

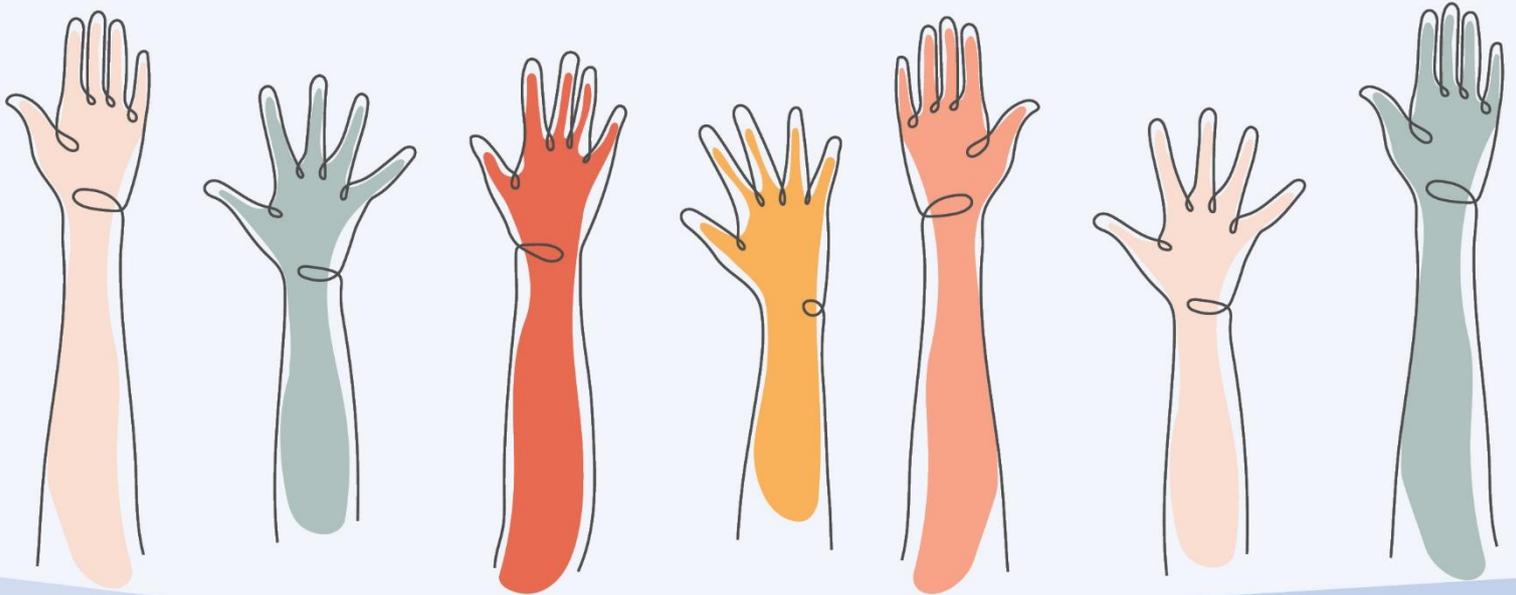


**Te Tari Taiwhenua
Internal Affairs**

REPORT

Strengthening our Approach to Volunteering

June 2022



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Foreword



I want to acknowledge the very significant contribution volunteers make to communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. Close to 50 percent of New Zealanders volunteer – either with an organisation or directly in their community.

Volunteering underpins the work of many thousands of community organisations and important programmes involving 30 different government agencies. It has a positive impact on individual life satisfaction and also on social cohesion.

Government recognises this contribution by supporting the volunteering infrastructure – the interconnected system that supports, protects and manages volunteers. However, there is more we could do to strengthen that support. I am keen to see a cross-agency approach to government work that involves volunteering such as conservation, emergency management and health. I'd also like to see higher-profile recognition of the value of volunteering. I want this report to inform further engagement on community funding administered by the Department of Internal Affairs.

This report has been released during National Volunteer Week 2022 as a way to celebrate and acknowledge the sector and the extraordinary people in it. I hope it will contribute to the on-going conversations around the country to better support our incredible volunteers. Ultimately, we all have a role to play in this – whether it's volunteering some of our own time or supporting others who do.

Nāku te rourou nāu te rourou ka ora ai te iwi
With your basket and my basket, our people will thrive.

Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan

Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector

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Executive summary

The report is based on a DIA desk-top review of volunteering information from New Zealand and other countries.

New Zealand's volunteering landscape is broad, but numbers are declining

New Zealand has a high volunteering participation rate, with 49.8% of the population volunteering with an organisation or directly in their communities. The economic value of volunteering is estimated at \$4 billion a year. The statistically discernible positive impact of volunteering on wellbeing and social cohesion is equally important.

Women volunteer more than men and a small proportion of volunteers contribute well over half of total volunteer hours. While younger volunteers have stepped up during the COVID-19 response, the volunteer workforce is shrinking and ageing.

Volunteering provides cost benefits to approximately 115,000 not-for-profits, and government agencies in New Zealand whose work involves volunteering. Registered charities rely heavily on volunteers, especially those that are smaller and less well-resourced. Volunteering infrastructure (a system to support, manage and promote volunteers) is evident in the work of volunteering peak bodies and the 17 regional volunteer centres, and many volunteer-involving organisations.

Volunteer organisations contribute to the COVID-19 response while experiencing pressures

Volunteering has made a significant contribution to the COVID-19 response. However, increased community demand for services has exacerbated pressures on voluntary sector budgets and wellbeing, and volunteer numbers are reportedly falling. Even so, the voluntary sector has continued to deliver and has adapted to new ways of working.

A stocktake of government support to volunteering

At least 30 agencies have work underway that involves volunteering. DIA identified issues and gaps in all types of government support to volunteering based on our desktop study and sector reports.

Government lacks an overall strategic approach

Several government agencies have strategic initiatives that recognise volunteering. However, the government has no overall strategic approach to volunteering and no shared mechanisms to enable government agencies to understand the impact of their interventions.

Agencies with a volunteering workforce experience varying participation trends

Some government agencies sustain their own volunteering workforce. However, volunteer numbers vary over time, with some agencies experiencing a consistent decline.

The government could more efficiently fund volunteering infrastructure and diversity

Government funding to community organisations with a volunteer base is generally via grants or contracts for services. This funding tends to focus on delivering programmes or outcomes, and often excludes specific costs of volunteer infrastructure. There is limited data on overall government funding to these organisations.

While lottery grants and Crown funds administered by DIA are only part of overall funding, they are a significant investment in supporting volunteers to achieve their communities' aspirations. Some Crown funds are over-subscribed, and the volunteering support needs of Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities are not well met. Broader concerns in the sector include that funding has not kept up with demand and is too short-term and competitive, creating pressure on volunteer wellbeing.

The sector sees some government regulation as a compliance burden

Government regulation is vital to the infrastructure that supports volunteers and helps to protect communities that use voluntary services. However, the sector sees some regulation as a compliance burden, such as the requirement for police vetting for each new voluntary engagement.

Improving recognition of volunteers could help address volunteering workforce issues

Attracting volunteers is one of the biggest challenges the sector faces, so it needs to find meaningful ways to attract and reward volunteers.

Government agencies recognise volunteers in a variety of ways, such as awards and reimbursing financial costs, and celebrating International Volunteer Day and Volunteer Awareness Week. Issues for the volunteer workforce that could be addressed by strengthening recognition include:

- helping them feel that they are valued, and their wellbeing concerns are being heard
- encouraging people to take up long-term commitments
- improving diversity in the sector and meeting volunteers' changing needs for support.

International data on volunteering

DIA reviewed data from Ireland, Scotland, the UK, Australia and Canada. These countries often approach volunteering similarly to the New Zealand government, but we can also learn from them:

- Ireland, Australia and Scotland have a national strategy for volunteering.
- All of the countries are addressing diversity issues by removing barriers for under-represented groups.
- All five countries had some form of good practice guidance for volunteer management, and some identified that more government support was needed in this area.
- All five countries supported the volunteer workforce, with many of them reimbursing expenses or acknowledging volunteer work through credentialing.

This report identifies opportunities to strengthen support for volunteering

This report, drawing on engagement with the voluntary sector and the international scan, identifies potential opportunities for the government to strengthen support to volunteering infrastructure and improve the diversity of volunteering. DIA could enact options 1-4 within current spending by reorganising some resources. Options 5-8 are for longer-term consideration and would require investment.

1. Champion the recognition of volunteering during Volunteering Week 2022

To strengthen recognition, we suggest that the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector champions volunteering, focusing on how volunteers contributed to the COVID-19 response. DIA could complement the sector-led programme of activities during National Volunteer Week 2022. This could also see introduction of a new high-profile Ministerial award for volunteering, such as a Prime Minister's Volunteering award.

2. Support a refresh of Volunteering New Zealand's 'Best Practice in Volunteering' document

DIA could support a volunteering infrastructure by providing immediate support to Volunteering New Zealand (VNZ) to refresh its good practice guidance document.

3. Encourage diverse volunteering with grants administered by DIA

DIA has completed a review of the Crown funds and is establishing a new Community and Volunteering Capability (CVC) Fund. This fund will prioritise volunteering, with a focus on supporting diversity (young volunteers and volunteering in Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities). DIA could also address inequity in the way that some funding is administered by reviewing the funding formula for volunteer centres in consultation with the sector.

4. Strengthen our strategic approach across government

Like other countries, New Zealand could develop a cross-government strategic approach. This would raise volunteering's profile across government, promote shared understanding of sector demand, improve the quality of information, fill data gaps, and help solve infrastructure problems. A focus of the strategic approach is support to Māori volunteering and diverse understandings of volunteering.

5. Invest in volunteering infrastructure and encourage diversity

Investing in ongoing support to practical volunteer management initiatives across the country at grass-roots level would strengthen volunteering infrastructure. Targeting diverse forms of volunteering would strengthen volunteering infrastructure in Māori, Pacific, ethnic and youth communities.

6. Investigate reimbursing volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses

Working with the volunteering sector to understand how it approaches reimbursement would support voluntary organisations to make reimbursement more available. This would encourage consistent approaches, removing financial barriers to volunteering.

7. Investigate introducing credentialing for volunteers

Introducing credentialing processes to volunteering would help it become a feasible pathway to employment. This work could assist the Ministry for Ethnic Communities' work on volunteering by new migrants under the Employment Action Plan.

8. Investigate creating a clearing house to connect online volunteering platforms

Supporting a sector-led project to develop a clearing house for online volunteering platforms would help stabilise the falling participation rate and connect with volunteers to meet rising demand. Connecting online could encourage volunteers to find opportunities that suit their aspirations, capabilities and lifestyle, including micro-volunteering and project volunteering.

Conclusion

We propose that the Government's role is to coordinate efforts across the volunteering sector to strengthen recognition of volunteering. The Government already supports volunteering infrastructure, but strengthening support would enable the sector to thrive and address pressing, persistent issues for the volunteer workforce.

Introduction

Strengthening our Approach to Volunteering reports on the Department of Internal Affairs' (DIA's) work to understand gaps and opportunities in the government approach to support for volunteering. A key focus of this report is the Crown Funds administered by DIA under the Community and Voluntary Sector portfolio. The report also informs the wider government approach to volunteering, which includes Lottery funding administered by DIA, and the numerous government agencies whose work connects with volunteering.

The report is based on a DIA desk-top study of New Zealand government support to volunteering supplemented by international volunteering data.

Indicative gaps and opportunities were tested with sector stakeholders. Their feedback helped refine opportunities to improve government support to volunteering that are presented for consideration. Some opportunities could be implemented immediately within current spending. Other opportunities are more exploratory and would involve new investment.

Appendix A presents a list of documents referenced in the report, including data and sector research.

1. New Zealand's volunteering landscape is broad

Many people in Aotearoa New Zealand volunteer, with the best available Stats NZ data indicating that 49.8% of New Zealanders over 15 years of age volunteer. Those volunteers worked a total of 31 million hours in the last month.¹

New Zealand also ranks consistently high in the Charities Aid Foundation's World Giving Index, being the second highest country in 2019. 56% of New Zealanders volunteer with an organisation, make donations, or help strangers.² However, accurately measuring volunteering is a challenge for any country.³ For example, our best available data on volunteering is the 2018 analysis of the General Social Survey 2016, which is over five years old. Recent research by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (MPP) asserts that New Zealand Government statistics reflect Western concepts of unpaid work and volunteering. This means Pacific peoples' unpaid community contributions are under-represented.⁴

Volunteering makes a significant contribution to the New Zealand economy, with the financial value of volunteering for organisations estimated at \$4 billion per year. If the output of not-for-profits was counted towards gross domestic product, they would have contributed \$8.1 billion, which is around the size of the construction sector.⁵

Volunteering also has a statistically discernible positive impact on life satisfaction.⁶ Volunteering connects communities and strengthens people's sense of belonging to an inclusive society. The value of volunteering is reflected in the New Zealand Treasury Living Standards Framework. The Framework identifies care, volunteering and work as important for building social capital and cohesion, and for the wellbeing of individuals, families, whānau and communities.⁷

Different groups have diverse understandings of volunteering

VNZ's definition of volunteering is *time willingly given for the common good and without financial gain*. The only piece of New Zealand legislation that defines 'volunteer' is the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 – as someone acting on a voluntary basis (whether or not the person receives out-of-pocket expenses).⁸

¹ Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *General Social Survey 2016*.

² Charities Aid Foundation. *World Giving Index 10th edition*. 2019.

³ United Nations. 2018. *The Scope and Scale of Global Volunteering*.

⁴ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. 2021. *Pacific Economy Research Report on Unpaid Work and Volunteering in Aotearoa*.

⁵ Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account*.

⁶ Kōtātā Insight. 2021. *Cost-wellbeing analysis of housing outcomes in the NZGSS*.

⁷ New Zealand Treasury. 2020. *Living Standards Framework*.

⁸ Community Law New Zealand. 2021. *Community Law Manual Online*.

Māori perspectives on volunteering are often distinguished from Western 'free will' notions. In Te Ao Māori, voluntary work is done out of love and compassion for one's community, a cultural calling to service. For Māori, this is part of tikanga and living as part of whānau, hapū and iwi.⁹ The 2007 Mahi Aroha report recommended enabling agencies to better recognise the contribution and value of mahi aroha. It suggested providing improved and appropriate support for mahi aroha where possible, and promoting and celebrating mahi aroha alongside Pākehā volunteering.¹⁰

Pacific communities understand unpaid labour in terms of service, commitment, love and generosity. MPP's 2021 research highlights that Western understandings of philanthropy draw a distinction between providing unpaid help to the family or the community. In contrast, Pacific notions see community and family as integrated, and unpaid work as part of the value system and practice.¹¹

Among ethnic communities, understandings of unpaid work and volunteering are as diverse as the communities themselves. Sometimes ethnic community understandings of volunteering are faith-based and intrinsic to people's participation in their communities.

Stats NZ defines two types of volunteering

Stats NZ defines volunteering in two ways. It can be direct volunteering in the community, as practised by 36.4% of the population over 15. It can also be volunteering with organisations like charities, as practised by 28.2% of the population over 15. Some people volunteer in both ways.¹²

Direct volunteering involves helping people who are not part of the volunteer's own household, such as family members and neighbours, with unpaid work like gardening, cooking and childcare. Direct volunteering is informal and not mediated by volunteering organisations, government or business.

However, these definitions do not fully incorporate diverse perspectives and the wide range of volunteering activities that take place in the community.¹³

Certain groups are more likely to volunteer

Official statistics report certain population groups volunteer more than others:

- More women volunteer than men, in terms of percentage of population and hours spent.
- More older people volunteer than other age groups, but middle-aged people volunteer the most hours.
- More part-time employed people volunteer, but employed people volunteer the most hours, followed by people not in the labour force.
- More people with degrees volunteer, but those with certificates volunteer the most hours.

⁹ Fiona Cram. 2021. *Mahi aroha: Māori work in times of trouble and disaster as an expression of a love for the people*.

¹⁰ Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector. 2007. *Mahi Aroha. Māori perspectives on volunteering and cultural obligations*.

¹¹ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. 2021. *Pacific Economy Research Report*.

¹² Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *General Social Survey 2016*.

¹³ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. 2021. *Pacific Economy Research Report*.

- More people on high incomes volunteer, but those on low incomes volunteer more hours.
- Māori and Europeans volunteer more than other ethnicities, with Europeans reported as spending more hours.
- Recent migrants volunteer less than others in terms of percentage of population and hours.
- A small number of volunteers (14.1%) do over half of the volunteer hours.¹⁴

People experience motivations and barriers to volunteering

Social connections inform why people volunteer. The top motivations are ‘a desire to give back to the community’, ‘to make friends’, ‘because a friend asked me’, and ‘gaining work experience’.¹⁵

Government websites such as Careers NZ and Immigration NZ recommend voluntary work as a way to explore career options and gain skills and experience as a pathway to employment.

Statistical information on barriers to volunteering reflects that volunteering competes with other demands. The three top reasons people did not volunteer were: ‘did not have enough time’ followed by ‘no-one asked me’ and ‘health problems/physically unable to volunteer’.¹⁶

The size and nature of the volunteer workforce is changing

The volunteer workforce shrank by around 150,000 volunteers between 2013 and 2018. The number of hours remained stable, but fewer volunteers are now working more hours.¹⁷

Voluntary organisations report difficulties in recruiting and retaining new volunteers, although once recruited older volunteers tend to be retained. The nature of volunteering is reportedly changing away from long-term commitments to episodic involvement that is often project-based. Younger people tend to connect to volunteering via new channels, including online volunteering platforms.¹⁸

Almost one third of New Zealanders volunteer with organisations

Almost one third (28.2%) of New Zealanders over the age of 15 volunteer with organisations such as registered charities, government agencies and businesses. In order from the highest to lowest number of hours per month, volunteers participate in:

- sports and recreation (sports clubs and coaching) – 3.2 million hours volunteered
- religious and spiritual (churches and religious associations) – 2.5 million hours
- social services (civil defence, emergency support and youth groups) – 1.8 million hours
- arts and culture (art galleries and museums) – 1.5 million hours
- health (hospitals, nursing homes and hospices) – 1.3 million hours
- environment, conservation and animal protection (SPCA, tree planting and Greenpeace) – 0.7 million hours

¹⁴Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *General Social Survey 2016*.

¹⁵Volunteering New Zealand. 2020. *State of Volunteering*.

¹⁶Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *General Social Survey 2016*.

¹⁷Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account*.

¹⁸Volunteering New Zealand. 2020. *State of Volunteering*.

- law, advocacy and politics (victim support, legal services and political parties) – 0.7 million hours
- community development and housing (marae work, community centres and community support groups) – 0.6 million hours
- business, professional associations and unions – 0.3 million hours
- overseas volunteer work (volunteering abroad and international emergency) – 0.1 million hours.¹⁹

Volunteering with not-for-profit organisations

Volunteering is very important for New Zealand's 115,770 not-for-profits, as 89% of them have no paid employees.²⁰ The majority of not-for-profits are small, informally structured (except for registered charities) and have modest budgets. In a 2021 survey, 70% of respondents reported an annual operating budget of under \$75,000, while half operated on less than \$125,000²¹.

Around a fifth of not-for-profits (28,000) are registered charities.²² 233,396 people volunteer with registered charities, while more than 50% of charities rely solely on volunteers.²³ Volunteering provides registered charities with significant cost savings. Larger, well-resourced charities tend to engage fewer volunteers and employ more paid staff than the more numerous, smaller charities.

Volunteering with government agencies

At least 30 central government agencies have activities that involve volunteering, based on the stocktake in section three. Local government also provides significant support to volunteering in local communities. This support can be in areas as diverse as environmental care, pest control, trail building, rubbish collection, art galleries, libraries, parks and gardens, and civil defence.

Volunteering with businesses

Many businesses link to community organisations so their employees can participate in corporate volunteering programmes. Popular examples include conservation and food rescue projects. The New Zealand Institute of Directors operates a coaching and mentoring programme to support governance of voluntary organisations.²⁴

¹⁹ Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *General Social Survey 2016*.

²⁰ JB Were. 2021. *JB Were Cause Report. 2021*.

²¹ *ibid*

²² A registered charity must have certain minimum structures in place, including a defined 'charitable purpose', an organisational structure and rules. Registered charities must also prepare annual financial statements and reports, which must be submitted to DIA's Charities Services annually (DIA website).

²³ J B Were Cause Report 2021.

²⁴ New Zealand Institute of Directors. 2021. Website.

New Zealand has many providers of volunteering infrastructure

‘Volunteering infrastructure’ means an interconnected system that supports, manages and promotes volunteers.²⁵ In New Zealand, volunteering infrastructure is provided by 17 regional volunteer centres, volunteering peak bodies and many volunteer-involving organisations.

Volunteer centres connect volunteers and communities

The 17 regional volunteer centres around New Zealand are vital to organisational volunteering. A core function of volunteer centres is to provide referral services that link potential volunteers to organisations — many of them list volunteering opportunities and roles on their websites. Centres also provide support and capability development to volunteers in their regions.

Volunteer centres are traditionally focused on women and Pākehā: only 5% of people using volunteer centres are Māori and 4.6% are Pacific peoples. People seeking roles in volunteer centres were more likely to be female, aged 20-39, Pākehā/New Zealand European and not in paid employment.²⁶

Volunteering peak bodies provide advocacy and leadership to the sector

VNZ is an association of 94 members: regional volunteer centres, and national and other volunteering organisations. VNZ receives annual revenue of around \$400,000, with just under half coming from the government. This funds national services to volunteering including advocacy, professional development, volunteer management tools and good practice guidance. It also funds research including annual State of Volunteering reports.²⁷

Hui E! Community Aotearoa (Hui E!) is a ‘peak body for tangata whenua, community and the voluntary sector in Aotearoa-New Zealand’, formed as a network of organisations and individuals.²⁸ Most of its 120 members are small community organisations or groups. Revenue of around \$200,000 (some from government) funds advocacy, professional development and sector resources.

Philanthropy New Zealand operates as an independent peak body for philanthropy and grant-making. Its 220 members are predominantly businesses and trusts. The JB Were NZ Support Report estimates the total philanthropic spend in New Zealand at \$3.6 billion annually.

People are connecting to volunteering more often through online platforms

Some of the most popular platforms belong to NGOs and businesses like Seek, BeCollective and Do Good Jobs. VNZ lists six websites that provide access to volunteer opportunities.

²⁵ Based on the United Nations Volunteers definition: *An enabling environment, operational structures and implementation capacities to promote volunteerism, mobilize volunteers and support them in their work.* UN Volunteers 2018. Global Trends in Volunteering infrastructure.

²⁶ Volunteering New Zealand. Survey 2007/08.

²⁷ Volunteering New Zealand. 2021. Annual Report 2020-21.

²⁸ Hui E!. 2021. *Annual Report 2020-2021.*

Good practice guidance is an important part of volunteering infrastructure

VNZ's *Best Practice Guidelines* are a self-assessment tool for organisations managing volunteers. Further resources that support volunteering good practice include online information from Hui E!, the New Zealand Navigator Trust, Inspiring Communities and ComVoices. Larger national organisations such as the Citizens Advice Network, Victim Support and Red Cross have tailored good practice guidance, as do some government agencies.²⁹

²⁹ NZSAR. 2021. *Valuing our Volunteers*.

2. Volunteers have been vital to the COVID-19 response

Volunteering has made a significant contribution to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, despite severe disruptions to volunteering participation. COVID-19 has exacerbated pressures on budgets and services in the sector. Of respondents to the Hauora Survey in 2021, 43% reported increased community demand during the COVID-19 pandemic. One respondent commented *'we have never been more busy, more needed. Many rely on our services and we rely on others for kindness.'*³⁰

The pandemic has also disrupted voluntary fundraising. COVID-19 highlighted revenue uncertainty for voluntary organisations, with 74% of respondents to a survey experiencing reduced funds due to cancelled fundraising.³¹ Many respondents (59%) said they had to reduce service delivery because of public health measures, such as social distancing and paused services due to lockdowns.

Reports noted that volunteer numbers fell initially as older volunteers stayed home. Lockdowns particularly impacted volunteers' wellbeing, as many felt torn between caring for the community and caring for themselves.³² Lockdowns intensified stress and isolation for many volunteers, especially those from disabled, ethnic and migrant communities. Volunteer wellbeing and the potential for volunteer burnout has been a recent focus in the public domain.

Opportunities emerged from the COVID-19 crisis

Sector reports indicate that despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, voluntary organisations rallied and continued to deliver as best they could. The sector proved itself to be adaptable and resilient.^{33,34} Voluntary organisations adapted by delivering more services online, remotely or by phone. They also adopted new ways of working such as video conferencing, supporting staff to work remotely and contactless community support such as drive-throughs. Services were sustained in new ways, with organisations reportedly using local community networks to deliver services such as food banks and support to those in need.

Younger volunteers stepped in for older volunteers staying at home. Organisations strengthened resilience through use of social media and online connectivity suited to younger volunteers' needs.³⁵

³⁰ Centre for Social Impact. 2020. *Time to Shine*. Respondent p 38.

³¹ Centre for Social Impact. 2020. *Time to Shine, Time to Take Stock*.

³² Volunteering NZ and Hui E!. 2021. *Hauora Wellbeing Survey*.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Volunteering NZ.2021. *Status of the volunteering sector: Post COVID recovery and resilience*.

³⁵ Centre for Social Impact (2020). *Time to Shine*

Māori played a vital role in the COVID-19 response, but we see indications that voluntary infrastructure and resources are not sufficient to support them. For Māori, volunteering during the pandemic has involved staffing rāhui borders or knowledge sharing online. It also involved sourcing food donations from businesses and forming health advisory groups.³⁶ The pandemic showed that Māori work effectively in crises to assist their community when they are sufficiently supported.³⁷

The 2020 lockdown had significant positive and negative impacts on Pacific people's volunteering. While some activities had to be stopped or reduced, other activities increased.³⁸

Government has funded voluntary organisations' response to COVID-19

Since the onset of the pandemic, additional government funding has supported community and voluntary organisations as part of the Government's COVID-19 response. This has included:

- a \$36 million Community Capacity and Resilience Fund over two years, established by the Ministry for Social Development (MSD)
- a Community COVID-19 fund established by MPP
- a \$120 million Māori Communities COVID-19 fund from Te Puni Kōkiri.

The Lottery Grants Board also contributed \$40 million in the Lottery COVID-19 Community Wellbeing Fund administered by DIA.

A 2021 DIA evaluation of the Lottery COVID-19 Wellbeing Fund found that the fund had supported organisations with a high proportion of volunteers to paid staff. However, while many organisations funded as part of the COVID-19 response have a volunteer base, it is difficult to determine how much funding has been targeted to volunteering infrastructure.

Many organisations in the sector report that COVID-19 funding broadened their reach

Peak body research indicates voluntary organisations want government to work with them to build on productive, collaborative relationships that were developed in response to the pandemic.³⁹

³⁶ Fiona Cram. 2021. *Mahi aroha: Māori work in times of trouble and disaster as an expression of a love for the people.*

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ministry for Pacific Peoples. 2021. *Pacific Economy Research Report on unpaid work and volunteering in Aotearoa.*

³⁹ Volunteering NZ. 2021. *Status of the volunteering sector: Post COVID recovery and resilience.*

3. Government supports volunteering in several ways

This stocktake of government support is based on a DIA desktop review and information supplied by the following 30 agencies whose work involves volunteering, across most government sectors:

- **Business and industry:** Inland Revenue, Maritime NZ, Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (including Companies Office and Immigration New Zealand), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Primary Industries, Worksafe.
- **Communities and wellbeing:** Department of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Development (including Office for Disability Issues and Office for Seniors), Oranga Tamariki.
- **Emergency management:** Fire and Emergency New Zealand, National Emergency Management Agency, New Zealand Search and Rescue.
- **Justice and defence:** Department of Corrections, New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Police.
- **Population-based:** Ministry for Ethnic Communities, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Ministry for Women, Ministry for Youth Development, Statistics New Zealand, Te Puni Kōkiri.
- **Recreation, environment and culture:** Creative NZ, Department of Conservation, Sport NZ.

Government has obligations related to volunteering under Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be honoured in volunteering contexts, especially those involving Māori. To honour Te Tiriti, the government must recognise Māori voluntary work and empower Māori to continue effective work for their communities. Care must also be taken that Māori are not exploited for their labour because of the perception that they will work for free out of aroha.⁴⁰

Government offers five types of support for volunteering

The extent and diversity of government support initiatives is significant and touches on almost all those who volunteer with organisations. Agencies often provide multiple, overlapping types of support and responsibilities may be shared, with limited coordination.

We identify issues with all types of support to volunteering below, based on sector perspectives identified in sector surveys, interviews and focus groups with thousands of paid staff and volunteers (the sector reports are listed in the Appendix).

Type 1: Government policy and strategies

The 2002 *Government Policy on Volunteering* (the Policy) recognises the wide-ranging nature of volunteering and the contribution that volunteers make. It presents a vision for volunteering:

⁴⁰ Office of the Community and Voluntary Sector. 2007. *Mahi Aroha: Māori perspectives on volunteering and cultural obligations*.

*A society with a high level of volunteering, where the many contributions people make to the common good through volunteering and fulfilment of cultural obligations are actively supported and valued.*⁴¹

In 2017, a VNZ Reference Group acknowledged the Policy in principle but called for government to renew its commitment to volunteering.⁴² In September 2018, the Prime Minister announced the Government's long-term plan to build a modern and fairer New Zealand. This plan is based on priority outcomes agreed by Cabinet, including to ensure everyone who is able to, is earning, learning, caring or volunteering.⁴³

Several central government agencies have strategic initiatives that recognise the contribution of volunteering to social cohesion and wellbeing. Examples include the Department of Corrections' *Mahi Aroha Volunteer Strategy* that champions the Corrections Volunteer Service's contributions to the restorative role of rehabilitation.⁴⁴ Another example is the Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) *Volunteerism Strategy*.⁴⁵ The Ministries of Social Development and Health have strategies that recognise unpaid carers and the importance of supporting volunteering.

While joint approaches are rare, one example is a working group researching approaches and motivators to volunteering across the emergency services and response organisations. This group is chaired by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The Government does not have an overall strategic approach

The Government has no overall strategic approach to volunteering, although a coordinated view could help to address common issues. Limited information on overall government funding hampers strategic planning. Declining volunteering participation affects all agencies with volunteering responsibilities, including those funding the sector and those with their own volunteering infrastructure. The 2002 Policy is acknowledged in peak body resources and some agency strategies, but is outdated, lacks a practical component and does not mention volunteering by Māori or other population groups.

Sector perspectives on government policies and strategies

In sector reports, respondents have asked government to encourage or facilitate inter-agency collaboration on volunteer management and policy. The sector is asking the Government to more clearly recognise the diverse ways people volunteer. The sector believes the Government's provisions and policies for volunteering need to pay more attention to mahi aroha. VNZ has offered to lead the development of a national strategy to improve overall coherence.

Type 2: Government agencies with a volunteering workforce infrastructure

For some government agencies that work with large numbers of volunteers (distinct from sector funding), the need to sustain their own volunteering workforce has evolved over time.

⁴¹ Department of Internal Affairs. 2002. *Government Policy on Volunteering*.

⁴² Volunteer New Zealand. 2017. *Overview paper on the state of volunteering in New Zealand*.

⁴³ Beehive. 2018. *Priorities for a modern and fairer NZ*

⁴⁴ Department of Corrections. 2018. *Mahi-Aroha Volunteer Strategy*.

⁴⁵ FENZ. 2019. *Volunteerism Strategy*.

Examples of agencies that work with volunteers

FENZ relies on almost 12,000 volunteers, primarily firefighters across more than 600 stations. These volunteers help communities prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. In 2020/21 FENZ invested \$84 million in volunteering support systems and training.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) integrates volunteers into its planned work and enables or supports hundreds of conservation groups on restoration and biodiversity recovery. A national team provides best practice guidance to rangers who work with volunteers at district level.

The Department of Corrections has around 1,300 authorised volunteers that regularly work with prisoners.⁴⁶ Corrections employs volunteer coordinators attached to prisons who recruit, administer, train and monitor these volunteers.

The New Zealand Search and Rescue (NZSAR) Council provides strategic governance and leadership to a resource-intensive sector which involves four non-governmental organisations and over 11,500 operational people. 90% of these personnel are not paid and they respond to around 3,000 incidents each year.

Agencies benefit from their volunteer workforce

Government agencies with their own volunteering workforce almost certainly see a good return on investment. It would be hard to imagine New Zealand's extensive network of firefighters or back-country huts without volunteers and the flow-on benefits to communities and the economy.

However, some agencies are experiencing declining volunteer numbers while some lack diversity. For example, research for the NZ Search and Rescue sector recommends a workforce strategy to address declining volunteer numbers and an ageing, mostly male volunteer workforce.⁴⁷ Contrastingly, FENZ's volunteer numbers have remained stable over time. Another reported issue is that people don't always know how to get involved in volunteering as pathways can be confusing. For example, DOC reports that multiple entry points to volunteering at district and national level can result in people not finding opportunities that suit their interests and abilities.

Type 3: Government funding to the volunteering sector

Government funding to the volunteering sector is generally via one of two methods. It can involve commissioning or contracting community and voluntary organisations for services, as an investment approach using government rules of procurement. The other approach involves grants, such as the Community and Volunteering Capability (CVC) Fund administered by DIA.

Both types of funding to community organisations tend to focus more on delivering programmes or outcomes than on their volunteer base. Often, funding policies do not include a requirement for community organisations to have volunteer infrastructure to support and manage volunteers. It is also rare for organisations to have to meet service-level metrics around volunteering infrastructure.

⁴⁶ Department of Corrections. 2021. *Annual Report 2020-21*.

⁴⁷ Volunteering New Zealand. 2019. *Volunteer Study for New Zealand Search and Rescue*.

Commissioning and contracting for services

The Government has commissioning/contract arrangements with many community organisations with a volunteer base, such as MSD's partnership agreements. The Ministry for Youth Development also funds targeted programmes involving volunteers. Many larger not-for-profits with a volunteer base have quality assurance systems to meet government performance requirements. These organisations include the Red Cross, St John's Ambulance, Victim Support and the Cancer Society.

Government grants to volunteer organisations

Stats NZ data indicates that central and local government grants to not-for-profits amounted to \$1.89 billion in 2018.⁴⁸ DIA administers Crown-funded community grants schemes and Lottery grants funding. Some other government agencies, including MSD, DOC and FENZ, also administer grants funding for voluntary organisations, but this report does not analyse these in detail.

DIA-administered funding streams are a significant investment supporting volunteering

Funding grants administered by DIA are a significant investment in supporting volunteers to achieve their communities' aspirations. The grants operate as co-investment — volunteers invest their time and effort while funding provides investment in voluntary projects. Examples include capital costs, specialist support, and capability building. Grant funding reduces the need for volunteers to spend time fundraising, maximising their time in creating value for their communities.

While evaluative information on volunteer effort is not readily available, initial analysis indicates that at least 30% of Crown and Lottery grant recipients mentioned volunteering in their funding requests. However, most Crown community grants schemes are over-subscribed and may not address Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities' volunteering support needs.

DIA administers Crown-funded community grants schemes

These schemes amounted to \$18.9 million in 2020/21 under Vote Internal Affairs. Their purpose is to 'support communities and voluntary sector organisations, so they become stronger, more cohesive and resilient'.⁴⁹ The schemes include:

Community and Volunteering Capability (CVC) Fund

DIA reviewed Crown-funded schemes in 2021 and found that the focus on national organisations meant local needs may not be addressed. Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities are particularly vulnerable to this issue, as they typically do not have national peak bodies. As a result, DIA established the newly amalgamated \$1.933 million CVC Fund as a first step towards simplifying community and voluntary sector funds. The Support for Volunteering Fund, Community Leadership Fund, Youth Worker Training Scheme and Community Internship Fund have been merged into this new fund. The change is one part of a large-scale programme of work DIA is carrying out. This programme aims to reshape our community funding system to be more strategic, responsive and inclusive, and to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

⁴⁸ Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *Non-profit Institutions Satellite Account (NPISA) 2018*.

⁴⁹ New Zealand Treasury. 2020. *Budget 2020/21- Vote Internal Affairs*.

Volunteering and sector leadership remain priorities within the merged CVC Fund. Under the volunteering priority, the CVC Fund provides grants to three groups of recipients:

- Māori, Pacific and ethnic, youth or community organisations for original one-off projects that will promote and support mahi aroha or volunteering (\$80,000)
- regional volunteer centres for promoting good practice in managing volunteers, recruiting and training volunteers, and providing training and networking for organisations that use volunteers (\$747,000)
- VNZ for working with community and voluntary sector organisations and regional volunteer centres to promote and support volunteering in New Zealand (\$175,000).

Community Organisation Grants Scheme (COGS) — \$12.5 million in 2020/21

COGS provides funding for community-based social services that contribute to locally determined outcomes. 37 local distribution committees make funding decisions and set local priorities.

Community-led Development Programme (CLDP) — \$4.4 million in 2020/21

CLDP currently partners with 20 communities across New Zealand, supporting them to achieve their community aspirations. Communities partner with DIA for up to five years.

DIA Crown community grants schemes could be better targeted and are over-subscribed

Remaining issues include the focus of Crown funds on volunteer centres, which traditionally serve older and Pākehā volunteers. This may mean the Crown funds are less responsive to changes in volunteer demographics, motivations or preferences. The small contestable part of the CVC Fund is likely to remain heavily over-subscribed, indicating pent-up demand. Also, the volunteer centres are allocated funding through a population-based formula, meaning that very large urban areas with diverse populations are comparatively underfunded.

27 out of 37 of the COGS local committees have priorities that support volunteering. However, COGS is significantly over-subscribed, and the large number of small grants it provides means its impact is thinly spread. A lack of Māori representation on local committees may contribute to few successful applications from Māori. Inability to access the fund or limited available funding may also be contributing factors.

The CLDP has no specific policies, criteria or outcomes that target support to volunteering. However, most of the CLDP initiatives where people step up to make a difference in their communities are volunteer-led.

DIA is responsible for the separate Ethnic Communities Development Fund

The fund had an of appropriation \$4.2 million in 2020/21 for grants to help ethnically diverse communities participate in New Zealand society. Grants support community projects and initiatives largely delivered by volunteers from ethnic communities, including language classes, cultural celebrations and wellbeing initiatives.

Lottery funding also supports volunteering

The Gambling Act 2003 requires that the Lottery Grants Board (LGB) distributes profits from Lotto sales to support communities. The LGB distributes profits via 10 Lottery grant schemes. In 2020/21, 20 Distribution Committees across the 10 schemes allocated \$134 million to community organisations. This figure does not include the Lottery COVID-19 Community Wellbeing Fund — see section two for more information about this fund. The LGB also distributes profits to four statutory bodies — Sport New Zealand, Creative New Zealand, the New Zealand Film Commission and Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision, which fund many community organisations. \$117.6 million was allocated to the statutory bodies in 2020/21.

The LGB determines amounts distributed to the committees and statutory bodies each year and sets strategic criteria and objectives for the Lottery Distribution Committees. The committees must comply with LGB policy, but each also has its own regional priorities. DIA provides a Secretariat to the LGB and administers the grants on their behalf.

Lottery funding is significant but its impact on volunteering infrastructure is unclear

Sheer magnitude makes Lottery funding a significant source of support that is highly valued by community groups with a volunteer base. Almost all the 10 Lottery grants schemes contribute significantly to meeting costs of voluntary activities including capital, equipment, research and support to individuals.

The LGB has specified *support volunteers* as a high-level criterion for distributing lotteries funding, meaning it is a key source of support to volunteering. Analysis of DIA information on Lottery grants from the last three financial years confirms many successful applications met the criteria *support volunteers*:

- Lottery Community: 84% of the spend and 51% of the grants
- Lottery Minister's Discretionary Fund: 30% of the spend and 20% of the grants
- Lottery Outdoor Safety: 94% of the spend and 94% of the grants.

Other Lottery schemes are likely to support volunteer activity, but recipients did not make specific reference to this in their requests. However, some volunteer organisations (especially faith-based organisations) do not access Lottery funding, as they can view gambling as having a negative impact on marginalised and at-risk communities.

Evaluative information about how recipients support volunteer infrastructure is not generally available. Exceptions are the DIA evaluation of the COVID-19 Lottery fund (see section two), and the 2020 evaluation by Te Puni Kōkiri of Oranga Mārae. The evaluation found one of the success factors for the Fund was the thousands of hours of in-kind (voluntary) contributions.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Te Puni Kōkiri. 2020. *Oranga Mārae Summative Evaluation*.

A lack of funding data makes it hard to assess impact on volunteering

Beyond funds administered by individual agencies, overall information on government funding is very limited. The Stats NZ non-profit institutions satellite account (NPISA) indicates government funding is likely to be a reasonable proportion of not-for-profits' income — this is relevant because most have a volunteer base. However, NPISA does not separate government contracts from overall sales and services, so we don't know the total government funding to not-for-profit organisations. Outdated DIA information suggests government contracts are very important to voluntary organisations, indicating 93% of total funding was from contracts for services. However, more recent information is not available.⁵¹

While we know the total amount of grants funding (\$1.89 billion in 2018), there is no comprehensive information about grants administered by different agencies, and about the proportion of funding targeted to volunteering infrastructure. Without this information, it is hard to assess the overall impact of funding to volunteering.

It is important to note that government funding is only one source of income for volunteer-involving organisations. They also get income from membership fees, public donations and fundraising, philanthropic donations, and selling goods and services other than government contracts.

The sector has concerns about funding focus and sustainability

Funding pressures are a prominent issue for the sector. For respondents to sector reports, funding has not matched growing community needs, placing pressure on budgets, staffing and service delivery. Respondents describe how short-term funding means paid staff are offered only fixed-term employment, posing recruitment and retention challenges.

Reports highlight the precariousness of community funding. In one survey, only 18.4% of respondents reported having funding for more than one year.⁵² Funding criteria reportedly favour innovative projects over ongoing service delivery, creating sustainability issues. Overall, short-term funding creates opportunity costs as repeated applications take time away from delivering services.⁵³

Many community and voluntary organisations compete for funding annually. Lengthy, complex application forms disadvantage applicants with English as a second language and smaller organisations tend to lose out because they lack resources.⁵⁴

Some respondents felt that funding decisions are dominated by Pākehā,⁵⁵ with few Māori governance representatives. Others saw funding flowing to traditional Pākehā charities instead of Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities. Some respondents felt that a few larger organisations received an unequal share of resources, and wanted greater support for smaller, lower-profile organisations or those that did not have government contracts.

⁵¹ DIA. 2007. *A Survey of Government Funding to Non-profit organisations*.

⁵² Volunteering NZ and Hui E!. 2021. *Hauora Wellbeing Survey*.

⁵³ Volunteering NZ. 2020. *State of Volunteering Report 2020*.; Volunteering NZ and Hui E!. 2021. *Hauora Wellbeing Survey*.; Centre for Social Impact. 2020. *Time to Shine*.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Volunteering NZ and Hui E!. 2021. *COVID-19 Hauora Wellbeing Survey*.

Sector respondents have suggested ways the Government could improve funding to volunteering:

- Work in a culturally responsive manner for Māori volunteering by strengthening volunteering initiatives from whanau, hapū and iwi.
- Provide more support for Hauora-wellbeing. Despite pressures due to COVID-19, the sector has shown tenacity and flexibility, but this is not sustainable without further support.
- Relieving funding and administration pressures on paid staff through adequate funding.
- Creating spaces and places for collaborative relationships.
- Fund salaries and ongoing operational costs rather than short-term projects.
- Multi-year funding to sustain organisations in the longer term.
- Improve and simplify the funding system by partnering with community and voluntary organisations.

Type 4: Regulation, information and services

Government regulation is vital to the volunteering infrastructure. Regulation supports volunteers, protecting them and communities that use volunteer services. The Government provides regulatory services in the following ways:

- Police vetting services meet statutory requirements for volunteers working with children and vulnerable people. The Police exempt most volunteer organisations from vetting fees.
- The Companies Office (part of MBIE) sets legal requirements for incorporated societies to file returns, set rules and provide financial statements. Many volunteer-involving organisations are incorporated societies, so complying with these laws engenders trust in their financial administration.
- The Charities Act provides a registration, reporting and monitoring system. Being a registered charity entails benefits, like tax exemptions, alongside obligations, like reporting. Many officers of registered charities are volunteers.
- MBIE administers the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. This act protects volunteers by placing obligations on organisations that work with volunteers and paid employees. These obligations do not apply to volunteer organisations that do not employ anyone.
- Inland Revenue administers the Income Tax Act 2007, which allows tax exemptions for voluntary organisations. For example, not-for-profit organisations can receive a \$1,000 income tax deduction and do not pay tax on reimbursement to volunteers.
- The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) covers volunteers if they are injured in an accident, as long as their accident meets the terms of the legislation.

The Government also provides a range of information services to volunteering stakeholders. Stats NZ is the main source of information on the contribution of not-for-profit institutions, unpaid work and volunteering.⁵⁶ Agencies with advisory networks that support volunteer organisations include DIA, MSD, MPP, Te Puni Kōkiri and the Tertiary Education Commission.

⁵⁶ Statistics New Zealand. 2018. *Non-profit institutions satellite account: 2018*.

The volunteering sector perceives some regulation as a compliance burden

For the sector, obtaining a new Police vet for each voluntary engagement is a significant burden. Sector organisations also reported that volunteers are not given equivalent ACC cover to employees.

More positively, the sector acknowledges regulation as a safety net that underpins rights and legal and financial protections. Volunteering NZ has reported an encouraging reduction in sector concerns about compliance with health and safety legislation in the results of its 2015 and 2017 sector surveys.⁵⁷ NZ Police is aiming to make it easier to apply for a vet.

Type 5: Support to the volunteering workforce

Making volunteers feel valued and respected is integral to maintaining a sustainable volunteer workforce. Recognising and thanking volunteers goes a long way to encouraging and promoting the value of volunteering.

Many volunteer organisations acknowledge their volunteers on International Volunteer Day on 5 December and National Volunteer Week in June. The peak bodies also lead activities that recognise and promote volunteering.

Government agencies recognise volunteers several ways. Examples are the Minister of Health Volunteer Awards, and awards by the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council, the Department of Corrections, and FENZ. Volunteers with DOC and other agencies are often recognised through the Royal Honours list.

Some agencies recognise the financial contributions volunteers make. While volunteers don't want to be paid a wage, their work often incurs significant health and time-related costs, strain on family relationships and opportunity costs. For example, The Department of Corrections, which 'doesn't want volunteers to be out of pocket', may reimburse costs borne by authorised prison visitors.⁵⁸ MSD recognises voluntary caregivers of disabled people by compensating them for expenses such as transport. FENZ spends over \$3 million annually on reimbursing volunteer firefighters.

The sector sees retention, recruitment and recognition as challenges

Difficulty recruiting volunteers is a recurrent theme for the sector — one report described it as the biggest challenge, with 68% of organisations reporting they needed more volunteers.⁵⁹

Volunteers do not always feel valued, and are not recognised, trained or mentored consistently. More effective strategies to attract and reward volunteers are needed, including informal recognition and reimbursement — only 32% of organisations reimbursed expenses.⁶⁰ Formal recognition practices vary and, although volunteers do not always expect them, respondents frequently mentioned the importance of informal recognition through thanks and acknowledgement.

⁵⁷ Volunteering NZ.2021. *Status of the Volunteering Sector: Post-COVID Recovery and Resilience*.

⁵⁸ Department of Corrections. 2022. *Welcome and thank you for volunteering at Corrections*

⁵⁹ Volunteering NZ.2020. *State of Volunteering Report 2020*.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The sector is concerned about volunteer workforce wellbeing and diversity issues

The sector is very concerned about volunteer wellbeing issues, such as instances of volunteer burnout, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating pressures. Māori and Pacific peoples in community-facing jobs will often do unpaid community work as well, leading to poor work-life balance. VNZ's *State of Volunteering Report 2020* noted instances of volunteer management style and structures causing poor relationships with volunteers. These issues were exacerbated by paid staff and volunteers being time-poor.⁶¹

Sector reports identify insufficient diversity as an issue – volunteers' age and ethnicity does not always reflect the socially diverse contexts for volunteering. The traditional volunteering workforce supported in regional volunteer centres is mostly Pākehā.⁶²

These reports also identified concerns about the ageing volunteer workforce. Older volunteers typically commit to long-term involvements, leaving gaps when they become less available. Younger volunteers face different challenges, benefiting from a reciprocal style of volunteer management.

People increasingly have difficulties balancing volunteering with commitments to their work and home life. Fewer volunteers want long-term commitment — instead, they often seek episodic opportunities related to their skills and interests via online volunteer matching platforms.

Sector reports make suggestions for strengthening government support of the volunteering workforce

These suggestions include investing in professional development to recognise the contribution volunteers make and enhance their wellbeing. The reports also suggest more clearly recognising the value of volunteering and incentivising employers to encourage volunteering and unpaid work outside the workplace.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

4. Other countries strongly support volunteering

DIA carried out a desktop review of volunteering data from Ireland, the UK, Scotland (treated separately from the UK), Australia and Canada. The countries were selected as they have high volunteering rates, and New Zealand commonly compares itself to them. This section discusses the different forms of government support for volunteering in those countries. It also draws out similarities and differences in approach to New Zealand, and what we could learn from them. Useful comparisons are highlighted in separate sections and some initiatives are called out as case studies.

The five countries analysed have high rates of volunteer participation

While the OECD average for volunteer participation in 2015 was 24%⁶³, the countries in the study reported these rates:

- UK: 38% of the population volunteered in the previous year, and 26% volunteered frequently⁶⁴
- Scotland: 52% of young people and 28% of adults volunteer⁶⁵
- Ireland: 28.4% of people over 15 volunteer⁶⁶
- Australia: 31% of the population volunteer⁶⁷
- Canada: 79% of the population reported volunteering either formally or informally.⁶⁸

Different measures account for the varying participation rates. Ireland measures only formal volunteering, whereas Canada (like New Zealand) measures formal and informal or 'direct helping' volunteering, so its participation rate is comparatively higher. As in New Zealand, motivations for volunteering across the countries are diverse, ranging from making a difference in the community and the world, to self-improvement or social connectedness.

The pandemic had a mixed effect on volunteering participation in the five countries

In Ireland and Scotland, volunteering increased dramatically during the pandemic and is predicted to remain higher than before the pandemic.⁶⁹ Australia and Canada experienced the opposite effect, recording drops in participation and an inability to return to previous capacity, alongside an increasing demand for volunteers.^{70 71}

⁶³ OECD. 2015. *Participation in voluntary work and membership of groups and organisations for young adults*.

⁶⁴ NCVO. (2019). *Time Well Spent: A national survey on the volunteer experience*.

⁶⁵ Scottish Government. 2018. *Volunteering for All: national framework*.

⁶⁶ Central Statistics Office Ireland. 2013. *QNHS Volunteering and Wellbeing*.

⁶⁷ Department of Social Services Australia. 2018. *Report on the Review of the Volunteer Management Activity*.

⁶⁸ Statistics Canada. 2018. *Volunteering counts: Formal and informal contributions of Canadians in 2018*.

⁶⁹ Volunteer Ireland. 2020. *Impact of COVID on Volunteer Participation in Ireland*.

⁷⁰ Volunteering Australia. 2020. *Re-engaging Volunteers and COVID-19*.

⁷¹ Volunteer Canada. 2020. *The Volunteering Lens of COVID-19, Fall 2020 Survey*.

In the UK, volunteer participation levels stayed largely the same, although only formal volunteering was measured, leaving a gap in the data.⁷² New Zealand also reported a decline in volunteer numbers due to older volunteers staying home during the pandemic.⁷³

The differences in participation post-pandemic may point to differences in volunteering support. Those targeting funding to smaller or medium organisations were not so severely impacted. Scotland's Volunteering Support Fund is distributed to small and medium-sized organisations through a charitable fund management organisation.⁷⁴ Contrastingly, Australia experienced declining volunteer numbers post-pandemic due to a lack of targeted support for smaller organisations. The new Australian Volunteer Management Activity addresses this issue by committing to improving poor volunteering conditions exposed by the pandemic.

The social value of volunteering is documented in each of the five countries

Volunteering adds social and economic value for volunteers themselves and the communities they support. In the five countries, volunteering contributed a significant amount to GDP, estimated at around 1-2%. Canada had the highest estimate at 2.21% of GDP.⁷⁵ The UK estimate was approximately 1% of GDP, but only formal volunteering was considered.⁷⁶ Like the UK, New Zealand's NPISA estimate of volunteering's economic worth only measures volunteering for organisations, making it hard to estimate the value of informal volunteering.

We noticed common themes in our research. The democratic nature of volunteering allows citizens to shape the world they want to live in and supplement limited government resources. Volunteering has great value in improving health and wellbeing and improving connection between people. This value was primarily for the volunteers themselves, but also for the people their work helps.

Volunteering also aids skills development. Volunteers work in many different roles and are trained to do the job well – creating a skilled, unpaid workforce.

Many countries struggle to reach a unified understanding of volunteering

Definitions of volunteering differ slightly across the five studied countries, but similar themes emerge. Ireland defines volunteering as work done without financial gain, and Scotland adds to this the idea that volunteering is a result of free will. Australia mirrors these definitions with the addition that volunteering time is 'willingly given for the common good'.⁷⁷ Canada and the UK have broader definitions that acknowledge diverse understandings.

⁷² Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport UK. 2020. *Formal Volunteering: Community Life COVID-19 Re-contact Survey 2020*.

⁷³ Volunteering NZ and Hui E!. 2021. *COVID-19 Hauora Wellbeing Survey*.

⁷⁴ Local Government and Communities Directorate Scotland. 2019. *Volunteering for All: national framework*.

⁷⁵ Volunteer Canada. 2018. *The Value of Volunteering in Canada*.

⁷⁶ Office for National Statistics. 2018. *Changes in the value and division of unpaid volunteering in the UK*.

⁷⁷ Department of Social Services Australia. 2018. *Report on the Review of the Volunteer Management Activity*.

The five counties acknowledge three different types of volunteering: formal, informal and 'neighbourliness'. Formal volunteering roles in a recognised organisation such as a charity, NGO, or not-for-profit are often ongoing, structured and involve training. Informal volunteering may link people with informal community groups, or they may be doing chores for community members or friends.⁷⁸ Neighbourliness is often defined as unpaid workers who don't identify themselves as volunteers, but rather as good citizens and community members doing what needs to be done.

Case study: Canada has an inclusive definition of volunteering

Canada has a broad and detailed definition of volunteering which considers what unpaid work is, who does it, and when and how they do it. The extended definition also addresses what motivates volunteers to give their time, including diverse understandings of voluntary and unpaid work and acknowledging the different cultural contexts for volunteering.⁷⁹ This inclusive definition allows Canada to cast a wide net when measuring volunteering rates. It also creates the opportunity for more closely targeted funding and support which is tailored to the reality of volunteering in Canada.

Ireland, Scotland and Australia have national strategies for volunteering

The five countries all recognise the International Year of Volunteers in 2001 as a catalyst for action. New Zealand's Government Policy for Volunteering also originated from this period. The policy is comparable to the strategies of Ireland, Scotland and Australia, if only in that it needs updating.

Canada and the UK do not have national strategies, but reports from their volunteering and charitable peak bodies strongly recommend adopting one. Ireland, Scotland and Australia each have a national volunteering strategy that outlines their government's long-term goals. A key purpose of the strategies is to support and recognise the value of volunteering and to improve public awareness.

All the national strategies had plans to improve a lack of diversity in volunteer spaces, proposing more inclusive approaches and encouraging flexibility. The strategies provide examples of different types and context of volunteering, and all plan to target funding to under-represented groups. Improving support for volunteers' needs is seen as very important and all include national good practice guidance. All made promises to implement policy or delivery plans to back up the strategies.

Scotland and Australia discuss programs in their national strategies for 'volunteer passports'. These would allow organisations to share volunteers without continually reapplying for Police vetting.^{80 81}

Diversity and inclusion in volunteering is an issue in all five countries

New Zealand has experienced a lack of diversity in formal volunteering as it is understood in Pākehā terms, highlighted in reports on mahi aroha and Pacific volunteering. These reports show that rates of formal volunteering among disadvantaged groups are low, but also that statistical measurement fails to account for diverse understandings of volunteering.

⁷⁸ Scottish Government. 2019. *Literature Review to Inform the Development of Scotland's Volunteering Outcomes Framework*.

⁷⁹ Canadian Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector. 2019. *Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector*.

⁸⁰ Local Government and Communities Directorate Scotland. 2019. *Volunteering for All: national framework*.

⁸¹ Department of Social Services Australia. 2018. *Report on the Review of the Volunteer Management Activity*.

In all five countries, diversity and inclusion were identified as major issues for volunteering, especially for disadvantaged groups. In Canada, for example, areas with high First Nations and Inuit populations were excluded from the most recent study on volunteering.⁸² The exception is Ireland, where many volunteers are new migrants.⁸³ Common diversity issues included inadequate accessibility, flexibility and direct support. Some disadvantaged groups found formal volunteering organisations difficult to access, such as disabled people, people of colour and young people.

Lack of diversity and inclusion were common factors that triggered national strategies for Ireland, Scotland and Australia and these countries are taking steps to address barriers to diversity. Irish volunteers were noted to face time constraints, so volunteers are being matched to organisations' needs and task-based volunteering is being introduced. In Scotland, volunteer management is too formal and inflexible, so the government encourages flexibility in the new national strategy delivery plan.

In Australia, volunteers reported finding it difficult to access online support or volunteering opportunities. The new strategy, the Volunteer Management Activity (VMA), focuses on improving online delivery. Australia has also seen a lack of support for disadvantaged groups in traditional volunteering spaces, so the strategic response focuses on addressing barriers they face.⁸⁴

Case study: improving diversity and inclusion in Ireland

The Irish government's national strategy lays out strategic objectives to increase diversity in volunteering and reduce barriers for disadvantaged groups. These barriers can include opportunities not offering flexibility, or requirements for high levels of commitment. The Irish government plans to support voluntary organisations to become more flexible and move towards task-based volunteering. Online volunteering portals will be linked to centralise the process and make it more accessible for first-time volunteers. Underrepresented groups will be specifically targeted with funding support and in recognition efforts.⁸⁵ Volunteer Ireland has also laid out targeted steps for increasing diversity.⁸⁶

All five of the studied countries have national peak bodies to fund the sector

These bodies support and fund volunteering in a variety of ways, mainly serving smaller regional bodies and/or volunteer centres. Their functions range from government funding distributor to independent advocacy and support organisation. All provide training, resources, research, guidelines, access to grants and support for volunteers.

⁸² Statistics Canada. 2019. *General Social Survey: An Overview*.

⁸³ Government of Ireland. 2021. *National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025*.

⁸⁴ Department of Social Services Australia. 2018. *Report on the Review of the Volunteer Management Activity*.

⁸⁵ Government of Ireland. 2021. *National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025*.

⁸⁶ Volunteer Ireland. 2022. *Investing in volunteers (IIV)*.

Case study: funding is linked to data in Ireland

Ireland has collected data on where different types of volunteer organisations access most of their funding, which allows the government to target funding to where it is most needed. For example, health groups get most of their core funding from government grants, whereas philanthropic groups get most of their funding from corporate sponsors. Having a better statistical view of the voluntary sector also allows Ireland to better understand how to support volunteering in the long term.⁸⁷

Case study: funding is allocated according to need in the UK

In the UK, funding has been recently ringfenced according to need. This means that instead of funding going to the same peak bodies or volunteer centres each year, it is divided into six different streams which are targeted to respond to different needs. Peak bodies, volunteer centres, NGOs and charities can apply under the streams relevant to their work. Here in New Zealand, increased targeting of funding balances new provision with sustaining established providers.

The five countries see the importance of volunteering good practice guidance

VNZ's *Best Practice Toolkit* draws on examples from voluntary organisations, while acknowledging diversity.⁸⁸ Similarly, peak bodies in all the studied countries had nationally recognised inclusive good practice guidance, providing practical steps for success for volunteer management. Ireland and Australia have identified the need for national good practice guidance from the government in their reviews of volunteering. Common themes that emerged from good practice guidance were:

- providing written policy or mission statements relating to volunteers and volunteer management
- commitments to increasing and supporting diversity
- making relevant information accessible to volunteers
- providing proper training for staff and volunteers
- creating a strong support structure for volunteers
- giving volunteers constructive and positive feedback
- having risk and conflict protocols.

Case study: best practice guidance in Ireland

The Irish government identifies the need for best practice guidance in the National Volunteering Strategy, and Volunteer Ireland has developed national quality standards for volunteering. The peak body monitors these standards as a government-funded entity. In-depth standards are complemented by practical guidance that shows exactly how the standards would be measured and carried out in a voluntary organisation.⁸⁹ In early 2022, Volunteer Ireland is launching a new and improved national quality standard for volunteering. The new standard includes a quality award for organisations with exemplary performance and accreditation for organisations who participate.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ European Union. 2010. *Irish National Report on Volunteering 2010*.

⁸⁸ Volunteering New Zealand. *Best Practice Toolkit*.

⁸⁹ Volunteer Ireland. 2021. *Investing in Volunteers*.

⁹⁰ Volunteer Ireland. 2021. *Launch of the new Investing in Volunteers Quality Standard*.

Volunteer workforces experience similar issues across countries

Surveys from all five countries showed a broad pattern of volunteer satisfaction and identified areas for improvement. Although satisfaction is generally high, most countries reported lower satisfaction among disadvantaged groups, who were more likely to report issues with volunteer management and accessibility. A recurring issue for volunteers was that their roles sometimes felt like paid work, in that too much was expected of them and the role no longer felt voluntary. The UK's Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has proposed a solution to this issue. It suggests that voluntary organisations should make volunteers' positions and responsibilities clear in their policy, in comparison to paid workers.⁹¹

Volunteers like to feel that they are making a difference. NCVO suggests achieving this by making information about how volunteering helps the organisation clear and accessible.

The five countries have taken steps to recognise volunteers

The need for volunteers to feel valued by their organisation was another theme. Acknowledging volunteers' work can include a personal thank you, a public acknowledgement, or a large-scale celebration of volunteer efforts. Some volunteers highly valued acknowledgement of their work through certification and skill accreditation, especially if they began volunteering to develop skills.

Scotland and Ireland report that feeling undervalued was a disincentive for many volunteers. Scotland reported that many volunteers felt that simply receiving thanks from an authority figure or the organisation was enough to feel valued.⁹²

The Irish government had several responses to volunteers feeling undervalued. It aimed to improve awareness of volunteering, considered qualifications for skills gained by volunteering, and funded awards ceremonies.⁹³ In Scotland, some volunteers felt their organisation was 'going nowhere', so organisations were encouraged to be transparent about their purpose and share successes.⁹⁴

Many countries identified that reimbursing expenses helped volunteers feel valued and respected. Most countries reported transport needs as a barrier to volunteering, and proposed reimbursing travel expenses as a solution. For example, in Scotland and the UK, disabled volunteers were more likely to report dissatisfaction with their role, especially due to accessibility concerns.⁹⁵

Case study: accreditation of volunteer skills in the United Kingdom

The UK has developed a training accreditation program for voluntary organisations, to provide proof of learning to those who volunteer for skill development. This program allows voluntary organisations to have their volunteer training accredited as official training by an educational facility or professional development company.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Volunteer Scotland. 2021. *NCVO Time Well Spent Survey, Scottish Analysis: Volunteer Experience*.

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Connected online volunteering platforms encourage participation

Each of the five countries has a non-governmental platform connecting all its volunteering opportunities, or a service run through peak bodies. One of the biggest barriers identified by volunteers was lack of access to opportunities, especially through online platforms. This shows how important access to online and centralised opportunities is. New Zealand also has online platforms offered by volunteer centres and private businesses, but they are not centrally connected.

Case study: improved online connections in Australia

In the new VMA, the Australian government has ringfenced around \$30 million AUD from its volunteering funding. This money will develop more accessible online platforms for volunteering opportunities and improve inclusion. After the pandemic, lack of online accessibility was reported as discouraging volunteers during and after the lockdowns. Smaller volunteer organisations struggled to recruit volunteers and return to previous capacity after the lockdowns. Volunteers said flexibility and skill matching would improve conditions, and better online delivery could address their needs.

5. Opportunities to strengthen volunteering

This section identifies opportunities to strengthen government support to volunteering to address gaps identified in section three. It builds on lessons from international practice reviewed in section four.

The opportunities strengthen volunteering infrastructure and diversity

On the face of it volunteering is an unpaid activity that does not require resourcing or support.

However, the volunteering sector complements government-funded services, reducing the fiscal burden on taxpayers by doing work that could not otherwise be funded. The volunteer workforce faces persistent, pressing issues, such as waning participation and negative impacts on their wellbeing. Without well-targeted support, volunteering as a powerful source of practical help could continue to dwindle.

The Government can help address these issues by working with the sector to create a strong volunteering infrastructure that:

- is grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- recognises diverse understandings of volunteering and is flexible to meet the needs of different volunteering contexts
- connects volunteers to services that suit their skills and preferences
- enables volunteers to participate equitably
- supports volunteer wellbeing and aspirations through volunteer management and capability development
- protects volunteers from abuse and exploitation
- protects communities so that volunteering does no harm and is of good quality.

Learning from the countries we studied, New Zealand's government could help strengthen public understanding of volunteering's value and what volunteers contribute to the country. This would help volunteers feel valued and promote the role of volunteering in the community and employment world. It would also help address volunteer burnout and stabilise declining participation rates.

Responses from targeted engagement have helped to refine the options

In February 2022, we tested indicative issues and the proposed opportunities with over 40 experienced and senior sector stakeholders in three hui. We also met with 20 government agencies to discuss indicative findings and proposals.

Options that could be managed within current resources

The first four options could be managed within current DIA business and appropriations with some redeployment of resources.

Option one: Champion the recognition of volunteering

This initiative borrows from examples in Ireland and elsewhere. As an immediate first step the Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector could further champion the recognition of volunteering by supporting activities during National Volunteer Week 2022. DIA could provide support to bolster and complement the sector-led event schedule.

National Volunteer Week or International Volunteer Day could be a good time to introduce a high-profile Ministerial award. This year an award could focus on the contribution of volunteering to the COVID response. DIA could support a process to nominate individual volunteers or groups for the award.

This initiative borrows from examples in Ireland and elsewhere. Sector and government stakeholders supported government recognition of volunteering. They saw an award as a way to champion volunteering, raise the public profile of volunteers and encourage New Zealanders to volunteer.

Option two: Support a refresh of current good practice documents

VNZ has suggested to DIA that it would like to refresh its good practice guidance tools. Good practice guidance, among other things, enhances volunteer management capability and volunteering infrastructure. DIA could fund VNZ to refresh its *Best Practice in Volunteering* document in 2022. Stakeholders and government agencies positively received a general proposal to strengthen support for good practice guidance. However, the sector also wants to see ongoing volunteer management support (see option five).

Option three: Encourage diverse volunteering through DIA grants

Governments are taking steps to target funding towards increasing diversity, especially in Ireland. In New Zealand, sector stakeholders agreed it was important to target funding to diverse communities.

DIA recently completed a review of the Crown funds and established the Community and Volunteering Capability (CVC) Fund, which amalgamates smaller funds and includes a volunteering priority with a focus on supporting diverse volunteers from youth, Māori, Pacific and ethnic communities. DIA is also carrying out a work programme for the Lottery Grants Board to make the Lottery funding model more equitable and accessible. In addition to work already underway DIA could review the funding formula for volunteer centres in consultation with the sector, to address inequity in the way some funding is administered.

Option five suggests broader, longer-term diversity and volunteering infrastructure initiatives.

Option four: Strengthen our strategic approach across government

The New Zealand Government has no systematic view of how its various volunteering interventions interact. Planning and problem solving is hampered by insufficient information sharing and the government has no overarching strategy to address diversity issues.

Like other countries we studied, New Zealand could develop a cross-government strategic approach to volunteering. This would raise the profile of volunteering across government, promote shared understanding of sector demand, information and data gaps, and help solve infrastructure problems. The strategic approach could take the form of a cross-agency steering group with volunteering sector input. A collaborative approach could help to identify the best way to best support Māori volunteering and honour government obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It could also help to:

- Incorporate diverse understandings of volunteering into government support and investment.
- Promote improved data sharing, especially for funding, so agencies can better understand where to target resources.
- Encourage agencies to produce improved, more current data on volunteering participation and types of volunteering, incorporating culturally inclusive definitions of volunteering.
- Encourage agencies to develop funding criteria and priorities in grants, contracts and agreements for organisations with a volunteer base.
- Investigate the benefits of Australia's example of volunteer checks, which means that some volunteers don't have to reapply for checks such as Police vetting when they take up a new role.

This collaborative approach could also help DIA to engage with other agencies to improve public understanding of how government regulatory and advisory services support volunteers and communities. One suggestion from the sector was to build a central portal for access to information on available government funding and support for volunteering.

Finally, collaboration could encourage agencies such as MBIE to investigate incentives to enable workers to do important unpaid work. We identified that Māori and Pacific peoples' volunteering in particular would benefit from flexibility to balance employment with community commitments. Ways to include flexibility in employment agreements could include special leave for voluntary or community work, allowances for flexible hours, and options to work outside the office.

At this stage, a practical, action-orientated mechanism would be more useful than a big project to establish a national strategy. It could allow us to gauge appetite for a volunteering strategy, which is likely to require specific resourcing for agencies and the sector.

We tested these ideas through targeted stakeholder and agency engagement and received unanimous support for government working in a more joined-up manner. A common theme was that the approach should be strategic and action-focussed, with strong sector input.

Options requiring further consideration

The following options are longer-term and more exploratory. They require further consideration to understand how they could be implemented.

Option five: Invest in volunteering infrastructure and diversity

We have seen that funding to support volunteering infrastructure is heavily over-subscribed, leaving little room for new initiatives that target good practice and diversity. Most of the funding for volunteering infrastructure is directed at volunteer centres, so the new CVC Fund is a good start. However, without new spending, targeting community groups who are not currently accessing funding would only intensify demand.

Any new investment should be aimed at strengthening volunteering infrastructure and directly help voluntary organisations recruit and retain volunteers. Sector-led volunteer management initiatives should be aimed at volunteer management capability at grass-roots level. Grounding good practice in Te Tiriti o Waitangi would be essential.

Investment must also include initiatives that sustain diverse forms of volunteering by strengthening volunteering infrastructure in Māori, Pacific and ethnic and youth communities. This would deliver more capacity and potentially involve paid staff to support volunteers.

Option six: Investigate reimbursing volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses

Reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses is a practical way that voluntary organisations and agencies recognise volunteers — some countries support reimbursements through policy settings.

Reimbursement does not mean paying volunteers — it simply ensures volunteers remain financially unaffected by their work and helps create equitable access to volunteering for disadvantaged groups.

We propose work with the volunteering sector organisations to understand reimbursement practices and help make reimbursement more available. This would encourage consistent approaches so that people who experience financial barriers can volunteer without negatively impacting their lives.

DIA Crown funds do allow providers to reimburse volunteer expenses, but greater focus on reimbursements could not be managed within current funding. Exploring varying practices with the sector would allow us to understand the cost implications of this idea.

Option seven: Investigate introducing credentialing for volunteers

Introducing credentialing for volunteers who want to document skills they have gained is another way to support the volunteering workforce. Credentialing makes volunteering a more feasible pathway to employment by providing volunteers a 'social CV' if they want it. It also helps to build participation in volunteering from young people and people wanting to upskill or re-enter the workforce. This idea would see DIA work with voluntary organisations, peak bodies and other agencies to investigate ways to credential the skills volunteers acquire while volunteering.

Investigating the use of credentialing would be aligned to the Ministry of Ethnic Communities' work on volunteering by new migrants, under the Employment Action Plan.

Some voluntary organisations already provide credentialing, but implementing it more widely could require new funding. The approach could include procuring a sector lead to develop and establish a credentialing programme and ongoing support to maintain the service.

Option eight: Investigate a clearing house to connect online platforms

We have identified declining numbers of volunteers as a persistent, pressing issue. We want to build the volunteer workforce by attracting more people in ways they want to volunteer.

Developing a central clearing house to connect online volunteering platforms would enhance opportunities for people to volunteer and meet rising demand. Government agencies could contribute and link their information about pathways to volunteering. As in Australia and Ireland, this initiative would be innovative and aligned to the way people are volunteering now, including micro-volunteering and project volunteering. Younger people who are attracted to shorter-term commitments could link directly to volunteering opportunities, with fewer intermediary steps.

Creating the clearing house would involve a government-supported project to work with voluntary organisations and agencies and identify an information technology provider to link the platforms. This proposal is ambitious and entails significantly more investment than those above.

Conclusion

The Government is only one player in strengthening support to volunteering — voluntary sector organisations rightly see themselves as leading in this area. The Government can have the most impact by helping to coordinate efforts across the volunteering sector and agencies to strengthen public understanding and recognition of volunteering’s value. A cross-government approach will make it easier to gather useful information about volunteering and to better understand the impacts of interventions. Government has a continued role to strengthen volunteering infrastructure and diverse forms of volunteering through improved targeting of funding.

Looking forward, the Report can inform conversations about the best ways to sustain volunteering so it can thrive. Then we can all continue to benefit from the immense contribution volunteering makes.

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