

Department for Environment and Heritage

Success Through Partnership



A Strategy for Volunteer Engagement 2005 - 2010

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Government
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Foreword

The Department for Environment and Heritage is proud of its long history of volunteer involvement. Today, more than 6000 people are engaged in volunteering with our Department. And together we can do more!

Success Through Partnership - A Strategy for Volunteer Engagement is an exciting approach to providing ongoing support and direction for volunteer involvement within the Department. The Strategy builds on the existing efforts and successes, and provides a solid direction for future volunteer engagement.

As the name suggests, *Success Through Partnership*, reaffirms the Department's intention to work in partnership to achieve its goals. This is recognised through the Department's Corporate Plan under the goal to 'Engage the community and foster debate on the environment'. Successful implementation, however, will require cooperation, coordination and commitment from all those involved in the management of the State's environment and heritage including Government, volunteers and community based groups.

I encourage everyone to be involved and would like to take this opportunity to formally thank all of our volunteers, past and present, for their dedication, enthusiasm and contribution.

ALLAN HOLMES
CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Executive Summary

Success Through Partnership: A Strategy for Volunteer Engagement provides a framework for future involvement of volunteers with the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH). The Volunteer Strategy is a first for South Australian Government agencies.

Success Through Partnership sets out both where we are now, where we want to be in the future, and outlines the challenges we will face in getting there. It encompasses high-level strategic objectives that are visionary, yet realistic.

As its name suggests, the underlying philosophy of the Volunteer Strategy is 'success through partnership'. Building on existing efforts and successes, it provides a solid plan for the future through clearly identified priorities and actions, so that even better outcomes can be realised for DEH and its volunteers in the future.

The development of *Success Through Partnership* is not intended to abandon or diminish the strengths of the Department's current volunteer programs. Rather it provides a focus for consolidation of existing processes, and a solid direction for further volunteer engagement.

Success Through Partnership will be an evolving document that is adapted to align with changing circumstances in terms of resources, priorities and the demands of both the Department and its volunteers. It will only be effective if it continues to reflect both DEH needs and community aspirations.

Further work will be required to identify specific actions, roles and responsibilities and implementation plans. Consultation will be ongoing with those groups who will be working together in partnership to achieve the outcomes identified in *Success Through Partnership*.

The Strategy at a glance

Success Through Partnership sets the direction for a reinvigorated approach to volunteer engagement in DEH over the next five years. It strongly reflects the Department's commitment to respond to new and emerging needs, and to address gaps in services and supports for its current volunteer programs. It will ensure that the Department's current and future volunteer programs align with its core business as outlined in the Corporate Plan¹. *Success Through Partnership* also reflects the State Government's commitment to supporting and increasing volunteer participation in South Australia.

The Volunteer Strategy is based upon ten guiding principles.

- Volunteer programs contribute significantly to DEH's core business.
- Volunteer activities should complement those carried out by DEH staff, thereby achieving greater results than could be achieved using DEH resources alone. Volunteer activities are not intended to displace existing or future DEH staff.
- Volunteers' contribution to our natural and cultural environment should be maximised through careful planning, appropriate induction and training, and by matching the interests, skills and experiences of volunteers with the activity.

- Volunteer activities should be carefully planned to take into account DEH corporate directions and priorities, staff availability and resources. Sustainability of outcomes should be at the core of any decision-making.
- All volunteer activities require sufficient financial and staff resources for planning structured programs and the provision of supervision, guidance and a safe working environment.
- The benefits and costs, both tangible and intangible, of volunteer programs should be clearly identified and understood.
- DEH values diversity amongst its volunteers and acknowledges the unique contribution that each volunteer makes. DEH will provide and support volunteer programs that meet different interests, and where all individuals feel welcomed and are able to meaningfully contribute.
- Volunteer programs should be designed to ensure negative impact on the environment is minimised.
- DEH recognises the need to keep the administration associated with volunteer programs to a minimum.
- DEH will support and encourage involvement of its volunteers in shaping the future of volunteering in the Department.

¹Department for Environment and Heritage - Corporate Plan 2005



Objectives

Success Through Partnership identifies five key objectives developed around the outcome areas of innovation, viability, support, recognition and improvement. Whilst key strategies have been identified for each objective, the strategies are broad targets that will require mutual cooperation and investment to be achieved.

With 'success through partnership' as the underlying philosophy, the Volunteer Strategy has a strong emphasis on collaboration and relationship building both with the Department's volunteers and external volunteer groups. It also pushes the traditional boundaries of volunteering within DEH.

Objective 1 Innovation

To expand the opportunity for volunteer involvement, and to offer a diverse range of events, activities and programs that allow people to be involved in conserving the natural and cultural environment, whilst supporting the core business of the Department.

Objective 2 Viability

To ensure long-term sustainability of volunteer involvement in DEH.

Objective 3 Support

To nurture and support the involvement of volunteers across DEH.

Objective 4 Recognition

To value, respect and recognise volunteers, and foster community pride in the work undertaken by the volunteers.

Objective 5 Improvement

To maintain management structures and processes that support best practice to enhance the Department's volunteering capacity.

Success Through Partnership will be progressed over the next five years through a number of key strategies. These strategies are outlined and developed in the main document and identify opportunities for DEH to be forward thinking, progressive in its actions and responsive to change. Specific strategies focus on further opportunities for volunteer engagement including the development of a program specifically aimed at young people, and tapping into the increasing interest in corporate social responsibility.

In addition there is a clear focus on further developing partnerships with external volunteer community groups and organisations, which will enable DEH to maximise its limited resources and to potentially achieve greater outcomes.

Progress will be reported through an annual reporting process, and the Strategy will be reviewed in five years, or as required.

Introduction

The Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) is responsible for environment policy, biodiversity conservation, heritage conservation, environmental sustainability and animal welfare, and is a custodian of information and knowledge about the State's environment.

The Department also manages the State's public land - land held in the conservation reserve system and as Crown lands. As a priority, the Department strives to build on working relationships with community groups to achieve mutual objectives.

The Department's strong commitment to engaging communities is reflected through the involvement of more than 6,000 volunteers in DEH activities throughout the State. This includes a range of activities across the Department.

Success Through Partnership: A Strategy for Volunteer Engagement sets the direction for a reinvigorated approach to volunteer engagement in DEH over the

next five years. It strongly reflects the Department's commitment to respond to new and emerging needs, and to address the gaps in services and supports for its current volunteer programs.

Success Through Partnership encompasses a series of strategies for the future, enabling the Department to both develop and expand opportunities for volunteers to contribute to the conservation and restoration of the environment, whilst also ensuring that programs align with the Department's corporate directions. *Success Through Partnership* will ensure DEH is well positioned to respond to the evolving, dynamic volunteer sector.

Volunteering - The Big Picture

Volunteers contribute significantly to our nation, and South Australia is no exception.

Every year more than 400,000 South Australians freely give their time to countless worthy causes, ranging from visiting elderly people in their homes, organising events for young people, protecting local heritage, and caring for sick and injured native wildlife.

According to the Voluntary Work Survey² undertaken in 2000, 3.8% of the nation's volunteers were active in environmental or animal welfare organisations, with each volunteer committing, on average, almost nine hours per year. That is more than 1.4 million hours of volunteer labour! A powerful force that when harnessed effectively can contribute enormous energy, skills, knowledge and passion to a cause.

In addition to tangible results, effective volunteer programs can greatly improve relationships between DEH and the

community beyond the scope of solid environmental outcomes, building a greater understanding and support for DEH activities.

Over the last 10 years or so, both the environment and volunteer sectors have experienced considerable change. Issues such as global warming, deforestation Clean Up Australia Day, and the Landcare movement, have increased community awareness of environmental issues and played an important role in encouraging people to become more active in their communities. Broader societal changes, such as the increased use of information technology and more recently the focus on risk management and insurance, have also impacted on how people engage with their communities.

²Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000)



Alignment with Government Policy

The South Australian Government has a strong focus on increasing and supporting volunteerism in the State.

In May 2003 Advancing the Community Together: A Partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the South Australian Government was launched. The Partnership outlines commitments of the State Government and Volunteer Sector to advancing volunteering in our State.

Success Through Partnership will advance the commitments made in the Volunteer Partnership and will contribute to achieving targets set in the SA Strategic Plan, in particular the 'Building Communities' Target 5.6 to 'increase the level of volunteerism in South Australia from 38% in 2000 to 50% within 10 years'³. In addition, the Volunteer Strategy can assist in achieving Targets 3.10 (Million Trees Program), and 3.4 (establishing biodiversity corridors).

DEH's Volunteer Strategy may also provide economic benefits through 'multiplier effects', helping to achieve Targets 2.2 (to increase healthy life expectancy of South Australians)⁴ and 2.8 (to reduce crime rates in the State)⁵. The strategies relating to commercial tourism and youth participation may contribute to Targets 1.13 (increasing visitor expenditure in the tourism industry), and 1.3 relating to youth employment (volunteering helps build life skills, and provides experience that can assist young people in gaining meaningful employment).

The focus on youth participation also aligns with the Government's priorities around school retention.

Volunteer participation also has the potential to positively impact on achieving sustainability targets. *three, four, five*⁶: A Report to the Government of South Australia on implementing the State Strategic Plan by the Premier's Round Table on Sustainability, identifies the cultivation and adequate resourcing of volunteers as a key recommendation in encouraging change in the way South Australians impact on the environment.

*Commissioner's Standard 1: A Planned Workforce Attachment A - Volunteers in Government Agencies*⁷ outlines the role of volunteers in agencies, and the responsibilities of agencies that engage volunteers. It defines volunteering as:

"Volunteering involves people undertaking defined activities:

- of their own free will
- without payment (other than out-of-pocket expenses); and
- which will be of benefit to the community and the agency concerned."

Whilst a person may obtain work experience skills through volunteering, within the Department formal work experience and volunteering are administratively distinct⁸.

A Focus on Volunteering in DEH

Volunteering for the environment has a long history in South Australia with voluntary service to national parks dating back to their inception in 1891.

Formal engagement of volunteers began in 1980 in the then Department of Environment and Planning, with the formation of the first National Parks and Wildlife Consultative Committee.

Today, DEH engages over 6,000 volunteers in more than 25 volunteer programs. The largest group is Friends of Parks, with 135 member groups across the State. Friends of Parks Inc is the umbrella organisation for these Friends of Parks groups. Whilst many of DEH's volunteers belong to Friends of Parks groups, established in relation to individual reserves, groups of reserves, or individual sites/issues, not all volunteers are involved in on-park activities.

Volunteers are involved in a wide variety of activities ranging from threat abatement and tour guiding, protection of local heritage, conserving specimens at the Herbarium and doing fieldwork for fire research. Volunteers are also associated with the preservation/restoration of maritime archaeological finds, cataloguing, photography and research support. Friends of the Botanic Gardens of Adelaide also has a large number of volunteers working across the three major botanic gardens in the State. In addition to practical on the ground works, DEH volunteers contribute through significant fundraising, raising community awareness, community education, cultural involvement and public relations.

³South Australian Strategic Plan - *Creating Opportunity*, Target 5.6 March (2004). The 50% target refers to the number of South Australians identified as participating in volunteering. ⁴Research has shown correlations between high social capital and lower mortality rates, coronary heart disease and other health conditions. Kawachi I and Berkman L (2000) *Social Cohesion, Social Capital, and Health* in Berkman L & Kawachi I (eds) *Social Epidemiology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press; cited in Mayer P (2003) *The Wider Economic Value of Social Capital and Volunteering in South Australia*, Government of SA. ⁵Strong negative correlations have been reported between voluntary membership/high social capital and crime rates. Various authors cited in Mayer P (2003) *The Wider Economic Value of Social Capital and Volunteering in South Australia*, Government of SA. ⁶The Premier's Round Table on Sustainability (2004) *three, four, five*: A report to the Government of South Australia on implementing the State Strategic Plan, Department for Environment and Heritage. ⁷Formerly PSM Act Determination No.27 - Volunteers in Government Agencies. ⁸Work experience is the formal placement of a student into the Department as part of their high school or university studies. In this case the student is covered by their institution's insurance. when a student participates in DEH activities outside this formal structure they are considered to be a volunteer, and as such are covered by the Government's insurance arrangements (DEH Human Resources Services Branch).



Why develop a Volunteer Strategy?

With the natural and cultural environment impacting on all South Australians and approximately 22% of South Australian land protected in the conservation reserve system, there is considerable potential, and imperative, to maintain community interest and involvement.

Whilst DEH has a long and proud volunteering tradition, volunteer effort needs to be carefully planned for and well supported. It is easy to get caught up in day-to-day demands and not think about the bigger picture, or the long-term viability of volunteering within DEH. Supported and managed appropriately, volunteers are a significant resource for the Department. Poorly managed, there is the potential for them

to be ineffective and a poor use of resources, resulting in disengagement and discontent within the community, or even degradation of the environment.

Planning ensures good outcomes for the Department, volunteers and the environment. It allows us to identify what we need to do now and in the future to ensure our volunteer programs are sustainable, effective and relevant.

Success Through Partnership is not intended to abandon or diminish the strengths of the Department's existing volunteer programs. Rather it provides a focus for consolidation of existing processes, and a solid direction for further volunteer engagement.

Key Issues

In developing the Volunteer Strategy, consultation with key stakeholders both within and outside of DEH, including volunteers, highlighted a number of key issues and opportunities for further improvement in organisational systems and processes, and for future engagement of volunteers.

Key issues identified were:

- ensuring volunteer programs are flexible and opportunistic
- involving more young people
- expanding the boundaries of volunteering
- planning for volunteer succession
- engaging culturally diverse communities
- recognition of volunteers
- engaging volunteers in decision making
- responding to the changing needs and expectations of the volunteer sector

Future Directions

Community involvement in conservation includes people taking everyday, local actions to help protect and conserve heritage, flora and fauna.

To engage people and inspire positive action and involvement, volunteering initiatives need to reflect an understanding of the current needs, attitudes and practices of the communities we are seeking to reach⁹.

The volunteering landscape is constantly changing. Social, technical, economic and political factors, and issues such as a greater understanding of conservation techniques, all impact on volunteering participation and programs.

Volunteering occurs along a continuum of involvement. Whilst some people commit to a weekly four-hour shift, others fit their volunteer activities around their regular job, personal life and other commitments. Making a regular commitment is often very challenging for young people. This means that volunteering is often done in time-limited chunks on a one-time, ongoing or sporadic basis. Volunteers are also being drawn to smaller, more manageable commitments, with many testing an organisation before they become involved in significant tasks or projects.

In response to the insurance crisis, the increasing awareness around legal and risk management issues, and volunteering becoming more professionalised, many volunteers are also opting out of formal committee involvement, preferring a practical hands-on approach. Project based or short-term initiatives can provide opportunities for these individuals to remain engaged in volunteering.

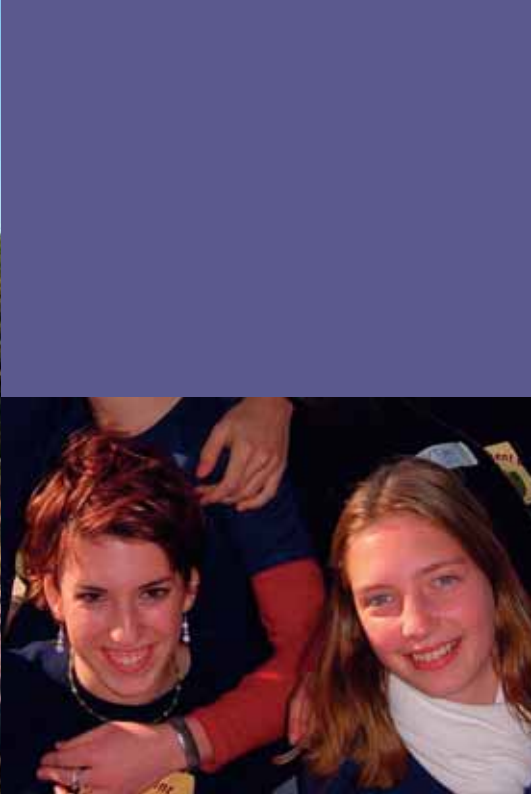
Family volunteering is also emerging as a trend. As people become increasingly time poor, they prefer to combine their regular activities and multi-task wherever they can - even when volunteering. Effectively, any changes that influence the availability of discretionary time can have a considerable impact on volunteer recruitment and retention. Organisations need to be aware of these trends in order to tap into the ever-changing market.

Shifting demographics, such as our ageing population, also present challenges to volunteer-involving organisations. Whilst age can provide a wealth of experience and retirees may have plenty of time to give, it can also interfere with the ability to volunteer. The baby boomers, whilst no less giving, are entering the volunteer sector more assertive, more educated and more demanding than volunteer generations before them¹⁰, and it is likely this trend will continue. This is driving volunteers' expectations that they should be able to contribute to any decisions that may impact on them.

The proposed change to the retirement age for employed workers could also impact on the pool of potential volunteers. This is particularly relevant for DEH given that a large proportion of its volunteers are retirees or near-retirees. Whilst legislative changes generating Work for the Dole and Mutual Obligation schemes may impose demands on organisations to provide placements for participants, these initiatives also provide new opportunities for engaging sectors of the community that may not have been involved previously. The challenge for organisations is being able to retain the individuals after they are no longer obligated to attend.

More recently, competition for resources between volunteer-involving organisations is being replaced by a tendency towards collaboration, partnership and a view to reducing duplication. Organisations are acknowledging the strength of working together and DEH should be no exception. Trees for Life, Greening Australia and Conservation Volunteers Australia as a few examples, are all working toward similar outcomes. Opportunities to work together on common issues should be embraced.

⁹Woolcott Research (2002) *Urban Wildlife Renewal 'Growing Conservation in Urban Communities'*, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Research Project, p6.
¹⁰Esmond J (2001) 'BOOMNET' Capturing the Baby Boomer Volunteers, TEAM CONSULTANTS.



Key Challenges

DEH recognises both the value and limitations of its current approach to volunteer engagement and is determined to meet the challenges presented by changing circumstances and expectations.

DEH needs to not only respond to these changes, but also drive change, in order to be able to deal with these trends. The challenge is to provide opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of volunteers, and provide a satisfying experience, whilst getting meaningful work done.

Building and sustaining volunteer involvement requires a clear commitment to effective communication, clarification of roles and responsibilities, coordination

and an understanding of how, and what, external factors impact on volunteering. In a climate of limited resources, DEH will need to carefully plan for use of the volunteer resource, to ensure maximum outcomes are achieved.

Given the impact that these trends may have on volunteer engagement, it is imperative that the Volunteer Strategy is considered in the context of the external environment in which it is likely to be operating over the next five years.

By preparing for and addressing these challenges now, DEH can continue to provide quality, accessible volunteering opportunities.

Vision for an Engaged Volunteer Community

By effectively engaging the community, DEH aims to tap into diverse perspectives, knowledge, skills and enthusiasm, ultimately improving the quality and delivery of DEH programs.

This engagement may range from information sharing and consultation, to active participation and partnership.

DEH seeks to attract committed, motivated and dedicated volunteers and aims to support

a strong, vibrant and diverse volunteer community. It aspires to foster a positive culture that respects, values and utilises the diversity of volunteers.

Goal

'A vibrant volunteer community of individuals, families and interest groups, engaged in meaningful volunteer programs that contribute to conserving and restoring South Australia's natural and cultural environment for all generations.'

Success Through Partnership is based on **ten guiding principles.**

- Volunteer programs contribute significantly to DEH's core business.
- Volunteer activities should complement those carried out by DEH staff, thereby achieving greater results than could be achieved using DEH resources alone. Volunteer activities are not intended to displace existing or future DEH staff.
- Volunteers' contribution to our natural and cultural environment should be maximised through careful planning, appropriate induction and training, and by matching the interests, skills and experiences of volunteers with the activity.
- Volunteer activities should be carefully planned to take into account DEH Corporate directions and priorities, staff availability and resources. Sustainability of outcomes should be at the core of any decision-making.
- All volunteer activities require sufficient financial and staff resources for planning structured programs and the provision of supervision, guidance and a safe working environment.
- The benefits and costs, both tangible and intangible, of volunteer programs should be clearly identified and understood.
- DEH values diversity amongst its volunteers and acknowledges the unique contribution that each volunteer makes. DEH will provide and support volunteer programs that meet different interests, and where all individuals feel welcomed and are able to meaningfully contribute.
- Volunteer programs should be designed to ensure negative impact on the environment is minimised.
- DEH recognises the need to keep the administration associated with volunteer programs to a minimum.
- DEH will support and encourage involvement of its volunteers in shaping the future of volunteering in the Department.

On the following pages *Success Through Partnership* establishes five key objectives developed around the outcome areas of innovation, viability, support,

recognition and improvement. Whilst key strategies have been identified for each objective, they are broad targets that will require cooperation to be achieved.



Objective 1

To expand the opportunity for volunteer involvement and to offer a diverse range of events, activities and programs that allow people to be involved in conserving the natural and cultural environment, whilst supporting the core business of the Department.

1 Explore mechanisms to engage volunteers on an episodic or short-term basis

Whilst DEH's existing volunteer programs provide a solid basis for ongoing volunteer involvement, volunteers are being drawn to smaller, more manageable commitments. The challenge for DEH is to provide opportunities that meet the needs and expectations of volunteers, whilst providing a satisfying experience and getting meaningful work done. With creativity and good planning there exists an opportunity to reinvigorate volunteer involvement and tap into previously unengaged sectors of the community.

One of the major actions is to explore opportunities for project or short-term basis volunteering to provide for people who have irregular, unexpected or short periods of time free, or who don't wish to be involved in a formal group. Initiatives may include a web page that lists DEH volunteering opportunities and allows people to sign up for one-off opportunities through the internet. This would also enable current short-term and one-off programs to sit under a common banner. Aligned to this, the Department will develop a system for cultivating the most interested to encourage their continued involvement.

2 Develop a program that encourages young people to make a commitment to volunteering with DEH, through the opportunity to build a Personal Skills Portfolio

Through volunteering many young people seek relevant and interesting experiences for their personal and career development. However one of the biggest barriers to young people's involvement is time. Young people see volunteering as very time-intensive and want clear returns for their investment. DEH will respond by developing a program that encourages young people to volunteer.

The program will reinforce the value of volunteering with regards to building life skills and recognise the contribution of young people through a personal skills portfolio.

3 Explore potential for DEH to engage in commercial tourism/vacation volunteering

Commercial tourism or vacation volunteering, where people see the world and 'do good' at the same time has been proposed as one way of dealing with the issue of time constraints and people's desire to see the world. And with the impending explosion of healthy, active and wealthy 'baby boomer' retirees, it is likely

to be one of the growth areas of volunteering in the next decade. South Australia's unique landscapes and biodiversity provide an ideal backdrop for these types of ventures, and there is significant opportunity for this to be further explored.

4 Capitalise on advances in information and communications technology by supporting the growth of 'virtual volunteering'

Society is continually changing and over the last 10 years the internet has had a significant impact on how we go about our everyday lives. Computers, email and the internet now allow people to volunteer from home, and to work at times that suit them best.

Whilst not every volunteer task lends itself to this approach, flexibility may provide volunteers with new avenues for engaging with DEH and may mean fewer barriers to overcome.

5 Promote to the business sector the benefits of corporate social responsibility through:

5.1 a program that encourages business to offset their environmental impacts through volunteering for the environment

5.2 opportunities for team challenges (corporate bonding/staff development days)

5.3 promoting the establishment of 'environmental offset' agreements between DEH and users of reserves

Concerns about the environmental and the social impacts of corporate activity are leading to sustainability and social responsibility becoming key issues not only for corporate sector, but the public and not-for-profit sectors also. Many businesses are now setting strategic goals around environmental sustainability and minimal impact. There exists an opportunity to assist these organisations in achieving their goals, whilst also achieving good outcomes for the environment,

by providing opportunities for the corporate sector to engage in environmental volunteering through 'corporate bonding days' and sequestration activities. This is a first step in accessing the enormous potential of private sector volunteering. Whilst different from current volunteering within the Department, it may allow DEH to access parts of the community with which positive relationships have previously been limited.



Objective 2

To ensure long-term sustainability of volunteer involvement in DEH

1 Assist volunteer programs by identifying available external funding sources

Volunteer involvement allows DEH to achieve more than it could if it relied solely on its own resources. Ensuring continued volunteer involvement in the future is therefore a priority for the Department. In addition to their physical contribution some volunteer programs, such as Friends of Parks, also contribute financially

through being awarded external grants, membership fees and/or fundraising. DEH recognises that these processes can place a significant burden on the volunteers and is committed to providing support to volunteers carrying out these activities.

2 Explore, and where appropriate develop, opportunities for further partnerships through:

2.1 educational institutions

2.2 working relationships with external volunteer and community groups/organisations, and local government to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes

2.3 exchange programs with other States

Shifting demographics, such as an ageing population, continue to present challenges to DEH in securing an ongoing volunteer base to meet its future needs. A large number of the Department's volunteers are retirees. Whilst age can provide a wealth of experience and retirees may have plenty of time to give, it can interfere with the ability to volunteer. Improved planning is required to ensure continued volunteer participation.

Further exploring the opportunity for partnerships and unleashing the potential of community sectors not currently involved in volunteering may provide a solution. Partnerships with educational institutions can provide mutual benefits through the exposure of students to real, local environmental issues, and provide innovative solutions for DEH through the linking of students with volunteering opportunities.

3 Increase the participation rate of diverse community groups

All sectors of the community should have the opportunity to engage in protecting and conserving their local environment. Significant potential exists for

DEH to enhance and develop its relationships with culturally diverse communities outside of the existing volunteer base, including Indigenous communities.

Objective 3

To nurture and support the involvement of volunteers across DEH

1 Develop agency specific, practical guidelines for the involvement of volunteers in the Department, to underpin and enhance the management of volunteers and volunteer programs

2 Improve induction systems for all volunteers, which highlight DEH's expectations of volunteers and articulate their contribution to Departmental objectives

3 Strengthen support to all of the Department's volunteer programs by identifying a central person/unit with responsibilities for providing a strategic focus and support role to volunteer program managers

4 Explore opportunities for:

4.1 the coordination of training across DEH for volunteers

4.2 key DEH staff to share information and discuss volunteering issues facing DEH

4.3 the engagement of dedicated Volunteer Coordinators

Well-managed, well-supported and well-resourced volunteer programs enhance the effectiveness of volunteer contribution. Poor use of a volunteer's time and expertise can be very discouraging.

DEH recognises the importance of effective and efficient management structures, processes

and systems to ensure high quality support to both volunteers and staff. A clear opportunity exists to consolidate current work, and to clearly articulate volunteering in policy documents. DEH will also investigate alternative models for volunteer management, including paid volunteer managers.

5 Provide formal volunteer management training to DEH staff that manage volunteers as a significant part of their job

DEH believes that volunteers deserve good leadership and supervision and is committed

to ensuring staff responsible for managing and working with the volunteers are highly skilled.



Objective 4

To value, respect and recognise volunteers, and foster community pride in the work undertaken by the volunteers

1 Consider and implement new approaches to recognise volunteer effort

Volunteers are a significant resource and DEH places a high value on the contribution that volunteers make. Appropriate recognition of volunteers is a key factor in volunteer retention. Establishing new approaches

to recognition will reinforce the Department's commitment to its volunteers. Initiatives may include further developing honorary researcher positions, exclusive seminars or field trips with DEH staff.

2 Establish a structured process for working with Friends of Parks, and other volunteer groups as necessary, to set annual volunteer work plans

There is also an opportunity to value volunteer input by bringing together staff and volunteers in planning processes. This can ensure that activities are clearly aligned to DEH objectives and will establish a shared commitment to future goals, leading to more effective

volunteer programs and a greater understanding of the needs and priorities of DEH. By encouraging a greater contribution toward decision-making, DEH hopes to facilitate a greater sense of responsibility, understanding and ownership.

3 Consult with volunteers through their representative groups when proposed Departmental policy development or decisions significantly impact on their involvement

Volunteers have increasing expectations that they should be able to contribute toward decisions affecting them, or of particular concern to them. The South Australian Government recognised this need and

committed to consultation when proposed legislation or policy has a significant impact on volunteering¹¹. DEH fully supports this commitment.

4 Convene a meeting of representatives of key volunteer groups one or two times per year for information exchange

The Department is committed to enhanced communication with its key volunteer stakeholders and will provide opportunities for two-way information

exchange on a regular basis. These meetings will also encourage partnerships between the key volunteer stakeholders.

5 Encourage the media to highlight positive contributions that volunteers make to the South Australian environment

There are significant gains to be made by raising the profile of our national parks and other reserves, and awareness of the voluntary activities that happen

within them. As such, DEH will seek opportunities to externally promote the extensive volunteering happening in our parks and other areas.

Objective 5

To maintain management structures and processes that support best practice to enhance the Department's volunteering capacity

1 Regularly review the key areas of volunteer involvement to ensure:

- 1.1 program objectives remain relevant in light of any changes to the Department's objectives or external environment
- 1.2 the adequacy of arrangements to support volunteer programs to meet changing needs
- 1.3 consistent reporting of the Department's volunteer program achievements

Given the need to carefully and strategically manage the Department's resources and the current environment of accountability, it is essential that the volunteer contribution is systematically reviewed to ensure that the activities and programs remain consistent with, and positively support, the achievement of organisational and program objectives, and optimise outcomes for both the Department and the environment.

It is proposed that DEH will establish a process for the periodic review of volunteer involvement to ensure that programs are meeting the changing needs of volunteers, and to ensure that program support is sufficient.

To be responsive to new and emerging trends in both volunteering and environmental management, DEH must remain open to new ideas and support thinking that reaches beyond the boundaries of conventional approaches.

Staff, volunteers and unions should all be involved in developing and reviewing volunteer programs and policies to ensure they are relevant, comprehensive, appropriate and mutually beneficial.

Implementation and review

Success Through Partnership can only be effective if it continues to reflect both DEH needs and community aspirations.

It is an evolving document that can, and should, be adapted to align with changing circumstances in terms of resources, priorities and the demands and preferences of both the Department and its volunteers.

The next step in progressing *Success Through Partnership* will be to develop and prioritise specific actions for each strategy, and to assign responsibility and timeframes to each of those actions.

Successful implementation will require cooperation, coordination and commitment from all those involved in the management of the State's environment and heritage including Government, community based groups and volunteers.

The ongoing use of volunteers will be accompanied by careful and regular assessment of the costs and benefits. This may require separate recording and analysis of expenditure associated with the use of volunteers, together with evaluation of the tangible and intangible benefits for the agency.

Responsibility will be assigned for the development of a set of indicators to allow measurement of progress against targets, and leading a coordinated and staged approach to implementation. A progress report will be provided to DEH Executive every 12 months. *Success Through Partnership* will be comprehensively reviewed in five years, to ensure that it remains relevant.

¹¹Advancing the Community Together: A Partnership between the Volunteer Sector and the South Australian Government May 2003, p14.