2022

Executive Summary

The State of Volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022 reports from the voices of volunteers. *Why do they volunteer, for whom, how do they like to be recognised* and *do they feel they belong in the organisation,* were some of the questions answered. We have also heard from volunteer managers within the community and voluntary sector.

We provide a pictorial summary of key data on pages 11 and 12 as well as 2021 Statistics New Zealand wellbeing data for volunteering across the population.

Then there are six substantive sections reflecting the themes and insights from our research.

These are:

ONE: Barriers and Motivations for Volunteering

There are many reasons for people to volunteer, including having a drive for social justice or a lived experience of the charity's cause. Volunteers want to be treated with dignity – and to treat those they serve in a dignified way. Volunteers will only commit to organisations that match their values. While many say there is an issue with ageing volunteers and a low interest from young people, youth themselves say organisations should consider why and how they could attract younger people.

TWO: Volunteering and whakawhaungatanga: relationships and connections

Many people volunteer because of the relationships and connections they make. The most common method of volunteer recruitment is via word of mouth except for people under the age of 35 who found their role via a social media post or internet search. The human and social aspects of volunteering are often the most rewarding. When these ties were stretched or severed during the response to the Covid pandemic, some volunteers did not return.

THREE: The public, organisational and personal benefits of volunteering

Different groups describe volunteering in different ways. Organisations (particularly those with over 500 volunteers) use organisational and business metrics to measure their impact. Volunteers focus on the public benefits (i.e. giving back to the community) or personal benefits (i.e. making friends through volunteering).

FOUR: Recognising and valuing volunteers and volunteering

Volunteer organisations vary in how they recognise and value volunteers. The majority reimburse volunteers for their out-of-pocket expenses. Some organisations regularly nominate volunteers for awards and honours. Many volunteers prefer small gestures of thanks. Key stakeholders from the community and voluntary sector feel more could be done to value and recognise volunteering.

FIVE: The impact of Covid-19 and lessons

Covid-19 negatively impacted volunteering organisations and their ability to deliver services. This resulted in having to suspend volunteering programmes and loss of volunteers due to the vaccine mandates. Covid-19 reduced many organisations' funding streams e.g. charity shops. Organisations with an electronic system for managing volunteers were better off than those without.

Covid-19 also adversely affected volunteers' experience and even ability to volunteer. Volunteers over 65 years of age were twice as likely to report that concerns about Covid-19 had prevented them volunteering.

SIX: Diversity and Inclusion in Volunteering theory and practice

There are challenges in creating a diverse and inclusive volunteering workforce. Volunteers' experiences of belonging did not correlate with an organisation having a diversity and inclusion strategy. However, some organisations were making inroads in this area.

CONCLUSION

Five lessons can be drawn from the report:

1. The community and voluntary sector should continue to invest in ways to make volunteering inclusive and accessible to everyone on their terms.
2. Volunteers should understand their own values and the value they can bring to an organisation before committing, ensuring these are mutually compatible.
3. Organisations should focus on making their volunteering environment caring, inclusive and conducive to attracting and retaining a diversity of people.
4. Organisations need to balance their activities between day-to-day management, strategy and planning, and engagement with the wider sector
5. The community and volunteering sector should acknowledge the changing patterns and nature of volunteering, and remain open to other ways of volunteering (including mahi aroha and digital volunteering).