

Volunteering New Zealand sector feedback update 18 May

What is this report?

Volunteering New Zealand has captured the status and the contribution of the voluntary sector during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report summarises the key points extracted from volunteer-involving organisations weekly updates in the period ending at alert Level 2. The collected information helps VNZ understand the impacts of the pandemic on the sector. The resulting insight will be useful for the volunteering sector, stakeholders, government, and experts in order to portray the response of the voluntary sector to the pandemic, elaborate on the lessons learned from it, and to conduct future analysis, preparation, and action.

The impact on organisations

As expected, the pandemic/lockdown did have a significant impact on the operations of volunteer-involving organisations. It disrupted their business as usual and subjected them to unprecedented circumstances, challenges, opportunities, and issues. Here are the main points raised by organisations:

Issues and challenges communicated by volunteer-involving organisations

- Funding; uncertainty around future funding and fear of the unknown.
- Volunteer-involving organisations are concerned about volunteer growth and retention over the next 6-12 months.
- Volunteer-involving organisations are concerned that not all of their volunteers will return.
- Volunteer-involving organisations are currently unsure how Covid has impacted their volunteer base.
- Volunteer-involving organisations predict changes in service levels as some recipient organisations are not comfortable or able to safely operate in Level 2.
- Some volunteer organisations are still unable to carry out their core business even in Level 2.
- In Level 2 it is possible for 70+ year-old volunteers to return to the volunteer pool which requires planning and coordination.
- Volunteer-involving organisations expect to have a reduced number of volunteers due to life changes and peoples stress levels.
- Resuming volunteer activities in Level 2 for some organisations requires coordination with the receiving organisations to implement the required processes.

- Expected further decrease in the volunteer pool as students resume their studies, and more businesses start their operation under lower alert levels.
- Volunteering opportunities are significantly reduced.

Actions taken by volunteer-involving organisations

- Volunteer-involving organisations have started talking about the recovery phase and preparing for the future.
- VNZ is working collaboratively with 'Frank Advice' on articulating the value of the community and voluntary sector which can help the sector to talk more and better to government.
- Communication and cooperation with recipients of volunteering activities in order to implement the required processes.
- A working group exploring delivering shared online training in volunteer management has been created by the Volunteer Centre Network.
- Volunteer involving organisations have focused on developing their Employee Volunteering (EV) programs.
- NCMC, now the Operations Command Centre, has distributed the volunteering guidelines for Alert Level 2.
- Volunteer involving organisations have collaborated with councils, Civil Defence, and other groups who have been looking for volunteers.
- Organisations have continued planning for different and multiple scenarios.

Opportunities for volunteer-involving organisations

- Opportunity for Employee Volunteering (EV) will be particularly important in the aftermath of the pandemic.
- Opportunity to offer online training in volunteer management as there will be a growing need for this in the future.
- There is an opportunity for running a national campaign on remote or virtual volunteering.
- The pandemic and the recovery phase provide an opportunity for the voluntary sector to be recognised by the government and various Ministries.
- The increase in the number of unemployed people may provide an opportunity for the voluntary sector to engage with them.