► **Submission to Ministry of Social Development's consultation on Social Inclusion.**

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► **Contact Details**

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1. VOLUNTEERING NEW ZEALAND: PEAK BODY FOR VOLUNTEERING AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteering New Zealand

Volunteering New Zealand is the "voice of volunteering" in Aotearoa. Our vision is for a New Zealand that promotes, values and supports effective volunteering for the benefit of individuals and communities – and our mission is to promote, support and advocate for volunteering.

We are the only national organisation in New Zealand that focuses purely on volunteering. We hold the 'big picture' and are in a position to liaise, work with, and advise volunteers, government and business sectors. This helps ensure that volunteering occurs within a positive environment where it is encouraged and fostered.

Over the past 20 years, VNZ has raised the profile of volunteer groups, activities, and management. We promote volunteering and its value to New Zealand society through advocacy, sharing stories, and producing tools like the Best Practice Guidelines and Competencies for Managers of Volunteers.

We have a membership of 100 national and regional member organisations that involve volunteers in their work programmes, or support volunteering infrastructure. Our members in work on behalf of 10,000 community organisations. We advocate on behalf of these organisations and for other groups that are not members but are aligned to our mission and values.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Volunteering New Zealand fully supports the Social Cohesion Framework in cultivating Aotearoa New Zealand to be a socially cohesive, diverse, and inclusive society. The goals of creating a sense of belonging, embracing diversity, and inspiring participation, are values we consciously promote in our efforts to ensure wellbeing and community connection through volunteering. We support the assertion of social cohesion as an aspiration to be actively pursued and continuously fostered, rather than an end goal to be achieved.

We see volunteering as an important component of communal connection, participation, and social solidarity which can enhance the conceptual framework of social cohesion. We believe there is a real opportunity to enrich this research, as well as areas that require developing or added elements to enhance the research.

The variety of areas which are being measured for social cohesion are very important. Investigating this on an interpersonal, community and institutional level will yield comprehensive insights into the current measures and perceived conditions of social cohesion and trust.

When investigating perspectives on the state of social cohesion, it needs to be asked what enables the nurturing of trust and social cohesion and what hinders it. Trust is an aspect we recommend be further explored to highlight wider issues concerning racial bias, cultural boundaries, and community relations to institutions.

There are also a variety of conflicts of trust on multiple levels of society. These concerns are connected to discrimination, diversity, tokenism, and lack of agency in contributing to decision-making processes. These issues should be investigated to improve understandings of trust and social cohesion.

The recognition of volunteering as an important part of civic participation is also encouraged. Acknowledging the many areas which volunteering contributes to in civic society are excellent indicators of social cohesion which will enhance the framework.

3. VOLUNTEERING IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

1. Mahi aroha and volunteering effort plays a critical role in empowering and enabling our communities as they are creating, leading and transforming their own futures.

2. Volunteering harnesses the collective energies of many for the benefit of all. Volunteering is universal, because all people seek to be part of a community and make a contribution to that community. All communities have unique cultures of community giving and practice social wellbeing.

3. The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised how volunteers as agents of change provide the practical action that build hope and resilience, improves lives, and strengthens communities.

4. As the kaitiaki of volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand, Volunteering New Zealand empowers volunteers to enrich Aotearoa New Zealand.

5. We commit to actively seeking to hear from and understand a diversity of experiences and perspectives on volunteering and community giving.

Government policies on volunteering

6. The *Government Policy on Volunteering 2002* (GPOV 2002) vision is "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".

7. The GPOV 2002 provides an overarching framing for governmental support, recognition and commitments to contributions people make to the common good.

8. The volunteering ecosystem is a network of relationships between volunteers, Volunteer Involving Organisations, Volunteering Support Services, Volunteering New Zealand, Volunteer Centres, other national peak bodies, iwi/hapu and community organisations, philanthropy, business, and government, all working for the collective viability and recognition of volunteering in Aotearoa.

Scale of volunteering in Aotearoa

9. Voluntary contribution enables organisations in the community and voluntary sector to operate. There are approximately 1 million volunteers contributing 4 billion of value to the 12 billion of value created by NFPs. Almost all of the NFP sector is entirely volunteer run.

10. This is only part of the picture. When you include informal volunteering, and other ways of measuring, understanding, and valuing voluntary contribution there is a much greater contribution.

11. Available data shows that:

    a. 21.5% of New Zealanders volunteer for organisations. (NPSIA 2018)
    b. 49.8% have performed formal and/or informal volunteer work in the last month. (GSS 2016)

12. Recognising this wider contribution is vital to understanding the volunteering eco-system.

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Expanding Understandings of Trust

13. Trust is an important aspect of initiating social cohesion, acting as a "lubricant that makes any group or organization run more efficiently".[1] When close social networks have a reciprocated sense of trust, the process of society becoming more civically active and more socially cohesive is accelerated.[2]

14. Trust should be constructed from multiple insights. Trust can be based on the nature of state institutions, which are accountable for application of laws and policies that should be impartial and universal.[3] It can also revolve around norms and common goals which enables members of a community to better co-operate, however, overcoming cultural boundaries may pose some

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[1] Fukuyama, 1999, p.16
[2] National Research Council, 2014, p.35.
[3] Storving, 2012, p.138.

challenges. Addressing how New Zealand society can instil trust on cultural and institutional levels are issues that need to be addressed and better understood to develop this framework.

15. Participants in the volunteer sector generally have high levels of trust in institutions and society. However, social conflicts in the volunteer sphere have been observed as relating to race, age, or other intersecting social identities; this can manifest as disparities in opportunities, lack of diversity, discrimination, exclusion, or lack of agency to contribute to important decision-making processes.[4] Another issue concerns tokenism, where diverse communities could feel they were being approached by volunteer organisations to tick a diversity check box.[5]

16. The *Ministry of Social Development's 2016 Social Report* outlined that trust in others could 'measure the extent to which people expect others to act fairly and honestly towards them', with high levels of trust being associated with the enhancement of wellbeing and co-operative behaviour.[6]

17. Findings on social connectedness indicated that a majority believed that most people could be trusted, although a significant disparity in Māori, Pacific people, unemployed, and lower socio-economic groups had the lowest levels of trust.[7] This is a concerning finding which reveals how measures of trust do not only indicate levels of confidence on the systemic level, but also the underlying prejudices about minority communities engrained within Aotearoa.

18. The goal of institutions being 'trusted by all' on an institutional level may not necessarily be a viable goal if community distrust and racial bias is present. This is an aspect that should be considered when constructing an accurate and in-depth framework of trust.

Elaboration of Proposed Indicators

19. A thorough analysis of indicators would help to enrich the research supporting the framework. When considering indicators related to community engagement and contribution, this could be extended into questions of unequal accessibility to venues of community contribution, or whether there is a presence of networks which connect individuals to communities they relate or belong to.

20. Development of indicators could provide more authentic and intricate responses from participants in the study. Proposed indicators such as 'the proportion of people who can be themselves, that they are part of a wider community and that they have a place to call home' could produce

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[4] Volunteering New Zealand, 2020, p.10; Carlton & Nissen (2022), p.8.
[5] Joyslin, 2018, p.9.
[6] Ministry of Social Development, 2016, p. 218.
[7] Ministry of Social Development, p.219.

generalized or vague responses to a subject that requires depth.

21. These questions could be framed to examine the social locations or communities that participants identify with or have membership in. Expansions on cultural or community connectedness indicators could extend into the degree to which people feel they can embrace their cultural or social identity without feeling the need to inhibit it. This could highlight the importance of a sense of 'belonging' and inclusion among a variety of social networks, contexts, and factors.

22. Developing social cohesion in the volunteering environment could look like facilitating access to physical and digital spaces to advance social networks and supplying resources for communities to build connections and support each other. This also underscores whether communities feel they have agency in making decisions for volunteer activities, or if there are appropriate outreach activities for vulnerable or isolated people to engage in.

Civic Engagement

23. Civic engagement is an incredibly salient aspect that volunteering is intwined with. It is defined as a process of 'active citizens producing cohesive societies'[8], and involves a myriad of individual efforts and activities concerned with 'making a difference in the civic life of communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference, (of) promoting the quality of life in a community'.[9]

24. Not all forms of civic participation are volunteering and vice versa, but there are overlaps between the two. It includes activities such as voluntary service to local communities, but also occasional charitable donations which may not typically be seen as volunteering.

25. Political participation at the personal (e.g. voting in an election) and collective (e.g. membership of political parties) levels, or people volunteering their time to actively participate in government decision-making or co-implementing state programmes. When seen in this light, volunteering allows individuals to intervene 'in the solution of existing social problems which require a certain interaction between society and the state.'[10]

26. Volunteering should be recognised as a direct form of civic participation and engagement. Facilitating an environment to promote civic engagement needs to be socially inclusive and cooperative. Engaging marginalized communities or individuals to be part of decision-making processes, developing skill sets and knowledge is incredibly important in advancing social cohesion.

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[8] Prewitt, 2014, p.25.
[9] Ehrlich, 2000, p.6
[10] United Nation Volunteers Programme, 2022, p.52.

Volunteering data

27. Volunteering New Zealand has reviewed the different sources of data collection employed by Statistics NZ relevant to volunteering. As snapshots of volunteering, these sources can be quite comprehensive. However, researchers are frustrated by gaps in collection and irregular data points across time. A more consistent approach will likely be necessary to get a sense of the changing picture of volunteering as it related to progress in wellbeing and inclusion outcomes.

28. Identifying and understanding volunteering's contribution is greater than the cost-saving aspect of saved labour. More and better data would help government and the sector recognise and track changes within the volunteering ecosystem and its contribution to social cohesion. It is important to consider the contribution of different types of volunteering as well as different ways of measuring its contribution to wellbeing.

29. In 2018 Volunteering New Zealand successfully advocated for volunteering be included in the suite of indicators being adopted by Statistics New Zealand, as a vital component of wellbeing.

30. The draft Indicators Aotearoa measure for volunteering is **participation** (which is currently 21.5% of New Zealanders formal volunteers (NPSIA 2018) and 49.8% have performed formal and/or informal volunteer work in the last month. (GSS 2016). This is a good measure of social inclusion.

Better volunteering data opportunities

31. We have previously noted that the following methods of data collection help measure the impact of volunteering:

   - The most detailed survey is the Time Use Survey. Any volunteering can be recorded alongside all the other activities in respondents' diaries. We suggest that volunteering be categorised as an activity that can be pulled out of the data.

   - The General Social Survey (NZGSS) is specifically designed to measure wellbeing using a mix of subjective and objective data. The inclusion of data about demographic distribution will be particularly useful. The GSS is a good source of information about volunteering, but it needs to be more consistent in its questionnaire so that comparisons can be made over time (for example, the 2014 survey appears to have no questions regarding unpaid work or volunteering). We suggest that the GSS questionnaire is standardised over time to include those questions relevant to volunteering that were asked in 2016 and that the survey designers test several questions in order to assess which questions are better. Given that Treasury will produce yearly reports as part of the Budget, best practice may necessitate an annual rather than a bi-annual survey.

- The Census is the most comprehensive survey in terms of participants, capturing the whole population of New Zealand. This has a question regarding time-use that includes volunteering. We ask that this continue.

- The Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account survey (NPISA) measures the substantial economic contribution that non-profit and volunteer organisations make to New Zealand. It also includes useful information about the types of voluntary work undertaken. We suggest that the NPISA survey continue, perhaps with more regularity.

- The Household Labour Force Survey has collected information about volunteering for the first time. The HLF survey is useful since it backs up findings from other surveys using a different collection method. We urge that it continue to ask about formal and informal volunteering.

4. CONCLUSION

Volunteering New Zealand supports the proposed framework and encourages the incorporation of volunteering and civic engagement. The feedback provided aims to help develop the concepts of social cohesion and trust within the context of volunteering and wider New Zealand society.

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