

Singapore Volunteer Management Conference

Tuesday, 11 April 2023

NCSS President Opening Address

1. A very good morning to everyone!

In the audience today, I see our social service agencies, non-profits across different sectors, corporates, and various groups that have the potential to play a significant role in improving the outcomes for our social service sector. You may be aware that the Ministry of Social and Family Development has designated 2023 as the Year of Celebrating Social Service Partners to recognise the integral contributions of partners from within and beyond the social service sector who work tirelessly to build strong families and a caring society.

2. We are beginning to see a paradigm shift here - where stakeholders see the different roles that they can play in supporting our social service sector. It is also one where the importance of volunteerism is being realised, recognised and valued.

A. Volunteers are a valuable resource to augment sector capacity and capability

3. Volunteers are crucial to the work that we do in serving the community as they augment staff manpower and help increase the capabilities and capacities of our organisations. Quite often, our NPOs operate with a lean team. However, this should not limit the positive impact that they have on society, as we have volunteers who can help bridge this gap in manpower resourcing. Increasingly, we are seeing an emphasis on skills-based volunteerism, where volunteers offer their specialised skills to play a more operational role in a non-profit's programmes. It is therefore an imperative that we manage volunteers more meaningfully, deliberately and effectively.

4. Board and senior leadership play a key role in building up an organisation's volunteer management capabilities. For one, Volunteer Managers need the support and guidance of the board and senior management in institutionalising good practice and engaging volunteers. As such, volunteer management should be a regular discussion item on your board and management's agenda. Whether in service delivery, fundraising or corporate functions such as HR, marketing, or digitalisation, you can tap on volunteers to augment your organisation's needs so that you can be more sustainable.

B. NCSS rallies the wider community to build volunteer capability and capacity

5. Data from our 2022 NCSS Social Service Sector Survey on Volunteer Management conducted with 217 SSAs showed that SSAs with stronger volunteer management capabilities were able to recruit more, and higher quality volunteers. This is why NCSS is pushing new frontiers in this space with today's conference - to equip organisations engaging volunteers with skills and resources to build your volunteer management capabilities. In doing so, you will not only improve your organisation's volunteerism outcomes, you will also be able to enhance the experience for your volunteers.
6. Let us take HCSA Community Services as an example. With the efforts of their dedicated Volunteer Manager, Esther Cheng, who was hired under the NCSS Enhanced Volunteer Manager Funding Scheme, HCSA saw a 96% increase in volunteers, a 57% increase in regular volunteers, and an expansion in capacity to serve 167% more service users, from 2020 to 2022.
7. With a dedicated volunteer manager, HCSA was able to see through the development of a Volunteer Management Framework which provides central guidance and alignment of processes to staff across various programmes engaging with volunteers. With this framework, it has made HCSA's volunteer management practices more robust, with their Volunteer Management Maturity Matrix scores increasing by 37% from 2020 to 2022.

8. Strong volunteer management function was also instrumental in helping HCSA pilot the Volunteer Role Design in various programs across HCSA. For example, the lead ally befriender in Dayspring SPIN, the volunteer guide/coordinator at Highpoint and Academy. Not only were the volunteers empowered, the increased capacity enabled their staff to focus on more core/strategic work.

10. HCSA also developed a Volunteer Continuity Plan to ensure swift response by the agency when faced with disruption during times of Covid. Their Volunteer Manager assisted in developing this Plan with infographics which helped the organisation to be swift with their crisis response and to be more future ready.

11. HCSA with the effort of their Volunteer Manager also implemented Volunteer Impact Measurement indicators to track the success of their volunteer programmes. This included pre and post mentoring surveys, progress reports, mid-point check-in calls, and Reflect & Celebrate sessions. All this has helped to enhance, improve and better manage their volunteer programmes.

C. We can harness the expertise/resource/network of corporates to help the sector be equipped to manage future challenges

12. Apart from what our non-profits themselves can do to harness and grow volunteerism to aid in service delivery, corporates too can lend a hand in this area as well.

13. A good example is what CapitaLand has done. The company established its philanthropic arm, CapitaLand Hope Foundation (CHF), in 2005 to drive the Group's giving efforts in a strategic and structured manner in communities where it operates.

14. Going beyond donations, CapitaLand advocates volunteerism among staff and has established good volunteer management practices by putting in place policies and working closely with social service agencies to curate meaningful volunteer opportunities to address the immediate needs of beneficiaries.
15. CapitaLand was one of the first companies in Singapore to formalise a three-day Volunteer Service Leave (VSL) system for staff globally. It also expanded its leave policy to include volunteer no pay leave and volunteer part-time leave in May 2006. To amplify their social impact, staff who utilise all three days of VSL are eligible to nominate a registered charity that CHF will make a donation to, as part of its recognition and appreciation system for staff volunteers.
16. CapitaLand also leverages its network and platform to rally its business partners, tenants and community to do good together, achieving greater collective impact to help those in need. More than 75 tenant companies have partnered with CapitaLand to give back to the community.
17. To date, CapitaLand's staff across the world have contributed more than 220,000 volunteer hours. In 2022, close to 950 staff in Singapore contributed over 10,600 volunteer hours, benefitting more than 6,600 beneficiaries through CHF and their own activities. On International Volunteer Day, CapitaLand also partnered with its retail tenant, Polar Puffs & Cakes, to provide sweet treats to staff volunteers to thank them for volunteering.
18. Beyond contributing time, CapitaLand staff also leverage their expertise to give back to the community. For example, besides providing funding from CHF to support the renovation of a Smart Seniors Applied Learning Centre and its programmes for the seniors, CapitaLand's lodging business unit, The Ascott Limited, also gave pro bono advice and programme curation to create an inclusive and sustainable space for the beneficiaries.

19. I believe the first step for corporates to play a larger role in contributing to the sector is for them to gain a deeper understanding of the needs and gaps of the sector. Being here at this Volunteer Management Conference is definitely a step in the right direction. Moving forward, corporates can then decide for themselves how best to build up their capabilities in volunteerism.
20. On an NCSS study trip which we made to Sydney just last week, our team was fascinated to learn that the Australian corporates operate on a very different level in terms of their mindset towards philanthropy and volunteerism.
21. The Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN) shared the role that they play as intermediaries between corporate volunteers and non-profits, activating more than 4,000 employees/corporate volunteers from more than 50 corporate members to volunteer at 200+ partner non-profits. They do this through strong programme facilitation to create a model that is replicable and scalable, which provides value to non-profits while enabling corporate volunteers to learn and grow in their volunteer journey.
22. What may be surprising to some, is that the corporate members themselves are willing to pay to participate in these volunteering programmes, as they see value in terms of their employee engagement and growth that such volunteer opportunities provide. This apparently is common practice in Australia!
23. The core idea here is that corporates and social service organisations are building “shared value”. The term shared value means that corporates are not doing non-profits a favour. Rather, the relationship is one of reciprocity where both parties can benefit: this comes in the form of stronger employee engagement, building a future workforce, and building shared social capital.
24. I do hope that I have offered you some food for thought this morning, as we dive into the programme that NCSS and SUSS have curated for us. I am sure that we will all learn something useful today which we can put into action for

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better outcomes for our social service sector. I wish all of you a very fruitful morning. Thank you.