

Summary of Key Findings of “What works? A systematic review of research and evaluation literature on encouragement and support of volunteering”

The Department of Internal Affairs commissioned a systematic literature review to assist Lottery Grants Board and its distribution committees to make distribution decisions that are evidence-based, and to focus on the most effective interventions.

The literature review summarises academic and practitioner research and evaluation from New Zealand and overseas – mostly Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States – on what works to encourage participation in volunteering and support the management of volunteers. The review highlights research on volunteering in areas funded by Lottery Grants Board, for example, environment and heritage, and community and social services.

Over 1 million New Zealanders participate in volunteering and the government’s vision is that citizens will actively volunteer, be supported and valued. The term ‘volunteering’ is a European word and different cultures in New Zealand use other terms related to obligations and contributing to the common good which encapsulate similar actions (e.g. the Māori concept of *mahi aroha*). (see Box 1)

Box 1: Concepts of Volunteering in New Zealand

The Māori concept of <i>mahi aroha</i> : “Volunteering for Māori is based significantly upon the notion of <i>whanaungatanga</i> (kinship) and the benefits, both for the individuals and the wider community, derived from contributing to the common good.” (OCVS, 2007, p.1)	“Many ethnic people think of volunteering as the fulfilling of family and social obligations and responsibilities ... helping, sharing and giving, first to their own family ... their extended families ... ethnic communities and finally to the wider community.” (NZFEC, 2004, p.11)	Pacific peoples’ cultural activities are closely associated with concepts of serving, caring, sustaining community, and reciprocity. There is less a sense of enforceability than an acceptance that one is obliged to do an act, although these obligations are cultural obligations. (Tamasese, et al., 2010)
---	--	---

New Zealand’s Volunteering Policy commits government to valuing and celebrating volunteering and supporting volunteering initiatives. Strategies to address barriers and increase the number of people who are volunteering are often prompted by government policy. There are important roles for the sector-led national peak volunteering body (e.g. Volunteering New Zealand), as well as local Volunteer Centres; both agencies who support and promote volunteering and volunteer organisations. Initiatives typically target those groups seen as under-represented as volunteers. Four key strategies improve access to volunteering:

- addressing the image of volunteering;
- more and better sources of information about the range of possible activities;
- more specific activities aimed at boosting people’s confidence; and
- applying the principles of good volunteer management.

Volunteering activities are broad and many different forms are emerging as shown in Box 4.

Box 4: Emergent forms of volunteering and useful resources

Episodic volunteering

- Volunteering opportunities that are temporary (volunteering only for a short time), interim (volunteering on a regular basis but for a defined period, for example on a project) and occasional (those volunteering for short periods of service at regular intervals). Event volunteering, for examples festivals and sports events, are common forms of episodic volunteering.
- Further information: *Volunteering Australia’s Subject Guide to Event Volunteering – Take a Closer Look*. <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org>

Virtual, online or cyber-volunteering

- Online volunteering activities can often be done ‘any time, any place’ and minimise the barriers of time availability, geographical boundaries and physical limitations. They particularly appeal to young people, and those with a disability which restricts their mobility.
- Further information: The United Nations Online Volunteering Service <http://www.onlinevolunteering.org/>

<p>Corporate, workplace, employee or employer-supported volunteering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees are encouraged to volunteer by their employer (e.g. through flexible arrangements, unpaid or paid time off to volunteer, and employer-organised volunteering activities). These initiatives are often part of corporate social responsibility programs. • Further information: Volunteer Canada resources http://www.volunteer.ca/en/volcan/employ-support/ Do-It.org resources http://www.do-it.org.uk/wanttovolunteer/evsvolunteering • Involves two or more generations participating as volunteers in the same activity. This can be a strategy to engage volunteers who otherwise have caring commitments, although involving different age groups may increase organisational liabilities. • Further information: Volunteering Australia's <i>Subject Guide Volunteering: An opportunity for the whole family</i> http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org Volunteer Canada resources http://volunteer.ca/en/volcan/family/family 	

This literature review focuses on what works for managing formal volunteering carried out through the structure of an organization. This is a 'workplace' model for involving and managing volunteers, but it recognises that there is a diversity of volunteers and voluntary organisations.

Volunteers can go through a series of stages in their relationship with volunteering more generally, and in volunteering for a specific organisation. Each of the stages and the transitions between them has implications for how volunteers are encouraged, managed and supported most effectively. An individual can stall or exit from volunteering at any of the stages, however, organisations involving volunteers will typically want to progress them through the stages so they are retained as a committed and long-term volunteer. Katherine Gaskin's model of volunteer involvement has four stages moving from the non-volunteer to the long-term volunteer; these are the doubter, starter, doer, and stayer (see Table 1). The aim of the organisation and its volunteer infrastructure should be to help the individual through each transition stage of the model so they become involved, and then more involved.

Table 1: Stages in the Involvement of Volunteers

What Works?		A Model of Volunteer Involvement <i>Gaskin (2003) A Choice Blend</i>
Volunteering infrastructure and good volunteer management practices in organisations	Encouraging participation in volunteering and addressing barriers to volunteering	
	Recruiting volunteers	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The doubter is outside volunteering, and may have attitudes, characteristics or circumstances which keep them a non-volunteer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The starter has entered volunteering by making an enquiry or application.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The doer has committed to being a volunteer and begun volunteering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stayer persists as a long-term volunteer.
	Managing retention	

Organisational and Policy Issues in New Zealand

New Zealand research draws together these organisational and policy issues and reports what works in supporting Maori and Pacific volunteers. Box 7 summarises the key factors from the OCVS (2007) study and examples from Tamasese et al. (2010).

Box 7: What works in supporting Maori and Pacific volunteers

<p>What works for Maori in supporting <i>mahi aroha</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends and work associates committed to supporting <i>kaupapa</i> Maori. • Sympathetic employers who are flexible regarding <i>kaupapa</i> Maori work. • Good communication technologies which reduce the need for travel. • Supportive government/organisational policy (e.g. DIA Volunteering Fund, Te Puni Kōkiri
--

contracting guidelines which include *tikanga* Māori essentials (such as food for meetings), and the payment of *koha* and fees for advisory work (OCVS, 2007))

What works for Pacific communities? Some examples from Tamasese et al., 2010:

- At the Mataula Centre, volunteers are supported by being able to work as a Tokelaaun community where cultural values and way of life is important;
- At the Canterbury Fiji Social Services Trust volunteers are supported by a sense of belonging, being in relationship, and the mutual respect that comes from sharing cultural awareness;
- In developing a Tongan exhibition at the National Library, volunteers were able to fulfil their social obligations and nurture relationships. This *faifatongia* is central to the Tongan construction of self. They also valued working in partnership with the Library;
- For Samoans, the opportunity to contribute to the wellbeing of the *aiga* (extended family) made for successful volunteering because it contributes to one's own wellness;
- Keeping integrity with ancestors and with future generations is important.

Key success factors for the encouragement and support of volunteers

This section summarises key success factors which research and evaluation tell us work for encouraging and supporting volunteers. While the literature review included overseas and research, these findings have been supported by the available New Zealand research.

1. **Seeing the involvement of volunteers as a series of stages** - from non-volunteer to committed volunteer – helps organisations understand the process of managing volunteers. Good practice in the management of volunteers within organisations includes provision of volunteering infrastructure, recruitment, training, and retention strategies.
2. **What works to encourage participation in volunteering and address barriers to volunteering?**
 - Understanding that the motivations and barriers to participation vary, due to, for example, culture, life-stage and socio-economic factors);
 - Volunteers want flexibility and an enriching volunteer experience; and
 - In line with New Zealand's Policy on Volunteering, there is a role for government and peak sector bodies to promote a positive image of volunteers and volunteering opportunities and to support and value volunteers and good volunteer management practices.
3. **What works for volunteering infrastructure and good volunteer management practices in organisations?**
 - Adopting the elements of good volunteer management practice including: support and communication, insurance coverage, written policies and procedures, recruitment and screening, orientation and training for volunteers, risk management and recognition of volunteers;
 - Recognising however, that there is no single model of good volunteer management practice and the adoption of practices depends on the specific needs of different organisations and volunteer involvement (for example, some volunteers and organisations thrive on formalised practices, while others do not);
 - Investing the necessary resources (time and money) in volunteering infrastructure, including expense reimbursement (full or partial); and
 - Appointing a manager of volunteers and, where appropriate, paying them.
4. **What works to recruit volunteers?**
 - Targeted recruitment particularly to involve groups under-represented as volunteers (for example due to cultural differences)
 - Matching volunteers to the roles available in the organisation and screening out unsuitable volunteers;

5. **What works for orientating and training volunteers?**
 - Effectively responding to enquiries and creating a welcoming environment;
 - Directly approaching potential volunteers and involving current volunteers in recruitment; and
 - Advertising to raise awareness and promote the organisation and volunteering opportunities.
6. **What works for retaining volunteers?**
 - Understanding there are personal, organisational and contextual factors that contribute towards volunteers staying in an organisation;
 - Adopting management practices that enrich the volunteering experience and which are culturally and organisationally appropriate (e.g., matching, training and recognition activities);
 - Ensuring cost is not a barrier to volunteers' involvement;
 - Having an organisational culture that welcomes, values and respects volunteers and emphasises the cultural and social rewards of volunteering; and
 - Managing volunteers' exit from the organisation.

Box 5: Resources for volunteer management practice

Online resources

Volunteering Australia subject guides, research and training on involving:

- Young People
- Baby Boomers
- Volunteers with a Disability
- Volunteers from Diverse Cultural and Language Backgrounds
- Indigenous Australians
- Volunteers in Rural and Remote areas
- Families; <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org.au>

Energise Inc.; <http://www.energizeinc.com>

OZVMP (Australasian Volunteer Program Management); <http://www.ozvpm.com>

Volunteering England Good Practice Bank: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/Resources/goodpracticebank>

Australian Sports Commission People Management Resources: <http://www.ausport.gov.au>

Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) Toolkit for Clubs – Managing Volunteers <http://www.sparc.org.nz>

Books

Bowgett, K., Dickie, K. and Restall, M. (2002) *The Good Practice Guide: for everyone who works with volunteers* Volunteering England

Fryar, A., Jackson, R. and Dyer, F. (Eds), (2004) *Turn Your Organisation into a Volunteer Magnet*. OZVMP. Available: <http://www.ozvpm.com>

McCurley, S. and Lynch, R. (1998) *Essential Volunteer Management* Directory of Social Change.

Woods, M. (1998) *Volunteers: a guide for volunteers and their organisations*. Hazard Press.