

Interim Report

The 3Vs: Volunteers Volunteering Volunteerism

The value hidden
in plain sight

August 2017



Working in conjunction
with Communities,
Government, Agencies
and Business

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Acknowledgement of Country:

Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land. EMV also acknowledges and pays respect to the Elders, past and present and is committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve a shared vision of safer and more resilient communities.

There are approximately 100,000 volunteers in Victoria's emergency management sector; while it's helpful to know this figure, it gives no real insight, evidence or facts about the value created by volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism (the 3Vs).

Volunteers: The people

Volunteering: The activities

Volunteerism: The culture

Executive Summary

The Value of Volunteers, Volunteering and Volunteerism (3Vs) project began on the premise that there are currently no credible or comprehensive methods or models to fully understand the value of emergency management volunteers and volunteering to the Victorian community. Nor is it possible to place a holistic value on volunteerism overall.

The contribution and value distribution cannot be quantified, and at present can only be demonstrated through effective story-telling, media messaging or standard lines. A better understanding of service, people, products and program value is important to sustainability, effective investment, strategy and modelling of capability, capacity and costs.

This Interim Report captures the first iteration of the project, the complexity of the task and the absolute importance of the work. In the past, attempts to understand and measure the value of emergency management volunteering were understood primarily through economic value at an individual level; that is, the financial cost of the substitution of labour per volunteer. The project deliberately provides a broader understanding of the 3Vs, and by doing this it shifts from an individual level understanding to a multi-layered understanding of value. The 3Vs is a quick way to describe three distinct yet interconnected terms, offering a new lens through which to view value.

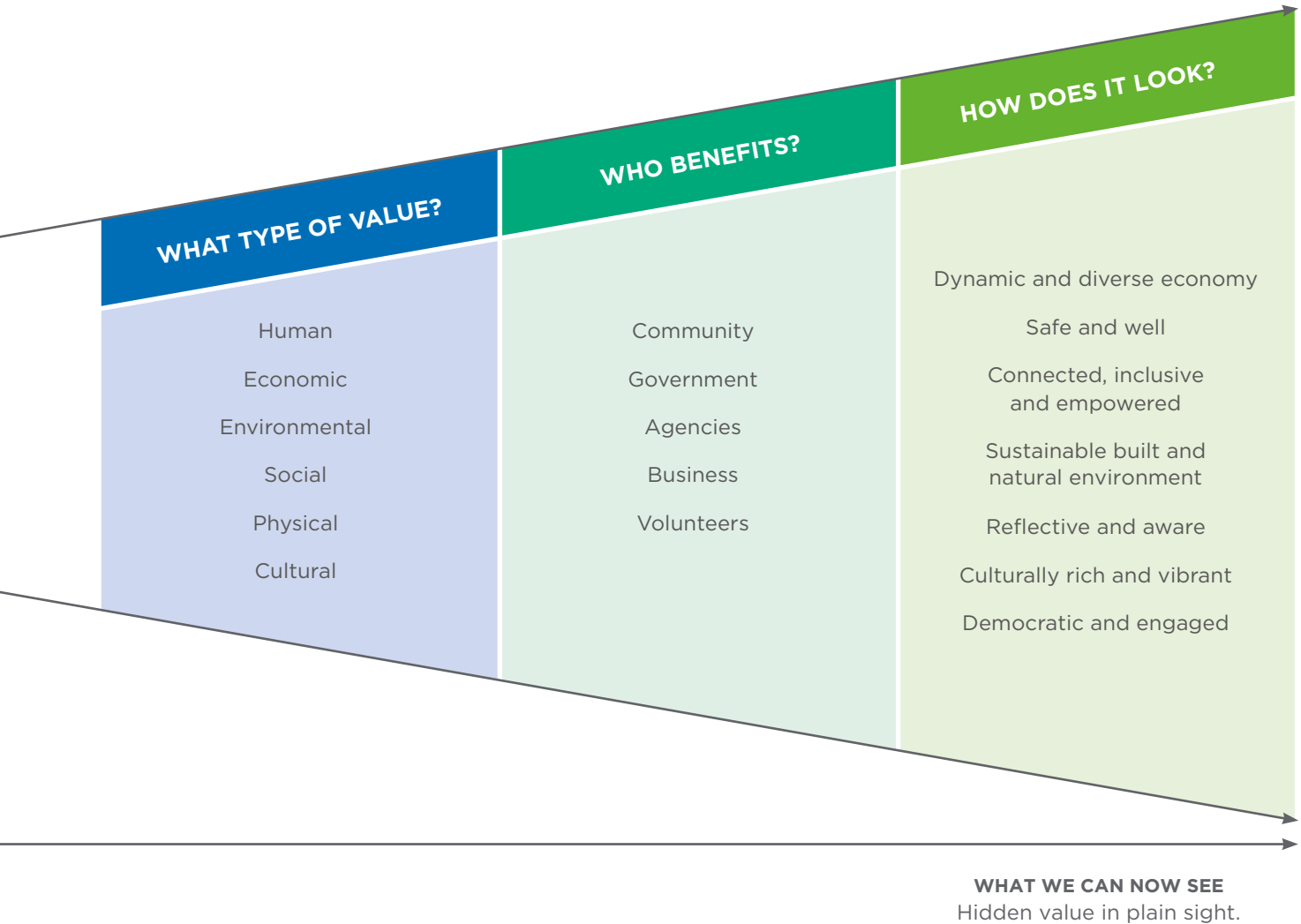
A New Line of Sight



By viewing value through a 3Vs lens our understanding broadens to extend beyond the traditional and narrow understanding of value, such as economic, to broader hidden value such as social, cultural, human, physical and environmental. With a deeper conceptualisation of value, we have a clearer line of sight to a range of recipients (including government, business, communities, agencies and volunteers), through to community resilience, revealing what has been mostly hidden from view, unacknowledged and not previously conceived of as value; the value has been present but hidden in plain sight.

Through this project, a literature review was completed, emergency management volunteer archetypes were developed, a conceptual model and matrix were created, and a preliminary data modelling tool was prototyped.

This project was delivered in collaboration with volunteers, industry experts and agencies. A Volunteer Consultative Forum (VCF) endorsed Reference Group has guided the project design, methodology, engagement, stakeholder management and links to the sector. The Interim Report provides an overview of the findings and recommendations that provide stakeholders with a preliminary view of approaches and methods to develop a more robust view of the value of volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism.



Introduction

While the Victorian emergency management volunteering sector is rich in personal stories, anecdotal evidence and individual agency statistics, to date there has been no common nor agreed way to effectively capture and communicate the value of volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism (3Vs) to government, business, community and agencies.

It is undoubted that the workforce of approximately 100,000 emergency management volunteers in Victoria creates and provides immense value before, during and after emergencies. They train, educate and prepare communities, provide front line response, coordinate resources and deliver critical psycho-social support after an emergency.

The 3Vs support community resilience in many ways. While not always called “resilience”, support to communities has always been central to emergency management in Victoria. The value created by the 3Vs is implicitly linked to organisational and community resilience, however the extent and the way it is delivered and realised is currently only narrowly defined.

Beyond rudimentary measures such as the task-specific and global substitution method¹ for some services, there are currently no comprehensive methods or models to calculate and fully understand the value created by the 3Vs. Consequently, our understanding of the value of volunteers is often limited to an economic measure, while the additional value of volunteering and volunteerism is overlooked, as are the types of value, the recipients and the broader benefits to community resilience and cohesion.

Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) in collaboration with a VCF endorsed Reference Group, has commenced a project to create a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the value of the 3Vs, and is developing a way to capture, quantify, validate and communicate the value identified. This aligns with the Strategic Priorities for Emergency Management Volunteering in Victoria, developed by the VCF, which identifies a need for greater knowledge, understanding and respect for emergency management volunteers.

The Reference Group included representation from Ambulance Victoria, Victorian Council of Churches – Emergency Ministries, Victoria State Emergency Service Volunteer Association, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, business community and Emergency Management Victoria, Volunteer Development and Change.

¹“Task-specific substitution methods” refers to replacement costs for tasks, and “the global substitution method” refers replacement costs for the time that volunteers make themselves available (eg. travel, training), and some standby costs as per Handmer and Ganewatta 2007 study.

Background

Over the years, efforts have been made to understand the value created by volunteers and yet none have managed to quantify and explain the depth and breadth of value created across the whole of the emergency management sector and to the community.

Multi-disciplinary literature on valuing volunteers has identified that there are many types of value and until now the emphasis has primarily been on the economic value of volunteering activities, or the social benefits of volunteering to the individuals who volunteer. In the emergency management sector, there has been little specialised research on the value of emergency management volunteers aside from studies focussing on limited aspects of economic value.

To date, key examples of research relating specifically to emergency management volunteering include:

- Handmer and Ganewatta’s 2007 work measuring the economic value of SES volunteers using the substitution method.
- Hourigan’s 2001 work using the output method to analyse of the value of CFA volunteers.
- The 2009 Bushfires Royal Commission also spent some time attempting to establish the value created by CFA volunteers, with a figure of around \$800 million dollars discussed using Margaret Hourigan’s 2001 work and model.

Beyond this one-dimensional economic perspective, little is understood regarding what is really meant by value, and what additional dimensions it has. Where, how and for whom does it manifest?

Definition of the 3Vs: Volunteers, Volunteering and Volunteerism.

Volunteers

The dedicated people who do the work in local communities before, during and after emergencies.

Volunteering

The activity itself, the work that volunteers do before, during and after emergencies.

Volunteerism

The culture within organisations and the culture within the community.

The value of volunteers and volunteering is often looked at in isolation, and there is insufficient emphasis on the value of volunteerism. There has been little concerted effort to capture the value exchange that occurs between a volunteer and the recipients of their efforts, nor to quantify the importance of volunteerism in underpinning a sense of community.

Volunteerism is intrinsically linked to volunteers and volunteering. In the emergency management sector especially, the culture and spirit of volunteerism is a critical component of the value. The value of volunteerism in local communities extends much further than the formal output of services rendered, and continues beyond rostered duty. As such, when looking at the 3Vs together, rather than in isolation, the hidden value becomes apparent.



Objectives

The hypothesis for this project is that by identifying the different types of value, and the measures and data that support it, an evidenced based approach to quantifying the value of the 3Vs can be developed. As a result, policies, practices and decision-making at all levels of government, within communities, agencies and business can be informed by a more comprehensive picture of the value of the 3Vs.

The objectives of the project are:

- To identify and articulate the complex value of volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism.
- To develop an accurate and compelling narrative around the value of 3Vs which can be universally understood.
- To design and develop an innovative, useful and meaningful tool and methods to capture, quantify, validate and communicate the social, economic, environmental and cultural value of Victoria's emergency management volunteers.
- To enable innovative, sophisticated and powerful ways to showcase the value of the 3Vs for government, agencies, business and the community.

Methods

The project uses a collaborative approach while drawing on the principles of participatory design. All products and methods have been developed, designed and shaped utilising the expertise of the Reference Group, the emergency management sector and the volunteers themselves.

- A literature review, research analysis and qualitative interviews have been conducted. This includes over 70 peer-reviewed papers and past studies of value in economics, volunteering, community services and other fields.
- Interviews have been carried out with academics, volunteers and representatives from the emergency management sector and government.

Findings

The value hidden in plain sight

The literature review and research analysis have revealed that the value of the 3Vs is mostly captured as economic value at an individual level. Significant hidden value has been uncovered as other types of value have been identified and tested including: social, physical, cultural, human and environmental. This hidden value has previously gone unnoticed, unrecognised and unaccounted for.

Six types of value

- 1 Physical Value** The protection of lives, buildings, homes, infrastructure, assets, property, livestock and transport.
- 2 Social Value** The social cohesion, community connectedness and relationships between people who live and work together.
- 3 Economic Value** The direct and indirect financial benefit of programs, people, services, labour, products delivered and avoided costs.
- 4 Cultural Value** The core principles, ideals and customs upon which a community exists.
- 5 Human Value** The personal/individual contribution of people through their knowledge, beliefs, experience, competencies, skills, abilities, motivation, attitudes and personalities.
- 6 Environmental Value** The protection of the natural environment such as forests, grasslands and fauna.

Determining the value of the 3Vs is broader and more complex than anticipated, but with a deeper conceptualisation of value we can better understand the recipients. This includes government, business, communities, agencies and volunteers.

By taking this new approach and exploring the links between the 3Vs, the types of value and the recipients, the connection to the seven characteristics of resilience² becomes clear. Appendix 1 (Matrix) validates the interconnected relationships between the types of value created by the 3Vs and resilience.

² Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), 2017, Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management, EMV, Melbourne.

Characteristics of resilience

- 1 Safe and well
- 2 Connected, inclusive and empowered
- 3 Dynamic and diverse local economy
- 4 Sustainable built and natural environment
- 5 Culturally rich and vibrant
- 6 Democratic and engaged
- 7 Reflective and aware

The conceptual model below has been specifically developed and designed for this project. Its purpose is to illustrate the links between the value created by the 3Vs, the types of value they create and the recipients, and how this contributes to community resilience.

In addition, a preliminary data modelling tool was prototyped to help validate and measure types of value. With further investment, this tool could allow existing agency data to be used to build a richer picture of the 3Vs.



Volunteers and Value

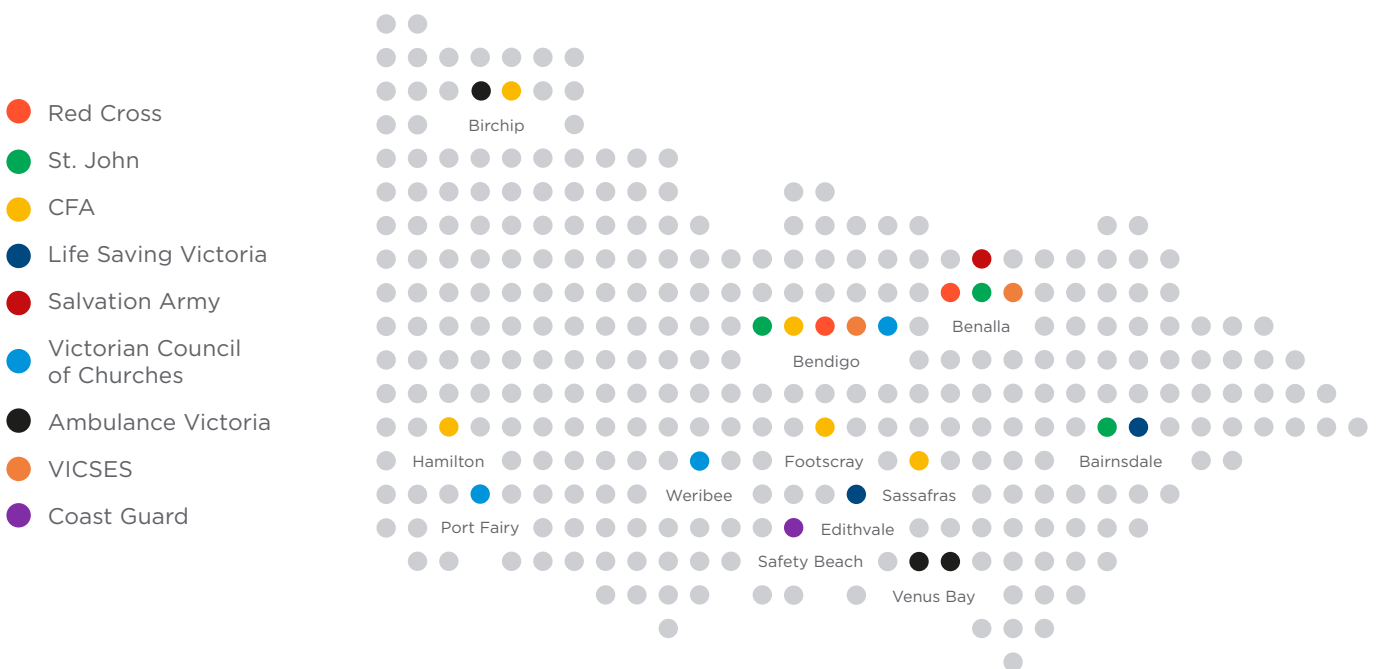
To ensure a holistic understanding of the types of value created by the 3Vs, it has been important to ground truth our assumptions by engaging with grassroots volunteers.

To achieve this, a series of interviews have been conducted around the state with volunteers from a broad range of agencies, locations and backgrounds.

Through the interviews, it became apparent volunteers recognise some of the important value they create. However, it is also clear that they don't always see all of the types of value they create and the range of recipients; reinforcing that value is hidden. This supports the need to continue to explore the concept of the 3Vs value from the perspective of other recipients, including business, government, communities and agencies.

A set of emergency management archetypes was developed and are currently being further explored. These demonstrate the great diversity of the people who volunteer, the roles they undertake, the communities they serve and the value they create.

We held 22 in depth interviews across Victoria.



3Vs in practice – Wye River

Located on the Great Ocean Road, the small beach township of Wye River has a permanent population of 236 (2011 Census) which increases tenfold during holidays. Wye River boasts a beautiful beach, trendy general store and prominent pub. It's also home to the CFA fire brigade and the Wye River Surf Life Saving Club.

Looking toward the beach on a busy day you will see the symbolic red and yellow flags – a simple sign that shows beachgoers that lifesavers are on duty. You are also not far from the iconic CFA logo affixed to the fire station. While it may feel reassuring to see these iconic symbols, it only captures a narrow impression of the value that these volunteers really make to their local community, and for visitors to the area.

When we offer a different perspective, like a new lens to look through, you will see past the bricks and mortar, trucks, surf skis and flags, and you will come to a different conclusion about the value of what we call the 3Vs. You will see the volunteers in and out of uniform, the variety and impact of the work they do, and the binding spirit they create and generate.

The real value of volunteers extends far beyond the activities they undertake. Without volunteers to provide both lifesaving and firefighting capabilities, the township of Wye River would not thrive as a tourist destination. The concerted effort of volunteers creates a safe environment within which families can comfortably holiday. This has a ripple effect on local businesses and employment, leading to a thriving community. It's evident that the value of the 3Vs in Wye River well exceeds the economic value of the volunteers' time.

This creation of value is happening day in day out, if you know what you are looking for. It's happening in the pub and in the general store, out on the water and over a cup of tea, in and out of uniform. Through the 3Vs lens, you can now see the value that to date was mostly hidden from view but often intrinsically known by those who create it and those who experience it.

Conclusion

Considering the size of the emergency management volunteer workforce, the understanding of value is limited and relies mostly on the recipient's ability and interest to determine for themselves. There is no purpose-built tool, efforts or methods to assist the community, government, business and agencies to better understand hidden value above platitudes and anecdotes of invaluable service to community. There is an inherent vulnerability in this approach.

While their contributions when in uniform and role are evident, there is now a logic that enables us to clearly validate the connection between the 3Vs and community resilience. By viewing value through the 3Vs lens our understanding is broadened to extend beyond the traditional and narrow understanding of value, such as economic, to broader hidden value such as social, cultural, human, physical and environmental.

With this deeper conceptualisation of value, we have a clearer line of sight to the recipients and community resilience, revealing what has been mostly hidden from view, unacknowledged and not previously conceived of as value; the value has been present but hidden in plain sight.

The need for a deeper understanding of value comes at an important time. All levels of government are striving to control costs, to improve outcomes for people, whilst at the same time responding to increasing demands and changing expectations from citizens. As the whole system of government looks to respond to this changing context, there is an opportunity to articulate clearly the full breadth and depth of value of the 3Vs. This new understanding will help challenge or confirm the value of the 3Vs using a new set of parameters.

The paradox faced by the sector is an inherent design flaw of previous attempts to capture value. While a local or individual level understanding is best built through a continual sharing of story and deed, at a system level something different is required to capture, quantify, validate and communicate the full extent of the value created.

This project has taken some significant first steps to shape a new understanding of volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism by taking into consideration their contribution to the six types of value, the recipients of the value created and the broader contribution to community resilience in Victoria.

Recommendations

This project represents an evolution in how the value of the 3Vs is understood, moving beyond an anecdotal story or rudimentary one-dimensional valuation. Using the 3Vs we are expanding, discovering and bringing to life the hidden value.

There is merit in further developing this important work by:

- Identifying and developing products to communicate the hidden value of the 3Vs.
- Exploring the broader application of the archetypes for use by volunteers, agencies and government.
- Interviewing other recipients of value, such as communities, agencies, businesses and government representatives, to gauge their understanding of the value of volunteers, volunteering and volunteerism.
- Scoping the development of the prototyped data-modelling tool based this new logic with the option to test in partnership with an emergency management agency. This could lead to a sector-wide tool to quantify the value of the 3Vs across the state.



Appendix 1:

How value created by the 3Vs contributes to community resilience

Types of Value	Value Definitions
<p>Physical</p>	<p>The protection of lives, buildings, homes, infrastructure, assets, property, livestock and transport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and mitigating damage to homes and belongings. • Protecting and mitigating damage to community buildings and assets. • Protecting and mitigating damage to property and infrastructure.
<p>Economic</p>	<p>The direct and indirect financial benefit of programs, people, services, labour and products delivered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevention and decreased impact/consequences of emergency events on communities, contributing to business continuity, decreased insurance claims, replacement and repairs of buildings and assets etc. • Decreased cost and demand on public and private services during and after emergency events such as hospitals and counselling services. • Protecting life and preventing injury.
<p>Social</p>	<p>The improved social cohesion, community connectedness and relationships between people who live and work together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making new friends, increasing connections, building local networks, sense of inclusion and belonging. • Improved physical/mental health and wellbeing. • Connecting people to the required service providers before, during and after emergency events. • Increased sense of safety, self-reliance and independence in communities.
<p>Cultural</p>	<p>The core principles, ideals and customs upon which a community exists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ingrained collective sense of identity, pride, togetherness, purpose and shared values. • Community confidence, trust, skills and resilience. • Community memory and local knowledge about emergencies including history, repercussions and learnings. • The traditions and behaviours, knowledge, esteem, purpose and recognition.
<p>Human</p>	<p>The personal/individual contribution of people through their knowledge, experience, competencies, skills, abilities, motivation, attitudes and personalities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased sense of purpose, ingenuity, self-worth and pride. • Improved individual confidence, trust, skills and resilience. • Sustained community memory and local knowledge about emergencies including history, repercussions and past learnings. • Increased contribution to employer/workforce.
<p>Environmental</p>	<p>Natural environment such as forests, grasslands, flora and fauna.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting and mitigating damage to national parks, state forests and open green spaces. • Protecting and maintaining air quality and waterways, flora and fauna diversity. • Protecting and mitigating damage to cultural, leisure and recreation assets and spaces.

Resilience Characteristics and Components						
Safe and well Personal health and wellbeing Personal and community safety	Connected inclusive and empowered Community connectedness Service availability/accessibility	Dynamic and diverse local economy Employment Income and wealth Skills Business continuity	Sustainable built and natural environment Transport accessibility Housing Open green space Infrastructure Communications infrastructure	Culturally rich and vibrant Art and cultural activities Leisure and recreation Culturally diverse	Democratic and engaged Citizen engagement Volunteerism Youth engagement	Reflective and aware Emergency management and mitigation planning Responsibility and self-organisation Lifelong learning
		✓	✓	✓		✓
✓		✓				✓
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