generations."**
>
> **Darebin 2041 Community Vision**

> **Strategic Objective 1.4 We will increase social connection to reduce isolation and loneliness, and support positive mental health.**
>
> **Council Plan 2021-2025**

Across a four-year period, the framework identifies actions to improve volunteer management practices, increase the visibility of volunteering and connect volunteer leaders across the organisation. It explores how we may strengthen existing partnerships and engage new stakeholders within the sector. These actions guide us in our collective effort to enable and support volunteering at Council.

Interim Chief Executive Officer Foreword

Being part of something great.

The benefits of volunteering for individuals and communities have been well documented – from community connectedness and cohesion to positive impacts on physical and mental health, social connection and development of skills and experience. Thus, it is my great pleasure to present Darebin City Council's four-year volunteering vision outlining our approach to engaging and supporting those who volunteer at Council.

This framework outlines our opportunity, philosophy and approach. Crucially it includes our measures of success and how we hold ourselves accountable to delivering.

We recognise that the purpose and legacy of volunteering is not the same for all people. There are challenges behind the connotation of volunteering – the sense of someone working for free – and thus it has been of utmost importance to us in developing this action plan that we seek to address this experience. Volunteering at Council is for the growth and development of our volunteers – for their wellbeing and connectedness.

Furthermore, we recognise our partners across the City of Darebin who engage volunteers. We are excited about the opportunities to work together and promote healthy volunteering practices, not in competition, but whereby decisions are made with the volunteer impact at the core – what provides the best experience for the volunteer.

We have a bold vision of what volunteering can be and lofty ambitions. By incorporating the national standards as a guide, creating a dedicated team and driving engagement across Council, I am energised by what we have set ourselves to achieve.

Rachel Ollivier
Interim Chief Executive Officer

Overview

The *2020 State of Volunteering Report* revealed that 2.3 million (42.1%) of Victorians over 15 years of age volunteer in Victoria, contributing an average of 223.9 hours per year, or 4.3 hours each week. These statistics are inclusive of people who volunteer both formally and informally[1].

Volunteer involvement is a critical component within society, contributing to building strong, inclusive, resilient communities[1,2]. Volunteering can create a two-way relationship, enabling a range of benefits to volunteers and to the organisation involving volunteers. Volunteers can make meaningful use of their time and skills by contributing to social and community outcomes and organisations can support their communities whilst working towards strategic goals through volunteer engagement[3].

The City of Darebin has a longstanding legacy of involvement with volunteers. As a Council we directly recruit and manage volunteers, as well as work in partnership with local community groups and members and volunteer involving organisations. To ensure that Council continues to promote and enable volunteering in a meaningful, inclusive and effective way, we must focus on best practice principles of volunteer engagement and volunteer management. This framework therefore seeks to provide a position on the support provided to those who volunteer at Council, including specific focus on Council staff facilitating volunteer engagement (volunteer leaders).

The methodology used to develop this framework used qualitative and quantitative approaches. This included:

- a review of endorsed Council plans and strategies;
- a benchmarking analysis of neighbouring municipalities' approach to volunteer engagement and strategy development;
- consultation with internal staff and Council volunteers; and
- a review of contemporary volunteering best practice guidance across both State and Federal levels.

The framework includes detailed actions covering infrastructure, communications, engagement, training and professional development, reward and recognition and an evaluation table which will be used to measure and track the program's success.

We will continue to seek stakeholder feedback, discuss progress and evolve the action plan accordingly to ensure that Council's volunteer plan remains relevant across the next four years and beyond.

Objectives

This framework is underpinned by the Council Plan 2021-2025 Strategic Objective 1.4 We will increase social connection to reduce isolation and loneliness, and support positive mental health, specifically Strategic Action 1-20 Facilitate and support volunteer opportunities with Council across our diverse communities, to strengthen community connection and skills development.

Managing the cohort of volunteers within Council has become increasingly complex, and as have the needs of volunteers. These challenges are shared throughout the volunteer sector. To address these changes effectively, a new inward-looking approach is required that will ensure Council's volunteer programs (current and future) are meaningful and sustainable, ultimately increasing volunteer management practices, and therefore volunteer outcomes of community involvement and connectedness across the City of Darebin.
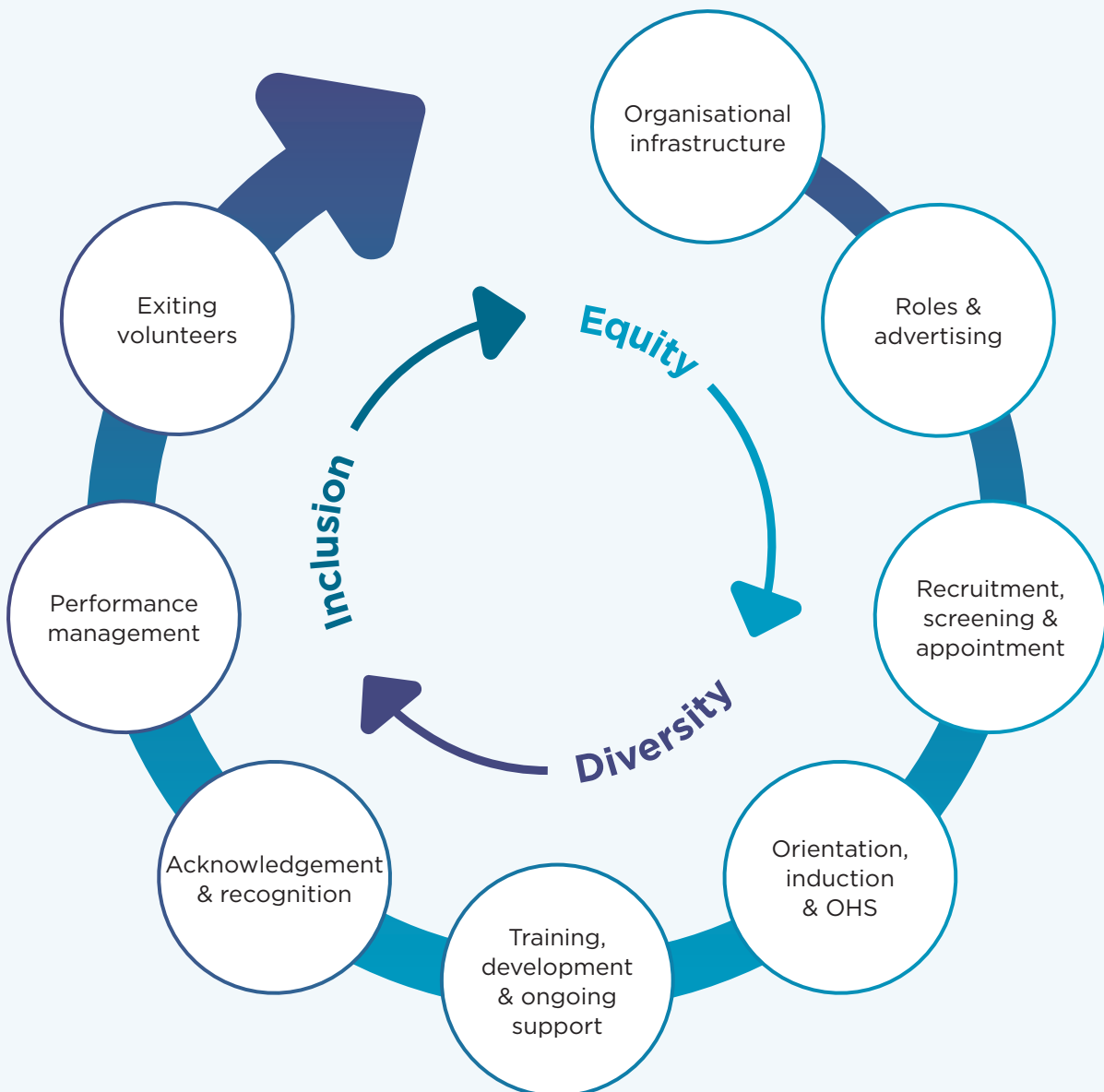
The purpose of this work is to provide a strategic approach to volunteer engagement across Council, which is delivered with consistency, transparency and visibility.

Strategic objectives include:

- Consistent, streamlined, centralised engagement and management of volunteers across Council;
- Clear and structured Council-led volunteer program aligned to the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement;
- Consistent direction and support to Council staff leading volunteers;
- Flexible, varied and meaningful volunteering opportunities to drive increased volunteer participation;
- Improved risk and safety management and (where appropriate) standardised compliance;
- Increased visibility, recognition and overall support of volunteers;
- Deeper connection with local community groups and members and volunteer involving organisations across the City of Darebin; and
- Consistent volunteer experience, delivered in accordance with legislative requirements, Code of Conduct, OHS Policy, Child Safe Organisation commitments and Council Values.

The Volunteer Engagement Lifecycle

The volunteer engagement lifecycle highlights the various stages of volunteer management, with defined processes at each stage. By dividing volunteer engagement into stages, we can ensure Council is adhering to volunteering best practice throughout the lifecycle.

Organisational infrastructure

Roles & advertising

Recruitment, screening & appointment

Orientation, induction & OHS

Training, development & ongoing support

Acknowledgement & recognition

Performance management

Exiting volunteers

Equity

Inclusion

Diversity

Volunteer Leaders

Diverse and skilled volunteer leaders are the cornerstone of best practice volunteer engagement. Across their diversity, a point of agreement for Council volunteer leaders is that they are committed to ensuring all Council volunteers have a meaningful, positive experience during their engagement with Council.

Adapted from Volunteering New Zealand's Competencies for Managers of Volunteers framework, Council recognises four key markers of competency for successful volunteer leadership and is committed to enabling volunteer leaders through centralised support, feedback loop mechanisms and training and professional development opportunities.

Volunteer leaders demonstrate an understanding of volunteer engagement best practice.

Volunteer leaders demonstrate continuous improvement in their volunteer management to reflect the needs of the community and Council.

| **Base knowledge** | **Base knowledge applied** | **Adaptive volunteer leadership** | **Strategic volunteer leadership** |

Volunteer leaders are able to translate base knowledge into their work with confidence.

Volunteer leaders demonstrate the link between Council-led volunteer programs and Council commitments.

Volunteer engagement lifecycle in action

Structure		Activity	Culture and Capability	Safety and Wellbeing	People Operations	Volunteer Leaders	Risk
Recruitment		• Identify meaningful opportunities • Role descriptions • Advertising	●			●	●
Selection		• Interviewing • Successful/ unsuccessful applicants • Screening	●			●	
Onboarding		• Volunteer Agreement • Orientation/Induction • Role-specific training • Volunteer Handbook	●	●		●	
Development		• Ongoing support and training • Feedback • Professional development opportunities	●			●	
Recognition		• Informal and formal recognition • Showcasing impact and contribution • Volunteer feedback	●			●	
Performance		• Issues management • Conflict resolution • Grievance and investigation	●	●	●	●	●
Exit		• Exit process • Acknowledgement • Volunteer feedback • Continuous improvement	●			●	●

DAREBIN INTERCULTURAL CENTRE

Current state

What is volunteering?

Volunteering can mean different things to different people. Individual and community-based values are influential in how volunteering is practiced, and the emergence of new technology has diversified the ways in which volunteers can come together and contribute[4]. Introduced in 2015, Volunteering Australia defines volunteering as **"time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain"**. According to the nation's peak volunteering body, this definition is more inclusive of newer forms of volunteering including virtual, corporate and spontaneous volunteering[5].

Types of volunteer engagement:

Formal volunteering (role based): taking place within organisations, including institutions and agencies, in a structured way.

Informal volunteering (fluid): taking place outside the context of a formal organisation. This includes assisting people in the community, for example, providing home or personal assistance, looking after children (excluding one's own family members)[6].

Community-giving: a description often assigned to volunteering by multicultural communities, as well as Aboriginal communities. Community-giving is often fluid and responsive to needs[2].

Virtual volunteering: where a volunteer's tasks are completed online. This can be formal or informal volunteering.

Corporate volunteering: where paid employees of an organisation are given work time and/ or payment by their employer to volunteer with another organisation, such as a charity[6].

Spontaneous volunteering: taking place during and/ or after an event, for example, bushfires or floods. This includes volunteers who are unaffiliated with any part of the existing official emergency management response and recovery system and may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience[7].

Mutual obligation: in return for receiving taxpayer-funded income support, unemployed people have mutual obligation requirements, and participation in voluntary work may count towards these requirements[8].

Organisational Overview

The framework is informed by several Council plans and strategies (see list below, non-exhaustive). The framework seeks to enable and complement the aims and objectives in the below-mentioned documents, as a key driver in Council's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, equality, transparency and advocacy in our volunteer engagement.

- Darebin 2041 Community Vision;
- Council Plan 2021-2025 (incorporating the Municipal Public Health & Wellbeing Plan);
- Statement of Commitment to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Towards Equality – Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights Framework 2019-2029;
- Equal Employment Opportunity Policy;
- Workforce Plan 2021-2025;
- Workforce and Diversity Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2017-2027;
- Access and Inclusion Plan 2021-2026;
- Youth Service Strategy 2019-2021;
- Active Healthy Ageing Strategy 2011-2021;
- Gender Equality Action Plan – under development; and
- Occupational Health and Safety Action Plan – under development.

Our Values

Our values underpin everything we do at Council and guide us in working together to be the best we can, while delivering service excellence for our community. Our six organisational values enable us to support the effective design and application of the framework. Volunteers and volunteer leaders make a difference; volunteers are leaders in the community; and we work together to achieve common goals.

OUR VALUES

We Make a Difference — **Our work matters**

We have Integrity — **We walk the talk**

We are Accountable — **We make it happen**

We show Respect — **We look after each other**

We are Creative — **We are leaders**

We are Collaborative — **We are one**

A snapshot of Council-led volunteer programs

Council directly engages and manages Council volunteers, with volunteer involvement occurring at varying levels across the divisions. We have a number of passionate, dedicated Council staff facilitating meaningful volunteer engagement from recruitment and onboarding, through to professional development and recognition. This framework will provide centralised guidance, support, and fit for purpose infrastructure at every step of the volunteer engagement lifecycle, to enable sustainability of Council-led volunteer programs, current and future, and to achieve consistent, positive experiences for all stakeholders involved.
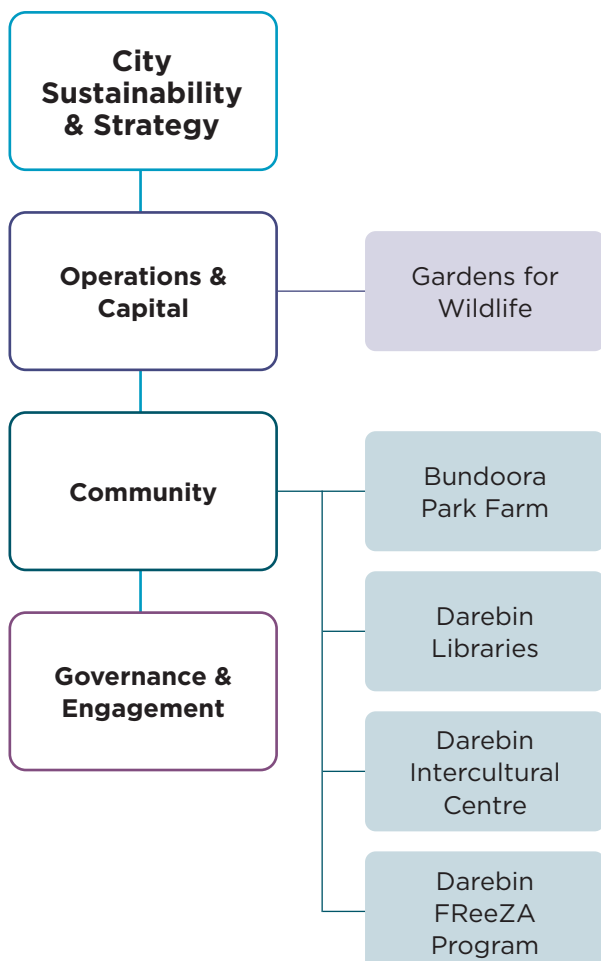
Types of volunteer engagement across Darebin City Council

Council volunteers	An individual selected by Council to undertake activities in a designated volunteer position with a formal volunteer agreement and role description.
Community Advisory Committees and Reference Groups	A member of the community providing advice to Council on specific topics relating to the Darebin community as informed by Terms of Reference and applicable governance mechanisms.
Community volunteers, members and groups	Individuals and volunteer groups who in partnership with Council support the Darebin community.
Volunteer involving organisations	Organisations that engage volunteers, who work with or are supported by Council.
Volunteer leaders	A Council staff member who is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of a Council volunteer. They will generally be their regular contact person and direct the activities to be conducted.
Work experience and student placement	Students enrolled in either secondary school or a higher education institution who will complete a placement, industry project, fieldwork, internship or other work integrated learning activities.

City Sustainability & Strategy
Operations & Capital — Gardens for Wildlife
Community — Bundoora Park Farm
Community — Darebin Libraries
Community — Darebin Intercultural Centre
Community — Darebin FReeZA Program
Governance & Engagement

Community overview

The City of Darebin is located between five and fifteen kilometres north of Melbourne's central business district. It has been home to the Wurundjeri people for many thousands of years. Our city covers 53 square kilometres of land, stretching from the inner northern suburbs of Northcote and Fairfield to Reservoir and Bundoora. As of June 2021, our city's resident population estimate is 150,335. We are home to one of Victoria's largest and most diverse communities in the realms of culture, language, religion, socioeconomic background, employment status, occupation and housing need.

In the City of Darebin 12.6% of the population aged 15 years and over reported engaging in some form of voluntary work in 2021. This was a similar proportion to Greater Melbourne (12.1%). Due to a range of factors, largely the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of volunteers in the City of Darebin decreased by 4,723 people between 2016 and 2021. The level of volunteering can indicate community connectedness and cohesiveness and how readily individuals are able to contribute to their community[9].

Within the City of Darebin, there is a multitude of volunteer involving organisations and local community groups and members, that work with or are supported by Council. These groups include, but are not limited to the Darebin Information, Volunteer, Resource Service (DIVRS); the Darebin Neighbourhood House Network: Your Community Health; and long-standing Friends Groups. Community groups and members and leaders of community groups and members play a critical role in building community resilience and enhancing social connection. Council is committed to supporting and complementing local volunteer involving groups through collective action to enable an active, inclusive and positive volunteering culture across Darebin.

Darebin's diverse community at a glance

150,335*

people live in Darebin

138

languages are spoken

208

asylum-seekers reside
in Darebin

1%*

of residents are Aboriginal or
Torres Strait Islander people

7%*

of our population has
difficulty speaking English

6%

of residents identify as
lesbian, gay or bisexual

21.6%*

of households are low income
(less than $650 per week)

59%

of residents were born
in Australia and 33%
were born overseas

37

religions are
practised in Darebin

6%*

identify as having a disability
and needing assistance

2,000+

Darebin is home to 2,000+
international students

12.6%*

of the population in Darebin
aged 15+ volunteered in 2021

*Data sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population 2016.
Compiled and presented by .id consulting*

*from 2021 census

Sector overview

National

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement

The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement (the National Standards) were developed in 2015 in consultation with the volunteer sector, to support volunteer engagement and provide guidance to volunteer involving organisations. The National Standards act as a framework for organisations, big and small, to consider the role of volunteers within their workplace and the impact effective volunteer involvement can have on achieving strategic goals. They ensure the rights of volunteers are protected and that volunteers are supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities safely[3].

The National Standards allow volunteer involving organisations to make use of simple, practical criteria across a broad range of volunteering situations. Through this framework, Council will continue to promote and support the implementation of the National Standards, ensuring guidance and processes are reflective of volunteering best practice.

There are eight standards which address the key areas of volunteer involvement:

Standard 1	Leadership and management
Standard 2	Commitment to volunteer involvement
Standard 3	Volunteer roles
Standard 4	Recruitment and selection
Standard 5	Support and development
Standard 6	Workplace safety and wellbeing
Standard 7	Volunteer recognition
Standard 8	Quality management and continuous improvement

Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the nation's peak body for volunteering. Founded in 1997, their mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering. Volunteering Australia play a pivotal role in driving and delivering research, advocacy, best practice guidance and promotion of volunteerism across the country.

The National Volunteering Strategy

In 2011, the Federal Government developed the National Volunteering Strategy, which aimed to ensure that by 2021 volunteering was encouraged, supported and recognised by all Australians. The strategy set out six focus areas:

1) Respond to trends in volunteering;
2) Harness technology;
3) Better regulation and risk management;
4) Strengthen management and training;
5) Strengthen relationships and advocacy; and
6) Recognise and value volunteering.[10]

Whilst the strategy has reached its tenure, Council's volunteer management framework has been guided by each of these focus areas.

Volunteering Australia is currently in the process of re-developing the National Volunteering Strategy, with a proposed launch for December 2022.

State

Volunteering Victoria

Volunteering Victoria is the state's peak body for volunteering. Volunteering Victoria focuses on advocacy, sector development and the promotion of volunteering. They provide support to volunteers, leaders of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations.

Victorian Volunteer Strategy 2022-2027

The Victorian Government released the Victorian Volunteer Strategy 2022-2027 in May 2022. The strategy seeks to support and enhance volunteerism across Victoria, drawing on the state's resources, influence and ability to extensively coordinate the wide-scale efforts required for meaningful and sustainable volunteer engagement. Over the next five years, the strategy seeks to achieve five overarching goals:

1) Making volunteering inclusive and accessible;
2) Making volunteering flexible and easier;
3) Supporting volunteers to be resilient, supported and empowered;
4) Creating volunteering connections and pathways; and
5) Ensuring volunteering is recognised and celebrated.

The recommendations and actions presented in this new strategy are reflective in the framework.

Gaps and Risks

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all volunteers who volunteer at Council. A risk assessment against the National Standards was undertaken to identify gaps and priority areas Council-wide. The table below outlines the risks that Council is responsible for mitigating or eliminating:

Assessment of Mitigation Plans Top risks	Mitigation Status
Standard 1 Leadership and management: Absence of a coordinated approach to volunteer engagement across Council. Risk of inconsistent experiences for our stakeholders. Talent shortage increasing risk of inconsistent support of Council-led volunteer programs.	A/R
Standard 2 Commitment to volunteer involvement: Inconsistent awareness, understanding and implementation of volunteering best practice standards. Risk of not adhering to legislative requirements and risk of negative volunteer experience.	A/R
Standard 3 Volunteer roles: Absence of standardised processes and procedures for developing a Council-led volunteer program/ volunteer role. Risk of not adhering to legislative requirements.	A/R
Standard 4 Recruitment and selection: Absence of standardised recruitment, screening and onboarding practices across Council-led volunteer programs. Risk of not adhering to legislative requirements.	A/R
Standard 5 Support and development: Inconsistent orientation, induction and training requirements and an absence of centralised tracking. Minimal skills development opportunities. Risk of placing untrained volunteers and increasing likelihood of incidents. Risk of low retention rates.	A/R
Standard 6 Workplace safety and wellbeing: Absence of standardised processes and procedures for escalating and supporting safety and wellbeing concerns, including volunteer accessibility to Council's Employee Assistance Program. Inefficient reporting capabilities leading to inadequate voluntary worker's insurance cover.	R
Standard 7 Volunteer recognition: Low visibility and awareness of volunteer engagement across Council. Absence of Council-led volunteer reward and recognition. Risk of inconsistent stakeholder experiences and volunteers and volunteer leaders feeling undervalued.	A/G
Standard 8 Quality management and continuous improvement: Absence of a centralised, fit for purpose volunteer management database. Risk of exposing a large gap in the ability to report and track volunteer engagement across Council at any point in time. Absence of stakeholder feedback and evaluation opportunities. Risk of not meeting stakeholder needs.	A/R

Status	Definition
G	Requires limited number of minor actions, plans and resources fully in place to deliver these.
A/G	Mitigating actions (urgent and non-urgent) required, plans and resources fully in place to deliver these.
A/R	Urgent mitigating actions required, plans and resources not fully in place to deliver these.
R	Requires substantial number of urgent actions, plans and resources not agreed to deliver these.
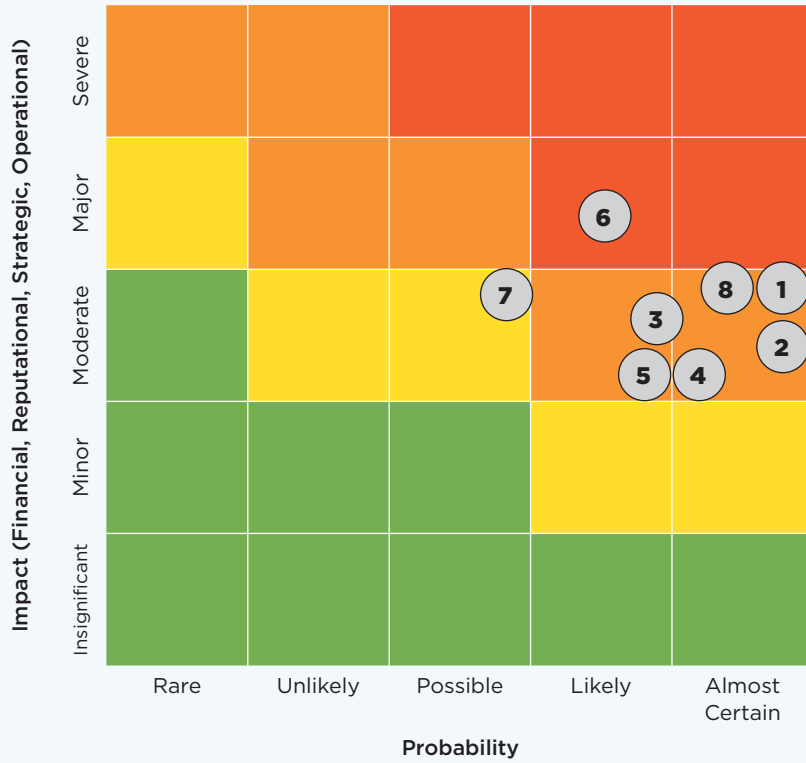
Probability

Probability and impact are based on residual risk, i.e. after taking into account **controls already in place and assumed to be operating effectively.**

Our Opportunity

Volunteering is an important feature of the Darebin community. If delivered with integrity, goodwill and fairness, volunteering can provide our community members with a sense of purpose and inclusion, support job readiness and give individuals opportunities to acquire a wide range of valuable skills and knowledge.

Due to changes in legislation, demographics, lifestyles, volunteer motivations, the availability of volunteers and the impact of COVID-19, a framework is required to support our community better when volunteering directly at Council. Through a coordinated approach to volunteer engagement across Council, we are better positioned to deliver on our commitment to volunteer participation.

Whilst we have a dual role supporting both internal and external volunteer cohorts, this framework focuses primarily on Council's internal role. Through the People and Culture Department, we commit to providing centralised, consistent and streamlined support for all prospective volunteers and Council staff engaging volunteers. We will complement and collaborate with volunteer involving organisations and local community groups. Council also has an opportunity to make a significant impact within the volunteer sector more broadly, by contributing to consultation and research and supporting joint advocacy initiatives.

Benefits and value of volunteering

The benefits of volunteering for individuals, communities and organisations are manifold and transcend culture, age and gender. Volunteering strengthens individual wellbeing, social connection and community connectedness and cohesion. Those who volunteer report an enhanced sense of meaning and purpose and a positive impact on physical and mental health[3,10]. Studies have shown a strong correlation between volunteering and good mental health, for example, just a few hours of voluntary work can make a difference in happiness and mood[11].

There are multiple reasons why people chose to volunteer. Some of the more common reasons include:

- to make new friendships and create professional networks;
- to gain experience and learn new skills;
- to enjoy new social and cultural experiences;
- to build self-confidence;
- to challenge oneself in a supportive environment; and
- to create 'bridging networks' (broad networks of loose connections to people from diverse backgrounds).[5,12]

The 2020 State of Volunteering in Victoria Report explores the economic, social and cultural value of volunteering and their contribution to the welfare of all. Despite the economic impact being the most visible, social and cultural capital are required for its activation.

The report converted the three forms of capital (economic, social and cultural) into economically valuable outputs and estimated that in 2019 volunteering in Victoria enabled at least $58.1 billion worth of benefits across the community. These were the sum of commercial benefits (worth $31.8 billion) and civic benefits (valued at $26.3 billion). The report highlights that for every $1 invested by the community, approximately $3.70 is returned, demonstrating a substantial economic, social and cultural 'profit' in volunteering. This is significant and a reminder of the importance of investment towards supporting and increasing the levels of volunteering.

Economic Capital	Social Capital	Cultural Capital
Economic capital takes the form of infrastructure and goods and services, otherwise known as tangible property. The report refers to economic capital as the physical assets produced and maintained by the volunteering sector. Examples include, but are not limited to: • volunteering infrastructure which contributes to a sense of place and belonging; • community-owned assets sustained by volunteer groups; • transport services provided by volunteers; and • creating use of equipment (and infrastructure) where none might otherwise exist.	The report defines social capital as "the norms and relations embedded in the social structures of societies that enable people to coordinate action to achieve desired goals". It can emerge organically or be purposefully cultivated through structured programs, such as those delivered by volunteer involving organisations. Examples of social capital in the volunteering sector include, but are not limited to: • individual's trust; • reciprocity; • interpersonal networks; and • civic engagement. Social capital can strengthen social ties and enable *bridging* between diverse groups. People around the world have looked to structured volunteering programs as a catalyst to encourage positive social capital development to strengthen communities.	A modern interpretation of cultural capital includes psychological, symbolic and spiritual capital, as well as an individual's physical health and wellbeing. The relationship of cultural capital to volunteering can be two-fold: volunteers can impart cultural capital to their beneficiaries through their skills and knowledge and they can improve their own capabilities through their volunteer engagement. Cultural capital can be accrued as a means of fulfilling one's sense of self-worth, it can be used to motivate productivity and it can even be used for economic and social gain[13].

Future State

Vision statement

Our vision is to establish a sustainable, fit-for-purpose infrastructure that supports an inclusive, creative and meaningful volunteer engagement lifecycle and enables our volunteers and volunteer leaders to thrive.

This vision for volunteer engagement at Council is supported by four key pillars, which will drive activities and priorities over the coming four-year period.

Best practice and fit-for-purpose volunteer engagement is guided by the relationships we build with volunteers and volunteer leaders, emerging sector trends, relevant legislation, organisational policies and procedures, risk management and continuous improvement.

In addition, a number of adopted Council strategies and plans guide our future state. Council is guided by the Community Vision and works to deliver the Council Plan.

Environmental sustainability considerations

Council continues to identify and facilitate volunteering opportunities that contribute to environmental and climate emergency related strategic objectives and activities. Volunteer program elements will be designed and developed utilising electronic material where possible.

Economic development considerations

Council recognises that volunteering fosters resilient communities, supports job readiness and can create pathways to employment through volunteers acquiring new skills, obtaining valuable experiences that could support a job application and through networking opportunities.

Four Pillars

■ Support and Strengthen	◆ Connectedness and Opportunity	● Volunteer Impact and Recognition	◀ Continuous Improvement
Enabling meaningful, sustainable volunteer engagement through fit-for-purpose infrastructure and centralised support.	Encouraging and facilitating volunteering as a way for our community to connect and build experience and expertise.	Acknowledging, showcasing and celebrating the array of contributions made by volunteers and volunteer leaders across Council.	Actively responding to emerging needs and trends through investment in data collection, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Equity, diversity and inclusion considerations

Recommended actions from Council's Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy and Action Plan and the Gender Equality Action Plan will be built into volunteer practices herein. An Equity Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the new framework.

A key principle of the framework is inclusivity, and our cohort of volunteers should reflect our diverse community. Equal representation enables equal and rightful opportunity to impact our communities and provides individuals with equitable access to shaping outcomes.

Cultural considerations

Council recognises the history and contributions of the various communities, migrants and refugees who have made the municipality their home. Council acknowledges the various connotations associated with the term 'volunteer' and will work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives to ensure Council's actions are reflective of respect and understanding.

Emerging trends in volunteering across the sector

The volunteering landscape is evolving and whilst traditional forms of volunteering remain popular, new forms are emerging. It is important that we recognise and understand these emerging trends to better develop tailored strategies to attract, support and retain volunteers. The following trends in volunteering in Australia have been identified across the sector:

- More volunteers are seeking roles that are flexible or require shorter hours or a shorter-term commitment;
- Virtual volunteering opportunities have risen as a result of technology changes and the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Project-based roles, innovative use of technology and rewarding social connections are vital in attracting today's youth volunteers;
- Older adults want to utilise the skills they have acquired throughout their working lives through meaningful and valued volunteering opportunities;
- People are increasingly time poor and volunteering activities compete with greater work and caring responsibilities;
- People are more mobile than in the past, making it less likely that a volunteer will stay for many years in a single role;
- The frequency of natural disasters requires a ready supply of skilled emergency management volunteers and the training requirements for these volunteers has grown substantially; and
- Increasing numbers of public and private employers support staff engaging in corporate volunteering.[1,2,4]

Engagement and development approach

Development of the framework:

The methodology used to develop the framework comprised of both qualitative and quantitative approaches including:

- Research and benchmarking into other Victorian municipalities' volunteering strategies and approaches to volunteer engagement;
- Desktop research into volunteering best practice guidance across Federal and State levels;

- A gaps analysis of Council volunteer engagement practices against the National Standards for Volunteer Involvement;
- Risk Assessment;
- Equity Impact Assessment;
- A review of endorsed Council plans and strategies to identify volunteering-related calls to action; and
- Consultation sessions with staff, Council volunteers, volunteer leaders and support functions (including People and Culture).

Implementation

The implementation of the volunteer engagement framework will take place over a period of four years. The strategic trajectory provides a highlevel overview of the steps that Council will take during this implementation.

Strategic trajectory

Foundation 2022-2023	Operational Excellence 2023-2024	Strategic Excellence 2024-2025	Evaluation 2025-2026
Establish baseline

Create Value Proposition

Implement streamlined processes | Increase visibility

Council Volunteer Leaders Network

Build capability and skills

Implement feedback mechanisms | Recognition and impact

Strengthen community partnerships

Contribute to consultation and research in the sector and support joint advocacy

Corporate Volunteering Program | Cultivate a visible, vibrant volunteering culture across Council

Analyse and present a range of data sought through feedback mechanisms

Evolve into an organisational leader of volunteer engagement

Review and refresh the framework |

Management reporting
Annual review and benchmark analysis
Four-year refresh

As a result of the research and consultation, we have created an action plan with measurable tasks to guide implementation and monitor activities across the next four years. Each action is aligned to the four pillars and the National Standards. The action plan will be managed by People and Culture with responsible officers dedicated to facilitating its implementation. The action plan will be reviewed annually.

PILLARS

- ■ Support and Strengthen
- ● Volunteer Impact and Recognition
- ◆ Connectedness and Opportunity
- ◀ Continuous Improvement

Action	Strategy/Link	Time frame	The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
1 Establish a centralised point of contact in People & Culture to support and guide volunteer engagement and drive implementation of the framework Council-wide **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ●	Volunteer Management Action Plan Workforce Plan	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 2
2 Identify existing Council-led volunteer programs and investigate current volunteer engagement practices **PILLARS:** ■ ◆	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1	Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5 Standard 6 Standard 7
3 Clearly define the different types of volunteer engagement across Council **PILLARS:** ■ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 8
4 Deliver on the Council Plan and Workforce Plan **PILLARS:** ■ ◆	Council Plan Workforce Plan	Year 1	Standard 2
5 Circulate and promote the implementation of Council's Volunteer Policy **PILLARS:** ■	Volunteer Policy	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 8
6 Apply organisational policies and practices to volunteer engagement, including but not limited to Child Safe Standards and OHS **PILLARS:** ■ ◀	Volunteer Policy OHS Action Plan	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 6
7 Investigate and procure a centralised volunteer management database to store, track and report volunteer involvement with Council across the volunteer engagement lifecycle **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 5 Standard 6 Standard 8
8 Cultivate a vibrant volunteering culture across Council through a shared, comprehensive understanding of volunteering best practice **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ●	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 7

Action	Strategy/Link	Time frame	The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
9 Resource the Action Plan to ensure its sustainability and success PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 2 Standard 8
10 Collaborate with staff across the organisation to explore what inclusivity, accessibility and equity look like in practice, across the volunteer engagement lifecycle • Consider targeted program support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the LGBTQIA+ community, people with disability, recently arrived migrants from non-English speaking countries PILLARS: ■ ◆	Towards Equality Framework Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 2 Standard 3 Standard 4 Standard 5 Standard 6 Standard 7
11 Consult with Council's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff network and the Darebin Aboriginal Advisory Committee in our approach to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through volunteering/ community-giving • Complement existing Council initiatives PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Council Plan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 6 Standard 8
12 Collaborate with responsible officers to facilitate regular consultation sessions with volunteers PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan Community Engagement Policy	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 8
13 Identify the key barriers to volunteer participation across Council and explore ways to reduce these barriers PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 6 Standard 8
14 Create and implement sustainable, place-based volunteering opportunities in East Preston and East Reservoir PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Council Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 2 Standard 3
15 Undertake an annual gaps analysis against the National Standards PILLARS: ■ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 8
16 Review and update the Action Plan annually PILLARS: ■ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 8
17 Increase Council presence within the volunteer sector as a leader of volunteers and contribute to joint advocacy initiatives and research PILLARS: ◆ ●	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 8

Action	Strategy/Link	Time frame	The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
18 Develop, streamline and centralise supporting documentation managed through People & Culture PILLARS: ■ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 8
19 Develop a standardised Council volunteer onboarding process (screening, orientation and induction) PILLARS: ■ ◀	Volunteer Policy Safeguarding Children Code of Conduct OHS Action Plan	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 4 Standard 5
20 Develop a standardised Council volunteer exit process to formally exit and thank volunteers and capture feedback PILLARS: ■ ● ◀	Workforce Plan	Year 1	Standard 1 Standard 7 Standard 8
21 Streamline channels of enquiry to enable timely response and support staff across the organisation to know how and where to direct enquiries PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan Customer Experience Strategy	Year 1	Standard 2 Standard 8
22 Create and manage digital communications such as centralised dedicated internal and external webpages PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan Customer Experience Strategy	Year 1	Standard 2 Standard 7 Standard 8
23 Investigate and procure appropriate memberships offered through volunteer sector bodies, such as Volunteering Victoria PILLARS: ■ ◆	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1	Standard 2
24 Review the ways volunteer opportunities are presented by Council and implement a coordinated approach PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 2	Standard 1 Standard 8
25 Develop value propositions that attract, support and retain a diverse network of volunteers and cohort of volunteer leaders across Council PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 2	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 7 Standard 8
26 Provide in-house training for responsible officers to access the volunteer management database PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 2	Standard 5
27 Expand on current information sharing channels across Council, such as the Staff-Staff Bulletin and e-newsletters to incorporate regular volunteer content PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 2	Standard 8
28 Investigate current engagement practices with associated Friends Groups in Darebin PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Parks and Open Space Volunteer Framework	Year 1 to Year 2	Standard 1 Standard 5 Standard 6

Action	Strategy/Link	Time frame	The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
29 Centralise and streamline methods of reporting volunteer information PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 1 to Year 2	Standard 8
30 Investigate free or low-cost training and professional development opportunities to better equip volunteer leaders PILLARS: ■ ◀	Learning and Development Policy Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	Year 2	Standard 5 Standard 8
31 Investigate Council volunteer accessibility to Council's Employee Assistance Program PILLARS: ■ ●	OHS Action Plan	Year 2	Standard 6
32 Investigate accessible, multi-faceted ways to celebrate volunteering at Council and support staff to nominate candidates for internal and external volunteer recognition awards PILLARS: ◆ ●	Volunteer Management Action Plan Disability Access and Inclusion in Darebin Plan	Year 2	Standard 2 Standard 7
33 Establish an internal Council Volunteer Leaders Network PILLARS: ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 2	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 5
34 Explore the capacity of the Council's organisational Learning Hub as a mechanism to deliver specific training to volunteers and responsible officers PILLARS: ■ ◀	Learning and Development Policy Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 2	Standard 5
35 Develop and implement regular feedback mechanisms, such as consultation and surveys, to improve volunteer engagement reporting and evaluation capability PILLARS: ■ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan Workforce Plan	Year 2	Standard 8
36 Establish a systematic volunteer referral process with local volunteer involving organisations to support and complement volunteering across the City of Darebin PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 2	Standard 2 Standard 8
37 Increase the range and availability of volunteer opportunities across Council, inclusive of one-off participation, responsive to the diverse needs and motivations of the community PILLARS: ◆ ●	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 2	Standard 3 Standard 8
38 Explore the pathways between volunteering and education (work experience and student placement) to support skill development and the pathways between volunteering and work to retirement PILLARS: ■ ◆ ◀	Pathways Program Youth Services Strategy Disability Access and Inclusion in Darebin Plan Age Friendly Darebin	Year 2	Standard 2 Standard 3 Standard 5

Action	Strategy/Link	Time frame	The National Standards for Volunteer Involvement
39 Develop partnerships with volunteering support services across other municipalities to pool resources and knowledge and connect with similar organisations **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 2 to Year 3	Standard 2 Standard 8
40 Establish an annual calendar of events and explore scope for co-facilitation of accessible activities and events with key stakeholders **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ●	Volunteer Management Action Plan Disability Access and Inclusion in Darebin Plan	Year 2 to Year 3	Standard 7
41 Enable Council volunteers to participate across a range of Council-led volunteer programs **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ●	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 3	Standard 5
42 Explore stakeholder consensus on development of a 'Volunteering in Darebin' e-newsletter **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 3	Standard 7 Standard 8
43 Explore interest and capacity for a Corporate Volunteering Program for Council staff **PILLARS:** ◆ ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 3	Standard 2 Standard 6
44 Investigate how Council can support mutual obligation through volunteer engagement **PILLARS:** ■ ◆	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 3	Standard 2 Standard 8
45 Consider the implications to Council's Volunteer Program when developing key policies, procedures and strategies **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 3 to Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 8
46 Participate in existing events and activities at local education/ training institutions and community centres to promote Council volunteering opportunities and complement volunteering across the City of Darebin **PILLARS:** ◆	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 3 to Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 7
47 Consider the requirements of volunteer engagement as part of broader People & Culture system requirements **PILLARS:** ■ ◀	Workforce Plan	Year 4	Standard 1 Standard 2 Standard 8
48 Review and update the Volunteer Management Action Plan **PILLARS:** ■ ◆ ● ◀	Volunteer Management Action Plan	Year 4	Standard 8

Outcome and Impact

What does success look like?

In conjunction with the strategic trajectory and action plan, an evaluation table will be used to measure the program's success metrics against each of the four pillars.

Stakeholders will be provided with ongoing opportunities to issue feedback to ensure the framework remains relevant and that we are on track, responding to emerging needs and trends in real time through our actions.

Evaluation Table

Pillar	Evaluation question	Indicators	Data source
Support & Strengthen ▪	Is the framework owned and managed and appropriately resourced?	• Responsible officer/s appointed to drive the implementation of the action plan • Increase in volunteering opportunities	• Council Plan • Workforce Plan • Unit Workplans
	Does Council have a clear oversight of volunteer engagement across the organisation?	• Visible volunteer engagement • Centralised, accessible volunteer information	• Centralised volunteer management database • Stakeholder feedback
	Have Value Propositions been established? Do they resonate with our volunteers and volunteer leaders?	• Volunteers and volunteer leaders chose Council because they feel welcomed, safe, valued and respected	• Stakeholder feedback • Participation rates • Equity and wellbeing data
	Is the environment culturally safe?	• Volunteers and volunteer leaders actively participate in consultation	• Stakeholder feedback • Participation rates
	Can volunteers and volunteer leaders access sector-related, quality training and professional development opportunities?	• Leveraging technology effectively and efficiently • Leveraging subject matter experts • Confident, empowered, skilled volunteers and volunteer leaders	• Training and professional development uptake data and completion rate
Connectedness & Opportunity ◆	Is Council facilitating an increase in connectedness of our diverse communities and providing opportunities to develop new skills?	• Volunteering is visible and accessible • Volunteering is a recognised pathway	• Stakeholder feedback • Participation rates • Community profile data • Pathways Program data
	Is Council enabling increased volunteer participation in East Preston and East Reservoir?	• Sustainable place-based volunteer programs that address community needs and motivations	• Stakeholder feedback • Participation rates • Community profile data

Pillar	Evaluation question	Indicators	Data source
Connectedness & Opportunity continued	Are volunteer leaders across Council connected?	• Adopted coordinated approach to volunteer engagement • Participation in Council Volunteer Leaders Network	• Volunteer leader feedback • Sustainability and impact evaluation of Council volunteer programs
	Does Council's Volunteer Program support and complement local volunteer involving organisations?	• Strong, transparent partnerships between Council and local volunteer involving organisations	• Referral process data • Stakeholder feedback • Community profile data
Volunteer Impact & Recognition ●	Are volunteers and volunteer leaders recognised?	• Consistent, planned and ad-hoc acknowledgement across various mediums • Uptake of calendar of events Council-wide • A range of small and large-scale activities and events	• Stakeholder feedback • Participation rates • Sector related award nominations (internal and external)
	What do the general public say about the support they receive from volunteers and their interactions with volunteers?	• A strong, positive, visible culture of volunteering	• Stakeholder and customer stories and feedback
Continuous improvement ◄	How is feedback gathered? What happens with the feedback that is gathered?	• Consistent data collection throughout volunteer engagement lifecycle • Centralised, multi-faceted reporting tools • Feedback and outcomes shared with stakeholders	• Centralised volunteer management database • Stakeholder feedback • Existing information sharing channels • Management reporting
	What mechanisms does Council use to keep up to date with needs and trends of volunteers, volunteer leaders and the Darebin community more broadly?	• Frequency of volunteer engagement sessions and use of feedback loop • Participation in sector-wide networks and consultation	• Stakeholder feedback • Community profile data • Local, State and Federal sector-related findings and recommendations
	Has the appropriate resourcing been allocated towards data collection and evaluation?	• Accurate and confident reporting • Accessible, up to date information	• Centralised volunteer management database • Management reporting

Addendum

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Contact details

Phone: 03 8470 8715

Email: volunteering@darebin.vic.gov.au

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