
INCREASING AND PROMOTING VOLUNTEERING IN WELLINGTON

1. Purpose of report

This report highlights the value of volunteering in Wellington and its contribution to making the city a great place to live. Officers propose greater Council involvement in promoting volunteering, and seek to develop a strategy with an action plan. A strategy is likely to raise the profile of Council in this area and also raise public expectations.

The approach will include a set of principles to guide delivery; these are outlined in the paper.

2. Executive Summary

Wellington volunteers are passionate about their City. They are generous of their time and provide a significant benefit to the City and the way it feels and operates. They contribute to Wellington through a range of different activities. Council recognises this value and wants to develop a strategy and set of actions that makes it easier to volunteer in the right place and at the right time. We want to connect people with their interests and passions and make sure that the Council enhances opportunities to volunteer and add value to that experience. We want to ensure that this is harnessed and citizens get a greater opportunity to volunteer generating a personal and community benefit.

In discussions with Volunteering New Zealand, stake holders and across Council, it is clear that there is real benefit in making it easier to volunteer, and providing a structure for volunteer contributions to be recognised and valued in a way that recognises their contribution through ongoing coordination, support and generally striving to making it easier for them to do the things they are passionate about. Volunteers are looking for an enduring commitment to support their sizable investment of time and effort.

Councils in New Zealand have a range of approaches that guide how they deal with and manage volunteers. Some Councils focus on volunteer management. This paper proposes a wider approach of Wellington City Council promoting the value of volunteering with the Council acting as a facilitator and encouraging innovation and participation. This paper seeks direction as to whether Council wants to develop a volunteer strategy. It is likely that public expectations could rise significantly once further work is started, therefore direction from Council as to the scale of this work will allow expectation setting. This paper outlines the many benefits of volunteering to the city and the volunteers, and presents these benefits as rationale for action.

The paper also indicates the principles with which a strategy could be developed and identifies the possible action areas for influencing the prevalence of volunteering in Wellington.

We will look for ways the Council can act as a catalyst, and create partnerships with the wider society. This is an area where engagement with the community, particularly those that give so much time and feel passionately about volunteering will be of critical importance.

3. Recommendations

Officers recommend that the Strategy and Policy Committee:

1. *Receive the information.*
2. *Note initial stakeholder and internal engagement has highlighted a desire for a high profile City and Region wide approach to increase and promote volunteering.*
4. *Agree to progress this work stream and develop a volunteer strategy and action plan.*
5. *Establish a working party consisting of the Portfolio Leader, Community Engagement (Chair) and four other councillors to work with officers to develop the strategy and action plan.*
6. *Note that an external reference group will be established to test ideas for the strategy action plan as it is developed.*
7. *Note that funding implications will be identified as part of developing the strategy and action plan and identified for consideration through the annual plan process.*

4. Background

Introduction

Wellington is a great place to live work and play. Many people have a great deal of goodwill towards the city. We want to ensure that this is harnessed and citizens get the opportunity to volunteer in a way that matches their circumstances.

Volunteering provides benefits to the community and to the volunteers involved. The Council has an interest in looking at ways to:

- Maximise volunteering opportunities
- Ensure best practise volunteer management for an improved volunteering experience
- Promote city objectives

Volunteer potential – Wellington

Volunteering makes a huge contribution nationally and in Wellington. Over one million Kiwi volunteers gave an incredible 270 million hours to their communities. If this labour was valued at market wages the overall contribution of non-profits rises to \$6.95 billion (\$1 billion for Wellington Region) or 4.9 per cent of GDP – the same as the entire construction industry (StatsNZ). Volunteering time is a hugely valuable resource. This type of scale would benefit from an enduring strategy and action plan.

Wellington has a real potential to make the most out of volunteering for a number of reasons. For example Wellington has a high migrant (including internal migration) population who may enjoy the opportunity of becoming involved in their new city and meeting new people. Wellington is also a city that people genuinely feel passionate about, achieving a ranking of 13th most liveable city in 2012, with culture and environment one of the five categories determining the ranking. A focus on volunteering can only help increase the liveability of Wellington and can do so comparatively small financial investment.

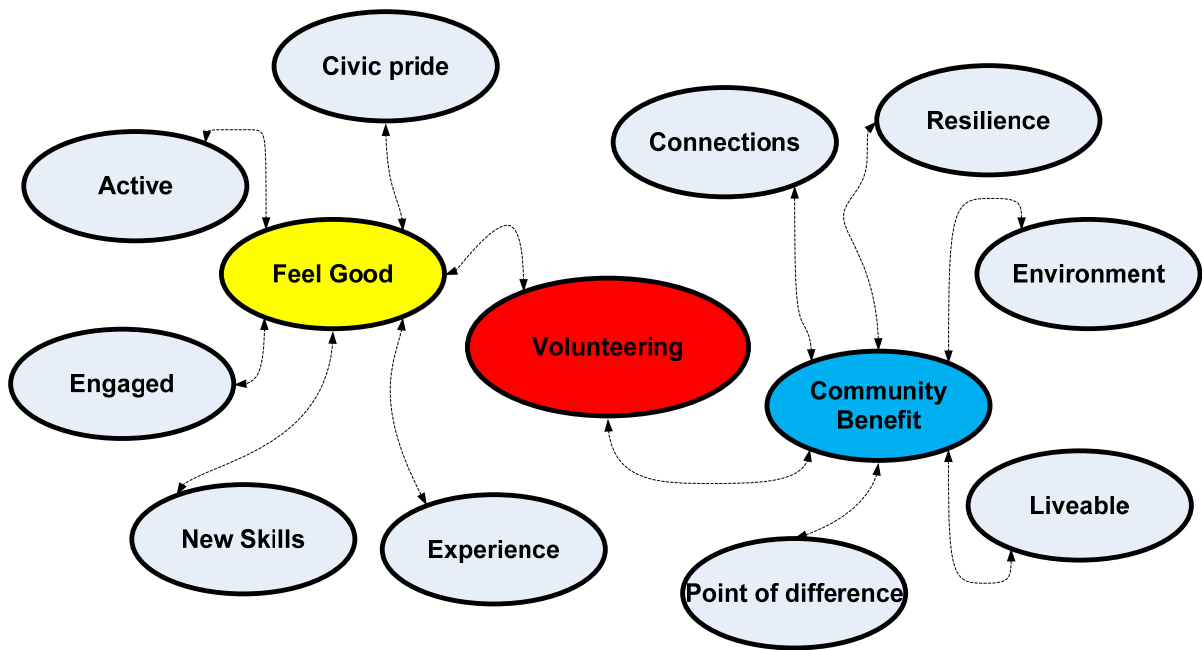
The wider population recognises the value of volunteering and tends to support and value those that contribute. A survey found that 55% of kiwis are loyal to companies that support a charity or local community. The Council already makes use of volunteer time in the provision of a number of services including in the Botanic Gardens, Civil Defence Centres, Community Centres, Emergency Response Team, Otari-Wilton's Bush, Reserves and Town Belt, and City Events. There is a great base to build on.

5. Discussion

Ongoing and future benefits to the City

Volunteering is a core part of the Wellington story about its liveability and attractiveness. There are strong benefits for both the volunteer and the community when people volunteer their time to worthy causes.

The diagram below seeks to capture these and present a rationale for why Council should be involved in promoting volunteering in Wellington.



Volunteer diversity and flexibility

Volunteer assistance comes in varying forms of commitment from those happy to contribute in the lead up to a specific event or willing to commit to a day of action such as tree planting through to those able to commit on an ongoing basis. Some volunteer to learn or implement new skills while others lend their commercial experience, such as an accountant who might look over the books of a sports club. Some people volunteer resources rather than their time.

A successful plan of action will require understanding these differences and making volunteering accessible. There may be many who are willing and able to make a commitment to a specific event while unable to make an ongoing commitment. Forms of commitment include:

- Event Specific
- Ongoing
- Corporate Skills
- Resources

To ensure any actions are well researched and likely to make a real difference, we will learn from current Wellington volunteering examples including: the Botanic Gardens, Civil Defence Centres, Community Centres, Emergency Response Team, Otari-Wilton's Bush, Reserves and Town Belt, and City Events. This will include looking at the pool of volunteers from past Wellington events and considering how they can and wish to be used in the future. In the parks area alone we have Four Park Rangers, and a Bio-diversity officer regularly working with and providing assistance to volunteers. Zealandia alone currently has 450 active volunteers.

We will also be learning from large successful uses of volunteering in New Zealand and overseas including: Pope’s Sydney Visit, Rugby World Cup, London Olympics, UK Big Society Network, and the Christchurch Student Army.

Principles guiding development

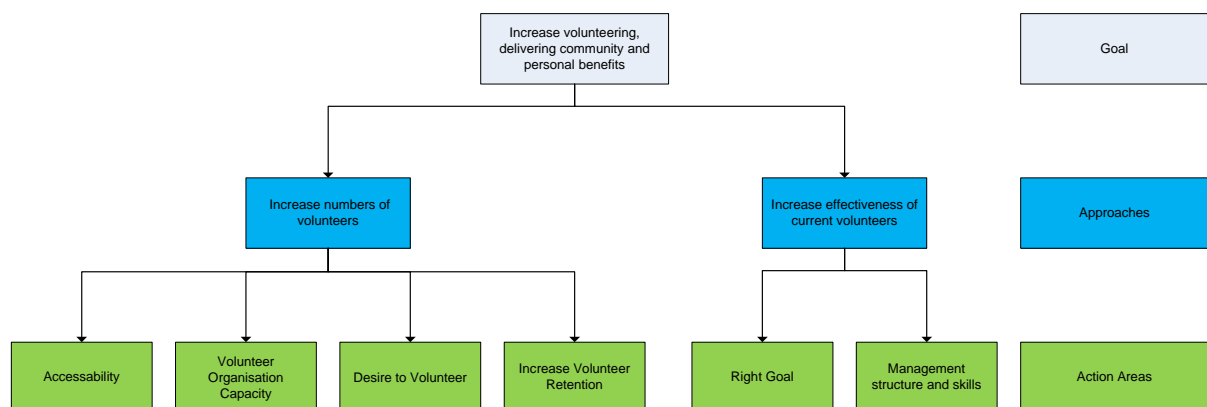
Out of initial discussions we have developed draft principles for how the Council should deal with volunteers; these can be used to guide further engagement and strategy development:

- Volunteer interactions with Council are positive and show our customer service philosophy
- Volunteer time is valued and supported
- Volunteer contributions to the city are recognised
- All areas where volunteering can help achieve the 2040 Vision are identified
- People are encouraged to take an active role in their communities
- We leverage support from our corporate citizens and seek mutual benefits that promote our ‘open for business’ mantra

We will look for ways the Council can act as a catalyst, and create partnerships with the wider society. This is an area where engagement with the community, particularly those that give so much time and feel passionately about volunteering will be of critical importance.

Action areas

The following diagram shows the full range of actions areas that we expect may contribute to the goal of increasing volunteering. Some of these areas may need no form of intervention, while concentrating on others may yield strong results. The list of action areas is intended to cover the full spectrum of possible interventions. Actions such as advertising volunteer opportunities or an IT solution that matches volunteers and opportunities might sit under ‘accessibility’ for example.



This paper seeks direction and certainty that Council wants a volunteer strategy/and or action plan as it is likely that public expectations could rise significantly once further work is started, therefore direction from Council as to the scale of this work will allow expectation setting.

Strategy direction

Increasing and promoting volunteering in Wellington will require a coordinated plan. A strategy is a plan for achieving a goal, in this case increasing volunteering. The formulation of a sound strategy facilitates a number of actions and desired results that would be difficult otherwise. A strategy clearly identifies how a goal can be met and sets out the actions to be followed. An action plan can set out a number of actions to be completed, essentially a list of actions.

The strategy and action plan can be co-developed with a councillor working party and an external reference group. The working party would guide development of the strategy complimented by an external reference group that can act as a board for testing ideas.

We propose that the board of Volunteer NZ act as an external reference group if they agree to do so; they have previously indicated that they would be keen to take on this kind of role.

We propose that a councillor working party is formed from the Community Engagement Portfolio and 3 other councillors.

Next steps include:

- Engaging further with the wider volunteer community including Volunteer Wellington, Volunteering New Zealand and others.
- Investigating possible actions and accessing their viability
 - As an example officers will be facilitating a workshop with businesses that have indicated a desire to encourage staff volunteering in the community and technological companies that may offer insights into a technological solution to matching volunteers with volunteer opportunities.
- Further engagement and direction from Council via the proposed Councillor working party

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

Consultation has included those that manage and work with volunteers across Council and volunteer networks in Wellington. Consultation is ongoing and at an early stage. This is an area where engagement with the community, particularly those that give so much time and feel passionately about volunteering will be of critical importance.

5.2 Financial considerations

No financial considerations. Any resourcing implications will be identified as part of developing the strategy and action plan and identified for consideration through the annual plan process.

5.3 Climate change impacts and considerations

No climate change impacts.

5.4 Long-term plan considerations

No long term plan considerations.

Contact Officer: *Andrew Stitt, Manager Policy*

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1) Strategic fit / Strategic outcome

The policy direction supports Council's overall vision of Wellington Towards 2040: Smart Capital. The policy direction supports creating a liveable city.

2) LTP/Annual Plan reference and long term financial impact

No long term financial impact

3) Treaty of Waitangi considerations

No Treaty of Waitangi considerations

4) Decision-making

This is not a significant decision. The report seeks a mandate and direction for further work.

5) Consultation

a) General consultation

Interested parties have been identified and consulted on possible actions. This process is ongoing.

b) Consultation with Maori

No specific Maori consultation

6) Legal implications

No legal implications

7) Consistency with existing policy

Any actions should be consistent with current policies.