

Volunteering New Zealand Election Manifesto 2020



Our inspiration

Mahi aroha and volunteering grows people, opens minds, opens hearts and creates joy.

Volunteering harnesses the collective energies of many for the benefit of all. Because we know that through growing others, we grow ourselves. And through connecting, we belong.

Through generosity and ngākau nui, big-heartedness, communities will be strong, be well, and be able to meet challenges and changes, both big and small.

Our call to action for political parties

We call on political parties to protect and grow the mahi aroha, volunteering effort and effect in Aotearoa New Zealand. Volunteering will generate the flows of wellbeing, public service, community building and social cohesion that are necessary for our communities to grow and thrive. Impactful volunteering is essential for the implementation of various policy agendas across many communities.

We are calling on political parties to commit to:

1. a minister for the community and voluntary sector that sits inside Cabinet
2. collaboratively rejuvenating the government policy on volunteering
3. funding a sector-led national strategy and action plan for volunteering
4. developing well defined, intentional policy positions/statements on volunteering.

Our reasoning

The COVID-19 response gave us a new reference point for the stunning outcomes that can be achieved when we work together. It surfaced and made explicit much of what we already know.

- ***Delivering on policy agendas relies on a partnership between the government and the voluntary sector.***

As clearly illustrated during the COVID-19 response, effective leadership and fast action by government was matched by mahi aroha, volunteers and communities across Aotearoa. The volunteer sector earned trust and mandate through its ability to read what was required on the ground. The voluntary sector moved rapidly on behalf of, in place of, and alongside government.

- ***Social capital is an asset that generates harmony and balance.***

Social capital builds social connections, a sense of unity, pro-social norms and values, pro-social behaviour and trust in institutions. Through generating a sense of belonging, volunteering is a proven contributor to social capital. It has also been shown to improve the social connections and the subjective well-being of both volunteers and communities. Highlighting the alignments of volunteering with the Living Standards Framework¹, this was clearly illustrated during the COVID-19 response as volunteers and communities rallied to help communities stay connected, get well, stay well and answer the call to unite.

- ***The Aotearoa New Zealand response to COVID-19 was not an accident.***

It was a product of the long tradition of manaakitanga, whanaungatanga and active citizenship that we embody as a nation. In fact, Aotearoa is currently number three globally in its voluntary participation². Nearly 50% of our citizens (50% of political parties' constituencies) volunteer formally (through organisations) or informally (outside of organisations). The value of formal volunteering in New Zealand's community and voluntary sector was estimated to be \$4.0 billion in 2018, with the sector's contributing to 4.2% of the GDP³. Protecting and growing the effort and effect of this workforce is not something to be left to chance.

WHERE THE NEXT GOVERNMENT CAN BUILD BETTER

1. PROTECT: By embedding social capital inside government decision-making

The driver: The volunteer workforce as an integral part of the economic and social fabric of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The mechanism: A minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector who sits inside Cabinet.

Our view: The Community and Voluntary sector is comprised of a diverse range of iwi, hapu and community organisations and it runs on mahi aroha, volunteering at the heart of Aotearoa New Zealand. It's contribution to the wellbeing of New Zealanders is immeasurable and it also makes a significant economic contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand's economy. The Community and Voluntary sector, hence, is essential in delivering on policy agendas and Volunteering New Zealand believes protecting and growing the volunteer workforce must be hardwired into the government's thinking and policymaking.

Mahi aroha, volunteering embodies manaakitanga and whakawhangatanga and by nature is place-based and decentralised. Covid-19 has highlighted a need for this multi-faceted contributor to have a greater voice in the policy environment.

A Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector that is within Cabinet empowers communities, mahi aroha and volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand, and better enables decision making that impacts on the sector. It enables a better partnership between our sector and key decision making in Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹ The Treasury, Our living standards framework [website], <https://treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

² Charities Aid Foundation. (2018). CFA World Giving Index 2018. A global view of giving trends.

³ Statistics New Zealand (2018), Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account (Wellington: Statistics New Zealand)

2. GROW: An intentional and impactful volunteer infrastructure that is flexible and able to notice and respond to community need

The driver: Growing and strengthening the social infrastructure scaffolding of mahi aroha and volunteering in all policy development and activities across all government departments and agencies.

The mechanism: Collaboratively rejuvenating the government policy on volunteering.

Our view: Government and the volunteering sector have shared objectives in ensuring that communities of Aotearoa flourish. Our mahi intersects. Government departments and agencies impact on the community and voluntary sector in multiple and intersecting ways across portfolios, votes and departments.

Moreover, various government departments overlap and impact on volunteering in multiple ways, through setting and implementing procedures, procurement, and funded programmes. It is vital that the government departments and agencies ensure that their policy development, operational activities and procurement processes do not adversely impact on volunteers.

Excellent volunteer management must also be embedded within the public sector. Employee volunteering, or volunteering leave, is a way of empowering role-modelling of community service and civic participation.

Collaboratively rejuvenating the government policy on volunteering will underline the importance of this intersection between mahi aroha and volunteering to services in Aotearoa New Zealand. It will enable government agents that deliver, fund and contract to be more intentional and impactful in their decision making. It enables better delivering on policy agendas impacting on the unpaid workforce. Strategic investment into mahi aroha and volunteering would be better enabled.

3. HARNESS and UTILISE: A volunteer infrastructure that is flexible and able to notice and respond to community need

The driver: Growing and strengthening the volunteer infrastructure (place, space, policies, programmes, funds) builds communities, civic behaviours, active citizenship and social cohesion. It enables our community sector to flourish.

The mechanism: A government funded sector-led national strategy and action plan for volunteering.

Our view: A national strategy and action plan on volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand would ensure that volunteering was supported in a strategic and co-ordinated way.

It would reduce barriers that prevent participation in volunteering, be that costs, social or cultural barriers, age or ethnicity.

Harnessing volunteering effort and impact cannot be left to chance. The world within which volunteering co-habits is continually changing. Recent data shows that the number of formal volunteers who support community organisations dropped by 200,000 between 2013-2018.

A national strategy and action plan would optimise social investment into mahi aroha and volunteering, and volunteering would be better supported to be accessible and resourced. Volunteers would be empowered, and organisations could harness and grow volunteering impact into the future.

There is an opportunity to protect and growing mahi aroha and volunteering as part of the future workforce bridges the gap between unemployment and work. It keeps people professionally relevant, connected and active.

4. PROTECT AND GROW: A vibrant and energised volunteer workforce that sees its effort and effect impacting positively on the lives of everyone.

The driver: The 50% of political party constituents that formally and informally volunteer expect to see their effort and effect protected and grown. They know their effort is central to bringing harmony and balance and joy to Aotearoa New Zealanders.

The mechanism: All political parties develop well defined, intentional policy positions/statements on volunteering.

Our view: New Zealand political parties do not have detailed policy statements around volunteering (with the Green party as an exception). Most parties only refer to the “community and voluntary sector” in their policy statements but none has a volunteering-specific policy. Detailed and specific policy positions by political parties for the Community and Voluntary Sector will ensure the significance of this sector is appropriately recognised.

CONCLUSION

Mahi aroha and volunteering effort plays a critical role in empowering our communities. As the kaitiaki of volunteering in Aotearoa New Zealand, Volunteering New Zealand empowers volunteers to enrich Aotearoa New Zealand. Our manifesto is a roadmap for a future where volunteers can meaningfully contribute to sustaining and transforming our communities.

Volunteering New Zealand is committed to working with the Government, departments and agencies to facilitate the implementation of this roadmap and to ensure that the volunteering sector, volunteering and mahi aroha are strong, resilient and thriving.