

SUBMISSION following
Call for Input (CFI) on Key Aspects to be included in a
National Volunteering Strategy
(The closing date for submissions is Thursday, 14 February 2019.)

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SUBMISSION

Call for Input (CFI) on Key Aspects to be included in a National Volunteering Strategy

	Section 4: Definition of Volunteering
1	Should we adopt the White Paper definition or the European Union definition of volunteering? Is there a more appropriate definition which could be considered for the purpose of the strategy?
	Yes

	Section 5: Background on Irish Volunteering
2	Do you agree with the outline of the Department's role in volunteering? What additions or amendments would you suggest?
	yes

	Section 6: A Vision for the Future of Irish Volunteering
3	Do you agree with this vision for the purposes of this strategy? If not, what should our vision be?
	"A society that values and supports volunteering that contributes meaningfully to supporting vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities throughout Ireland."

	Section 7: Objectives of a Volunteering Strategy
4	What objectives for Irish volunteering should be set for the purposes of this strategy?
	<p>We believe that the strategic priorities of Volunteer Ireland are useful starting objectives for this strategy. We would also recommend the inclusion of an objective around 'supporting organisations that involve volunteers.</p> <p>Many of our member organisations are small voluntary led groups who are struggling to recruit and maintain volunteers and to comply with the bureaucracy around volunteering. To advance volunteering it is essential that community groups are encouraged and supported without restriction from overly bureaucratic requirements.</p>

	Section 8: The Volunteering Community
5	What is the role of the public in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?
	<p>In addition to the roles identified. From the perspective of a PPN we would suggest that there is another role that volunteers play: Ensuring that the voice of the community is heard, valued and supported in local decision and policy making that impacts the wellbeing of the community.</p>

6	What is the role of the VIOs in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?
	VIOs contribute to the creation of a vibrant community where there is a real sense of community and good community spirit. They are the means through which people can volunteer, get involved and work together for the benefit of the individuals and community.
7	Should the role of volunteer supporting infrastructure be expanded for the purposes of this strategy?
	No.
8	Is the current model adequate? If not, what volunteering infrastructure and funding model would best support the development of volunteering?
	Additional human resources available at VC level to provide more direct engagement and support with; VIOs, volunteers, and the community to promote volunteering and raise awareness of opportunities and the benefits of volunteering.
9	How can Volunteer Centres, Volunteer Ireland and PPNs work together to develop volunteering, active citizenship and participation in the community?
	Close collaboration across the organisations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to ensure the provision of clear accessible, information and procedures that support community participation and activation • to support and enable community groups to thrive and implement best practice in relation to volunteering
10	How can the Department facilitate co-operation between Volunteer Centres, Volunteer Ireland and the PPNs?
	The continuation of adequate funding to support the employment of the human resources required to enable close co-operation and the implementation of joint campaigns/events.
11	Are there other areas of research that could be included?
	How is bureaucracy, policy development, governance and administration impacting on grass roots volunteering?
12	What is the role of local authorities in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?
	The Local authority can play a key role in the vibrancy of the volunteer sector. They have a role to play in creating an environment and system that nurtures and values volunteering in their area. At a practical level this can be achieved by; being open to community input, ensuring access to local authority staff, funding opportunities and information. The local authority also has a role to play in facilitating active citizen participation in local decision and policy making through the adoption of open, accessible and transparent governance and procedures.
13	What is the role of central Government (outside the Department of Rural and Community Development) in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?
	Driving strategy development and implementation. Ensuring requirements and procedures in relation to volunteering are clear and accessible, and not overly restrictive and burdensome on VIOs. Review the current Garda Vetting procedures: to make it transferable across voluntary organisations, renew more regularly and simplify the renewal process. Ensuring that local supports for volunteering and VIO are adequately resourced.

	Lobbying the private sector businesses that provide services to VIO's e.g. Insurance, to ensure that it is appropriate and affordable. Remove barriers to volunteering for people on state welfare payments. Explore ways of incentivising volunteering e.g. tax incentives
14	How could the Department further facilitate engagement between the business sector and volunteering?
	Lobby the business sector to provide affordable and good value for money services to the volunteer sector.
15	What steps can the Department and other stakeholders take to enhance engagement with European and international partners in volunteering?
16	What other relevant stakeholders, if any, should be considered in developing a volunteering strategy to support volunteering in Ireland?

	Section 9: Governance and Funding
17	Do you agree with the approach outlined above? If not, please provide reasons.
	Yes – any developments that will help to streamline administration and reporting requirements would be a welcome development.
18	Do you agree with the approach outlined above? If not, please provide reasons.
	Yes – the move to multi-annual funding would enable improved planning and ultimately more efficient use of resources

	Section 10: Challenges to Volunteering
19	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering?
	Actions targeted at specific groups e.g. Youth, migrants, marginalised groups should be considered. Personalising and localising information will make it more relevant and accessible.
20	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities?
	As per Q 19
21	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage general participation in volunteering?
	A well-resourced community and voluntary sector and volunteering support infrastructure. Actions that demonstrate the real commitment to and value placed on volunteering. Clarity around responsibility and reassurance around risks/liability of volunteer. Clear accessible governance procedures should be developed to balance the necessity for volunteers devoting much of their time to governance and transparency issues while their

	real motivation is to focus on the community development work and its benefits for the local communities.
22	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage the participation of young people in volunteering?
	Consider the role that technology could play in encouraging young people in volunteering. Review Gaisce award Consider included volunteering in Junior Cycle programme.
23	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage the participation of marginalised groups in volunteering?
	Additional locally based resources, to create local environment where all citizens are enabled to actively engage in the development of their community. Ensure that there are no bureaucratic restrictions on volunteering for people who are in receipt of a state welfare payment, consider incentives to volunteer.

24	Should the strategy seek to focus on or identify particular marginalised group(s) to encourage their participation in volunteering?
	No, Strategy should focus on engagement with all citizens.
25	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to mitigate the risks posed by the changing demographic of volunteers?
	Continue to work towards making volunteering accessible e.g. Short-term volunteering opportunities, using technology – remote volunteering options, provide reassurance around risk/liability and ensure requirements are straightforward and not overly restrictive or bureaucratic.
26	What specific audiences should the national volunteering strategy focus on?
	The Strategy should be for all citizens. Specific objectives and actions could target specific audiences.
27	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage training and development opportunities for volunteers?
	Training and development opportunities should be accessible and flexible in structure to encourage engagement.
28	In what other ways can the Department support enhanced volunteer performance in Irish volunteering?
	Greater acknowledgement of the very important and significant role that volunteers made to our communities.
29	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage training and development opportunities for volunteer managers?
	In small and medium sizes VIOs many of the managers will also be volunteers. Training and development opportunities should be accessible and flexible in structure to encourage engagement.

30	What steps may be taken by the Department to support enhanced management performance in Irish volunteering?
	The provision of locally accessible training and the development of governance toolkits/templates for VIO.
31	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to address the perception of volunteering involving too large a commitment of time?
	Simplify the initial paperwork required to volunteer as this contributes to the perception of volunteering being time consuming before ever a person gets to undertake voluntary work. Review Garda vetting process as outlines in Q13. Highlight the variety and flexibility of volunteering options available, including the micro-volunteering option.
32	Should a volunteering code of conduct for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) be developed and implemented? What should this code include?
	Yes. The code should include clear accessible information, procedures and templates that will support VIOs to engage and maintain voluntary community participation and activation. The code should also include information and resource materials that will highlight the value and recognition of the contribution of the volunteer possibly in the form of a volunteer charter template that would provide clarify around role and responsibilities and serve to reassure volunteers.
33	Should a potential Irish code of conduct for volunteers and VIOs be mandatory or optional? Who would regulate it?
	Optional initially, with support provided to VIO to encourage and enable engagement and compliance with the Code. Longer term decision would then be based on review of optional code.
34	What particular challenges are facing smaller volunteer involving organisations and how can the Department assist?
	<p>In our experience through talking to our members, most of which are smaller VIOs, we have found that while they fully recognise and appreciate the importance of good governance, best practise and transparency, they are finding current procedures to be a burden as they are diverting much needed volunteer hours away from local community activities. Groups are struggling to find the time to a) understand what is required of them and b) complying with the requirements. We are hearing that this is having severe impacts on voluntary community groups and their work. In some cases, this is curbing community activity completely and in others we have heard of groups using their scarce funds to buy the expertise or training to enable them to become compliant. At best, this is taking much needed funds and volunteer time from providing the benefits that were intended for communities and at worst it is posing a real threat to the vision for sustainable communities and the willingness of people to volunteer.</p> <p>We would suggest that the Department carry out a risk assessment to identify and measure the impact that current governance procedures are having on smaller VIOs. If, as our anecdotal evidence suggests, this shows that they are strangling community work and activities, then clear accessible procedures should be developed to balance the necessity of governance and transparency with the importance of community development work and its benefits in local communities.</p>

	The cost of adequate insurance cover also continues to be an issue for many smaller VIO. Could the government lobby the insurance industry and work with them to implement a national affordable insurance scheme for Community Groups.
35	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to facilitate QQI assessment of volunteers for the purposes of accrediting skills?
36	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage the creation of volunteering opportunities?
	A commitment to supporting and resourcing all VIOs to continue to enable all citizens to actively engage in their communities without being restricted by overly bureaucratic systems.
37	What other significant challenges to volunteering should be considered as part of this strategy? How can they be addressed?
	Ensuring that both Local and National decision-making structures seek to develop and implement real meaningful connections with the voluntary sector, which enables this sector to contribute to decision making and policy development. The PPNs are working with community groups to increase their capacity and interest in connecting with local and national government. However, practical issues including for example: timing of meetings to facilitate volunteers to attend, timing in relation to the circulation of public consultation and meeting agendas to allow volunteers to consult with the community sector and compile feedback.
38	Are there any further challenges, strategic objectives and actions that you feel should be included in a national volunteering strategy?

	Section 11: Monitoring, Measuring and Evaluating the Impact of Volunteering
39	What criteria should be used to assess our progress in assessing the impacts of volunteering?
40	What criteria should be used to gauge success in delivery of the National Volunteering Strategy?
	While figures around numbers and specific groups volunteering as outlined in the Call for Input document will help gauge success in the delivery of the Strategy. Cross cutting themes including for example: the experience of volunteers and VIOs may also be important indicators of success.

	Section 12: Proposed National Advisory Group on Volunteering
41	Do you agree that a National Advisory Group is the most suitable vehicle to drive this strategy forward?

	Yes
42	Who should participate in a National Advisory Group?
	<p>The group should include stakeholder:</p> <p>Volunteer Centre Managers</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>Representatives of VIOs</p> <p>A representative of the PPNs on this Group would provide a useful link to this other structure that exists nationally to support all Community based groups.</p>
43	How broad should the terms of reference (TOR) be for the proposed Advisory Group or other mechanism found suitable to drive this strategy forward?
44	Does any better mechanism exist to drive this strategy forward?
	Volunteer Centre Managers and resources are key.