

## Volunteering New Zealand Board Nomination

Kia ora,

My name is Taylor Marston, and I would like to nominate myself for the board for Volunteering New Zealand. The following highlights why I think I would be suitable for this role, especially as the youth representative.

I am what you might call a “career student”. I started studying in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts in Japanese language before completing my Master’s in Political Science at Kobe University in Japan. Now, ten years since I started, I will soon (fingers crossed) be graduating with my PhD in community studies. My PhD explores the experiences and perceptions of volunteer community groups engaged in global partnerships (such as sister cities). It is through these studies that I have become intrigued by the topic of volunteerism.

For over three years, I have been on the board of a volunteer-run organisation called Global Cities New Zealand (previously Sister Cities New Zealand), which promotes and advocates for global partnerships across Aotearoa New Zealand. I initially held the youth portfolio but have since taken on more of a community and advocacy role, helping to organise forums and promote best practices.

In 2023 I joined the Rotary Club of Auckland and was quickly voluntold to join the board, again with a focus on youth engagement. I currently help run the club’s youth scholarships, including RYLA (Rotary Young Leaders Award) and RYPEN (Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment), and provide support for the Auckland Grammar Interact Club. That same year, I also joined Coastguard Titirangi as the community engagement coordinator and have since helped to organise community-facing events and procure funding.

These volunteer roles have deepened my understanding of the challenges I’ve uncovered through my PhD research. Notably, through multiple interviews with 15 volunteers across the country, I found recurring issues in efficiency, resilience, and sustainability—problems I’ve experienced firsthand in my volunteer work.

The groups suffer from what I have coined “accumulative systemic burdens” - A situation where volunteers are aware of the issues they face but are unable to enact change, forced instead to continue operating within inefficient systems and processes, causing their efforts to become increasingly burdensome. In the case of the volunteers I interviewed, these burdens had become so large that they lacked the time and capacity to contemplate even fundamental questions. My interviews were often the first time volunteers had stopped to contemplate what they were

doing, why they were doing it, and how they could do it better. Even when solutions were identified, there was again little volunteers could do to implement these, for they lacked resources, time, and expertise. My working hypothesis is that without significant external support, most of these groups will soon collapse, and it is this concern that has driven me to want to join Volunteering New Zealand.

In particular, I was inspired by your recent State of Volunteering in Aotearoa, New Zealand Report, which mirrored many of the issues I have observed in my studies. While I may not have long-term volunteer experience, I believe I can provide an academic lens to the board and hopefully help contribute towards a more resilient and sustainable future of volunteering in Aotearoa.

Thank you for your consideration.

Taylor