

STRATEGIES FOR NON-TRADITIONAL EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS



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A RISK-BENEFIT FRAMEWORK HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO ASSIST DECISION-MAKERS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS (EMOS) CONSIDER POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS OF SIX STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR 'NON-TRADITIONAL' EMERGENCY VOLUNTEERS IN RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PHASES.

BACKGROUND

Non-traditional emergency volunteering is formal and informal volunteering that:

- 1) Is focused on emergency prevention, preparedness, response, and/or relief and recovery, and
- 2) Is not formally affiliated with EMOs.

Non-traditional volunteering contributes significantly to the effectiveness of emergency management and builds community resilience. It needs appropriate planning and support from EMOs.

PROBLEM

Making decisions about strategies for non-traditional volunteering can be difficult for EMOs. Not all of the potential consequences of alternative strategies will be immediately evident to a particular organisation at a particular point in time. Without decision support EMOs may perceive higher risks and overlook or downgrade potential benefits due to unawareness, unfamiliarity, or risk aversion.

SOLUTION

The risk-benefit framework maps out a wider range of potential risks and benefits than are likely to be immediately evident to EMOs. It thus enables a more complete, better-informed basis for making decisions.

It leads decision-makers to consider more options than a simple 'do or don't' approach.

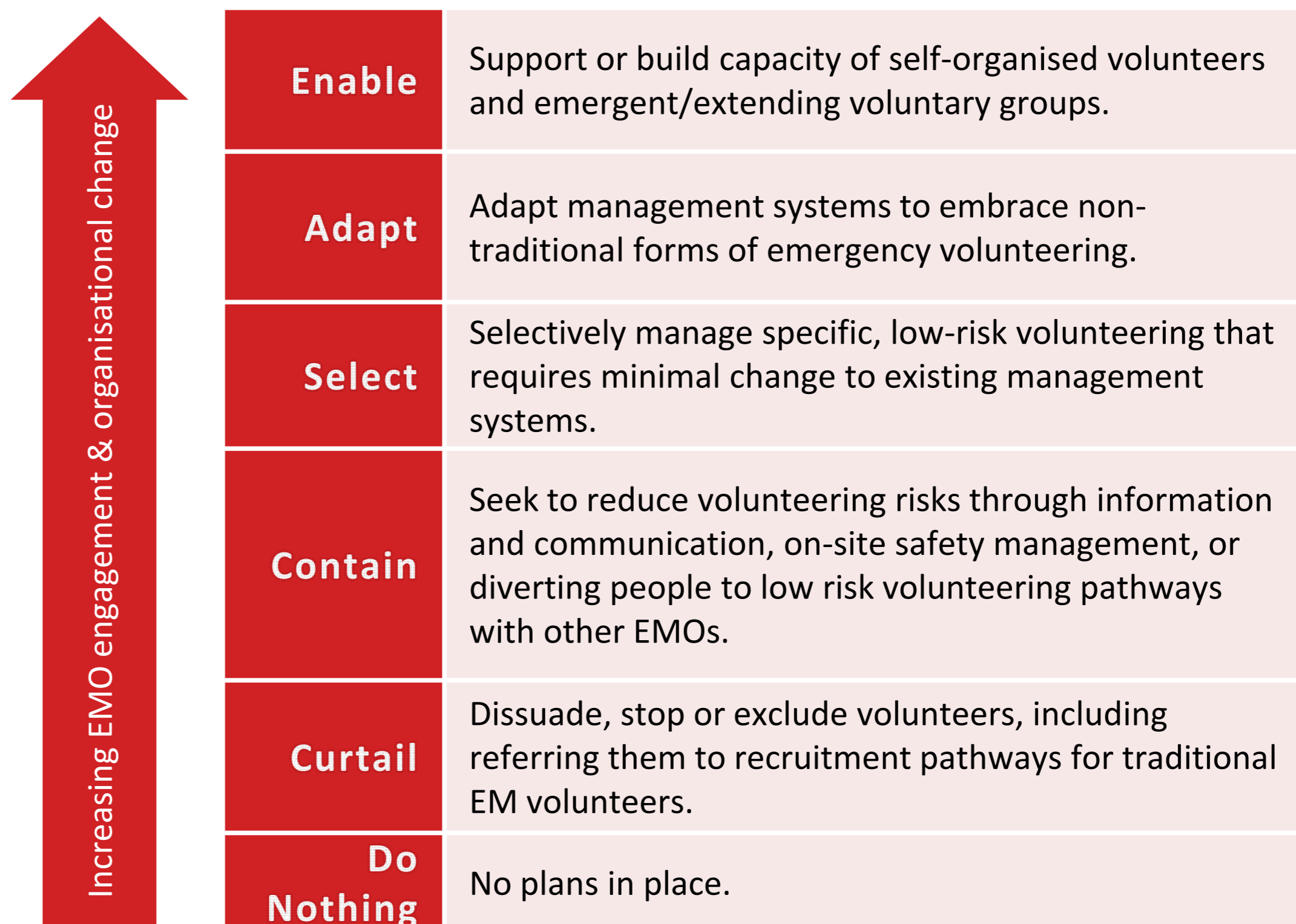


Figure 1: Strategic options included in the risk-benefit framework

ABOUT THE FRAMEWORK

The framework was developed primarily from stakeholder input in two workshops. This was used to populate risk/benefit tables for each of six strategic options (see Figure 1). The tables include risks and benefits for organisations, volunteers and communities across the areas of:

- ▶ **Benefits** – community resilience, government-citizen relationships, effectiveness/capacity, efficiency, innovation/adaptation
- ▶ **Risks** – Community impact, control/safety, accountability/liability, suitability to role/task, management effort & cost, EMO culture & tradition

End User Statement

This research helps to shift the narrative around emergency volunteering from one of crisis and decline, to one of transformation and opportunity. This is in fact good news as it may be the very shift that we need to drive organisational change. This is where we must focus our energy and efforts; as communities change, so must we. If we don't, we face a very real chance of being left behind, and looking back at what might have been.

– Paul Davis, Manager, Volunteer Development and Change, EMV

MORE INFORMATION

- ▶ Out of Uniform project. <http://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/resilient-people-infrastructure-and-institutions/248j>
- ▶ Blythe McLennan, blythe.mclennan@rmit.edu.au

