

**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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**All materials received by the Department will be subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. This means that all materials submitted during the CFI could be released to a wider audience on request. If you wish to claim exemption from the Act please state this case in your submission along with the justification for so doing.**

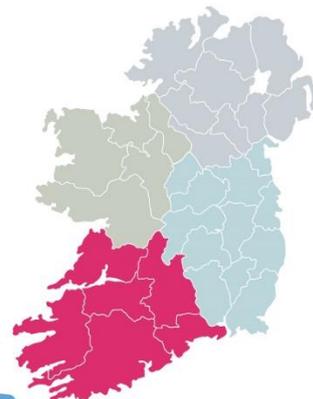
# Munster Volunteer Centres

## Call for Input Summary

### WHAT WE HEARD?



- + Fear of Governance & Regulation
- + Urban and Rural challenges differ
- + Volunteers do not feel valued
- + Volunteer burn out and wellbeing is a real issue
- + Lack of funding is limiting service provision
- + Restricted access to locally delivered support and information
- + Frustration with Garda Vetting
- + Limited Volunteer Management Capacity across the province



### WHERE WE HEARD IT?



- + **31** Focus Groups across Munster
- + Attended by **321** people
- + **224** responses to the national survey (33% of the total)

### HOW WE HEARD IT?



- + Structured and formalised approach to regional workshops
- + Support documentation for facilitators
- + Province wide plan
- + Joint Social Media campaign
- + Dedicated website

### WHAT SHOULD THE STRATEGY INCLUDE?



- + A robust volunteering infrastructure
- + A national volunteering awareness campaign
- + Assistance to small organisations
- + Proportionate governance and legislative requirements for C&V groups
- + Fairness across the urban / rural divide
- + Opportunity for feedback into the implementation of the strategy



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

Supported by The Department of Rural and Community Development

In response to the Department of Rural and Community Development call for input into the Volunteering Strategy, Cork Volunteer Centre undertook the following actions;

- Collaborated with other **Volunteer Centres in Munster** to engage with volunteers and volunteer involving organisations across the region to have their say (see infographic on previous page).
- Cork Volunteer Centre hosted **6 focus groups** across the city and county (Cork City x 2, Clonakilty, Mallow, Mitchelstown and Youghal) to obtain the views of the volunteers and volunteer involving organisations we represent. Almost, **60 people** representing Clonakilty Community Care, Clonakilty Resource Centre, Right of Place Cork, Hour TimeBank GLG, Bantry Historical Society, Clonakilty Wellbeing, Cork ETB, Dunmanway Access Group, the RNLI, Foroige, Cork Simon Community, Good Sheperd Cork, the Irish Wheelchair Association, Cork Film Festival, Cork City Partnership, The Next Step, the Special Olympics, Cork Cycling Festival, Irish Platform for Patients' Organisations, Kinsale Harbour Festival, Friends of Saint Finbarr's Hospital, Cork Community Art Link, Lombardstown Community Council, University College Cork, Mallow Community Council, Cork Environmental Forum, Citizens Information, Cork County PPN, Avondhu Blackwater Partnership, Cloyne Diocesan Youth Services, Youghal Credit Union, Cork Gay Project, Youghal Health Project, Waterford VIS, Cork County Library, Mitchelstown Credit Union, Mitchelstown Community Council, Mitchelstown Heritage Society, Mitchelstown Community Games, Girl Guides, attended these events. As you can see, representatives were from local, county and national organisations. In addition, the note takers and facilitators at these events were mainly volunteers themselves.
- A **survey** was circulated nationally by Volunteer Ireland to volunteers and volunteer involving organisations on I-Vol. **353 representatives from Volunteer Involving Organisations** completed this survey, along with **534 volunteers**.
- Cork Volunteer Centre itself has **4 staff members, 1 Community Employment Scheme, 1 Tus Scheme** and approximately **10 volunteers**. In addition, Cork Volunteer Centre has **8 volunteers on its board of management**.
- Furthermore, on specific questions Cork Volunteer Centre consulted representatives from **Cork City PPN, Cork County PPN and Cork City and County Council**.
- Cork Volunteer Centre staff members attended the **Volunteer Centres Managers Network annual conference** on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> February 2017 held in response to this call for input.

**The views outlined in this submission represent the views of all listed above.**

## SUBMISSION

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

	<b>Section 4: Definition of Volunteering</b>
1	<p>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?</p>
	<p>Given the large number of people consulted, opinions varied extensively on this question. Below represents a summary of the opinions given.</p> <p><b>White Paper Definition</b></p> <p>Of the focus group participants, 19 preferred the White Paper Definition. 54% of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations surveyed by Volunteer Ireland preferred this definition.</p> <p>City focus group participants felt that this definition was dismissive and derogatory. Participants also mentioned that it was devoid of warmth. Mitchelstown participants described this definition as dismissive, defunct and insulting (in that it emphasised cheap or free labour). They felt that mentioning expenses was inappropriate. Participants also felt that the wording of the definition was confusing in particular, the punctuation around the wording ‘outside of the family, environment etc.’ reads that volunteering does not include the environment. Youghal also emphasised the point about the wording of the sentence.</p> <p>On a positive note, in Clonakilty, this definition was described as more inclusive, and easier to understand. While in Youghal and Mallow participants liked that it was concise, to the point, clearer and more simplistic.</p> <p><b>European Definition</b></p> <p>Of the focus group participants, 34 preferred the EU definition. 42% of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations surveyed by VI preferred this definition.</p> <p>It should be noted that there was a significant anti EU sentiment at one of the rural focus groups. Many felt that they did not want the EU to tell them what to do. Negative comments included that this definition was too long (Youghal), long winded, clinical and cold, inaccessible language. (Mallow)</p> <p>However, a substantial amount of people felt that the European definition incorporated most elements of volunteering. Focus group participants in Cork City liked that it was so comprehensive and recognised different types of volunteering. City focus group participants felt the word solidarity was important. In Mitchelstown participants liked that this definition emphasised free will, motivation, and that it had a broader sense of</p>

appreciation for volunteering. In Clonakilty, participants were keen on the wording journey and solidarity and that this definition acknowledges that informal volunteering occurs. Generally focus group participants felt positive about the wording undertaken of a persons own free will. One particularly wily participant noted that if we align ourselves with this definition we might be better able to access EU funding. In Youghal, they liked that this definition was clearly presented in bullet points. Participants in Youghal also liked that 'without financial gain' was emphasised. This definition was described as more inspiring, and capturing the broader nature of the community sector. While in Mallow , it was noted that this definition was clear and had no ambiguity. Across all focus groups, many participants also noted that they liked that this definition specifically mentioned community and voluntary groups.

### **Other**

Of the focus group participants, 8 put forward some sort of definition of their own. The following are some of the items that participants felt should be included in a definition of volunteering;

- Should emphasise Irish kindness
- Both definitions above fail to recognise that volunteering assists the government in filling a gap in services, government relies on volunteers to provide services but don't support them enough (Cork City). Clonakilty also noted that volunteering is a response to a practical need.
- The EU definition could emphasise social inclusion aspects to volunteering (Clonakilty).
- The definition should focus more on the individual (City)
- Plain English should be used.
- Alternatively, more passion should be emphasised.

Only 6% of survey participants felt that another definition of volunteering should be used.

As an opening exercise at all the Cork focus groups, participants were asked to write the first three words that came to mind when they thought of volunteering. The most frequently mentioned words were; Time (15 instances); Community and Helping Others (12 instances each), commitment (10 instances); support (7 instances); Friendship and interesting (5 instances each); Contribution, Rewarding and Funding (3 instances each); connecting people, thankless, sharing, feel good, wanted (2 instances each); essential, interest, free, challenging, available, citizenship, personal, important, making a difference, inspiration, participation, free choice, satisfaction, knowledge, engagement, enjoyable, accountability, responsibility, brilliant, scarce, fulfilling, essential, kindness, challenge, and hope; all appeared once.

### **Recommendation**

Cork Volunteer Centre suggests that the above words and phrases should be noted as important if the strategy utilises a definition of volunteering other than the White Paper or the EU definition.

	<b>Section 5: Background on Irish Volunteering</b>
2	Do you agree with the outline of the Department’s role in volunteering? What additions or amendments would you suggest?
	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre welcomes this call for input and agrees that the role of the Department of Rural and Community Development in relation to volunteering should be;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing policy</li> <li>• Supporting the development and growth of volunteering, and</li> <li>• Providing funding and other supports to enable the development of volunteering infrastructure.</li> </ul> <p>When asked What else can the Government do to better support volunteering in Ireland the following represents the views of the 524 volunteers who completed Volunteer Ireland’s survey on the call for input;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 59% suggested more funding for parts of the volunteering support infrastructure, like Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Ireland</li> <li>• 64% suggested more funding for programmes within organisations that involve volunteers</li> <li>• 50% suggested more promotion of volunteering.</li> <li>• 39% suggested better legal protections for volunteers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department should take a stronger role in the promotion of volunteering nationally.</li> <li>• Provision of more funding for the volunteering support infrastructure.</li> </ul>

	<b>Section 6: A Vision for the Future of Irish Volunteering</b>
3	Do you agree with this vision for the purposes of this strategy? If not, what should our vision be?
	<p>Of the volunteers and volunteer involving organisations who completed Volunteer Ireland’s survey on the call for input 94% agreed with the Departments proposal for the vision for the purposes of the strategy.</p> <p>Focus group participants wanted the vision to emphasise building and maintaining a culture of volunteering throughout all sectors of Irish society. Many focus group participants also felt that a vision statement around the value of volunteers was important.</p>

	<b>Section 7: Objectives of a Volunteering Strategy</b>
4	What objectives for Irish volunteering should be set for the purposes of this strategy?
	<p>Of the volunteers and volunteer involving organisations who completed Volunteer Ireland’s survey on the call for input over 97% agree with the Departments suggestion for the strategy objectives.</p> <p>The focus group participants also felt that these objectives are vital and had some suggestions as to how these objects should be met as follows;</p> <p><b>Advancing volunteering</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in promotional activities to increase the knowledge of the benefits of volunteering.</li> <li>• Set up a specific programme for schools.</li> </ul> <p><b>Supporting the volunteering infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise that volunteering is not just the remit of one department.</li> <li>• Streamline vetting processes and procedures.</li> <li>• Volunteering shouldn’t displace paid employment and other initiatives or social economy companies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Supporting volunteering and volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers should be enabled to volunteer regardless of social welfare status.</li> <li>• Provide adequate resources for training and supports for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations to recruit, retain and manage and support volunteers.</li> <li>• Provide supports and training to volunteer involving organisations to build on their capacity to deal with governance and regulatory issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>Celebrating volunteering</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequately resource local celebratory events to recognise the contribution of volunteering in local communities.</li> <li>• Acknowledge the value of volunteering to the state.</li> <li>• Recognise that volunteer involving organisations provide essential services that the government fails to provide.</li> </ul>

	<b>Section 8: The Volunteering Community</b>
5	What is the role of the public in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?
	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre agrees that the role of the public in relation to volunteering should be seen as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being volunteers</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefiting from volunteering services</li> <li>• Providing services to the community and</li> <li>• Funding volunteering organisations</li> </ul> <p>However, the Department should also recognise the important role that volunteers play in managing voluntary organisations as members of Boards of Management. Members of the public build the capacity of organisations through their skills, experience and expertise.</p>
6	<p>What is the role of the VIOs in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?</p> <p>Volunteer involving organisations recruit, manage, train and support volunteers. However, it should be recognised that some volunteer involving organisations, in particular, smaller organisations, have no paid employees. Therefore, volunteers themselves recruit, manage, train and support other volunteers. They also bear huge responsibility in relation to financial controls, governance and Garda vetting.</p>
7	<p>Should the role of volunteer supporting infrastructure be expanded for the purposes of this strategy?</p> <p>Cork Volunteer Centre agrees that Volunteer Information Services should be brought up to the status of Volunteer Centres in every county. However, it is extremely important for the Department to note that some existing Volunteer Centres are not currently adequately funded to properly engage in all of the activities they are contracted to do by the Department.</p> <p>It is imperative that existing support structures are adequately resourced before the Department considers setting up additional structures. Interestingly, of the 524 volunteers surveyed by Volunteer Ireland, 70% stated that they thought the current volunteer support infrastructure works well.</p> <p>More interestingly, 67% of volunteer involving organisations registered with Volunteer Centres were happy with existing structures but only 47% of unregistered organisations surveyed felt that the existing volunteer support infrastructure works well. To follow on from that question, 56% of respondents representing VIOs felt that there should be more funding for the existing infrastructure, and more particularly, that there should be more funding for volunteer programmes within organisations that involve volunteers (76%).</p>
8	<p>Is the current model adequate? If not, what volunteering infrastructure and funding model would best support the development of volunteering?</p> <p>The existing funding model is not adequate, nor is it consistent, clear or transparent. Funding is currently provided to Volunteer Centres in a very ad hoc manner with no clear justification why some Volunteer Centres receive vastly larger sums than others. Funding is based on historical arrangements rather than population size or density, geographical area, outreach priorities or achievement of key performance indicators.</p>

	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre currently serves the largest geographical area in the country, which consists of both a large urban and rural population. It should be noted that for the same geographical area there are two PPNs and two Local Authorities. However, when comparing the budget allocation of Cork Volunteer Centre to other Volunteer Centres with smaller geographical areas and less dispersed populations, it is very difficult to justify our current allocation. As a result of our current budget allocation, the number of staff we have to serve the entire county is disproportionate with salaries are lower than recommended in the McLaughlin (2017) report due to high expenditure on other items such as rent.</p> <p>McLaughlin (2017) made numerous recommendations in relation to the funding of Volunteer Centres. This valuable report set a minimum funding requirement for Volunteer Centres to function as €120,000 per annum. However, it also argued that additional funding above this level should take into account factors such as geographic reach, population size, density and levels of deprivation. This report pointed out that in 2016 Cork received the lowest funding per capita for the entire country. Cork Volunteer Centres allocation for 2019 is merely €123,800. Our actual running costs for the year will be approximately €170,000. Other sources of income we receive for training and Garda vetting cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, operational planning of our services can be very difficult. For example, we can plan for outreach activities but we may not be able to deliver them in the final quarter of the year if we do not have enough income.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b> Provide a clear and transparent funding model for Volunteer Centres based on factors outlined above.</p>
9	<p>How can Volunteer Centres, Volunteer Ireland and PPNs work together to develop volunteering, active citizenship and participation in the community?</p>
	<p>It should be noted that while there are many opportunities for collaboration between Volunteer Centres and PPNs, they are very different entities, with different functions/remits and as such should retain their independence from each other.</p> <p>With this in mind, Cork Volunteer Centre provides services to all of Cork City and County. However, there are two PPNs for Cork. Cork Volunteer Centre is engaged in a hosting arrangement for Cork City PPN. Cork City PPN is located in the same building as Cork Volunteer Centre and employment of Cork City PPN staff is hosted by Cork Volunteer Centre. Cork County PPN is located within Cork County Council. Both were consulted for this call for input. After consultation with both Cork PPNs, Cork Volunteer Centre envisages activities such as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross promotion of each other’s work/activities.</li> <li>• Collaboration on the provision of training to organisations to avoid duplication.</li> <li>• Engaging with marginalised communities across the county.</li> </ul>

10	How can the Department facilitate co-operation between Volunteer Centres, Volunteer Ireland and the PPNs?
	<p>In the funding and development of policy for the Community and Voluntary sector, the Department should continue to expressly provide for and acknowledge the distinct identity, autonomy and value that both PPNs and Volunteer Centres can bring.</p> <p>Volunteer Centres have responsibility for volunteering and placement, along with the development and promotion of volunteer activities. The PPNs were developed as a representative arrangement for local government. There is a clear distinction in roles and functions.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteer Centres and PPNs should collaborate and cross promote but should remain independent of each other.</li> <li>• Volunteer Centres and PPNs should be adequately funded by the Department to engage in collaborative activities.</li> </ul>
11	Are there other areas of research that could be included?
	<p>Since its inception, Cork Volunteer Centre has a long history of engaging in research. In 2001, a report entitled ‘Supporting the Volunteer Community in Cork’ was authored by Staunton and O’Haodain. This report assessed the extent and nature of volunteering in Cork; the changes affecting volunteering as experienced by voluntary organisations in Cork and assessed the need for a Volunteer Bureau (as it was then called) in the Cork area. The report found that there was a need for a Volunteer Bureau in the Cork area and that such a bureau should undertake the following functions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting volunteers</li> <li>• Establish and maintain links with voluntary organisations for the promotion of volunteering</li> <li>• Support and training of volunteers</li> <li>• Supporting voluntary organisations</li> <li>• Promoting the benefits of volunteering</li> <li>• Influence government policy in relation to volunteering.</li> </ul> <p>It should be noted for this strategy that while this research was conducted in 2001, many of its findings are still extremely relevant to the drafting of a strategy on volunteering, almost 20 years later.</p> <p>On a <b>national/governmental level</b>, Cork Volunteer Centre recommends that the Central Statistics Office record the overall rate of volunteering in the country.</p>

	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre, partnered with UCC and the other Volunteer Centres in Munster, currently has applied for funding from the <b>Irish Research Council</b> for a project on rural volunteering. The project will identify the challenges volunteer involving organisations face in recruiting and retaining volunteers indifferent areas/sectors; explore the impact of low levels of recruitment on volunteer involving organisations and communities; and identify strategies to promote volunteering. It is hoped that the findings will inform submissions to the draft National Volunteering Strategy. The project will support the work of Volunteer Centres and volunteer involving organisations, and contribute to national policy-making. If successful, funding will be available from April and the project will commence shortly thereafter.</p> <p>The question of research came up in the <b>focus groups</b> where the need to conduct more research into the motivations of volunteers was emphasised. Participants felt that answering the question of why individuals volunteer in the first place, but also importantly, what keeps them volunteering, was essential in order to drive the content of national campaigns and promotional materials.</p> <p>More research needs to be undertaken on the impact of <b>regulation and governance</b> requirements on smaller volunteer only organisations. In particular, how this might lead to some organisations no longer existing due to lack of capacity to deal with these legal requirements. The focus groups held across Cork City and County emphasised the support needs of smaller organisations. It is clear that with more adequate resources, Cork Volunteer Centre is uniquely placed to provide these supports.</p> <p>Volunteer Ireland asked participants representing volunteer involving organisations their views on the type of research that should be conducted into volunteering and the top responses were as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social return on investment of volunteering 60%</li> <li>• What are the main challenges facing volunteer involving organisations in terms of volunteering and how can these be overcome 54%</li> <li>• How can volunteering contribute to <b>social inclusion</b> goals for groups like migrants, the unemployed or young people 49%</li> </ul> <p><b>Overall</b> Cork Volunteer Centre recommends that the Department funds and promotes research on all aspects of volunteering in Ireland as there is a clear gap in the literature on this jurisdiction.</p>
12	What is the role of local authorities in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?
	<p>In Cork, we are fortunate to have a constructive relationship with both of our local authorities and have been actively involved in collaborating on projects in relation to funding. We have existing partnerships with local authorities in relation to tidy towns initiatives and senior alerts schemes in local communities. Local authorities directly benefit from volunteer input on events such as culture night and arts festivals. Local authorities directly support Volunteer</p>

	<p>Centres with funding as part of their community development remit and work closely with Volunteer Centres to deliver social inclusion goals.</p> <p>Respondents to Volunteer Irelands survey from volunteer involving organisations felt that other stakeholders such as local authorities play an important role in supporting volunteering in Ireland in the following ways;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding specific projects that support volunteering 63%</li> <li>• Providing oversight or regulation 27%</li> <li>• Encouraging staff to volunteer 63%</li> <li>• Providing skilled volunteers e.g. on boards of management 64%</li> <li>• Using their position to raise awareness of volunteering 72%</li> </ul>
13	<p>What is the role of central Government (outside the Department of Rural and Community Development) in volunteering for the purposes of this strategy?</p>
	<p>Volunteering impacts on the delivery of services for almost all central government departments (Kinsella, 2018). This needs to be recognised and celebrated. All government Departments should be engaged formally in this strategy. Furthermore, at one focus group it was suggested that the government should consider putting the word volunteering into the title of a government department. This would give a clear signal that the value of volunteering is recognised. Clonakilty focus group suggested that a volunteering strategy should be embedded into a rural development strategy, as the two are so intertwined. They felt that, for example, some services in rural communities would not exist without volunteers, and volunteers cannot volunteer without essential rural infrastructure such as transport links and adequate broadband.</p> <p>While Cork Volunteer Centre agrees that all government departments should be involved in a strategy on volunteering, some departments are more relevant than others as follows;</p> <p><b>Department of Justice and Equality</b> – needs to do more work to streamline Garda vetting processes and procedures as all focus groups indicated that Garda vetting is a significant barrier to volunteering.</p> <p><b>Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection</b> – remove barriers to volunteering for jobseekers recipients and actively encourage volunteering as a means of rehabilitation for those on illness and disability payments.</p> <p><b>Department of Education and Skills</b> – to be directly involved in educational programme around volunteering at primary school level, as research demonstrates again and again the importance of developing a volunteering mind-set in children. The need for a dedicated educational programme in primary and post primary schools was emphasised by all the focus groups held in Cork City and County.</p> <p><b>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</b> – work with DRCD to identify a clear rationale for funding the existing volunteer support infrastructure.</p>

14	How could the Department further facilitate engagement between the business sector and volunteering?
	<p>All of the activities listed in the call for input paper could assist with facilitating engagement between the business sector and volunteering.</p> <p>However, Cork Volunteer Centre feels that a number of <b>additional actions</b> should be considered as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the capacity and role of Volunteer Centres to engage with local businesses to support their local communities, through adequate resourcing.</li> <li>• Provide incentives to public and private sector employers to allow employees take paid time off work to engage in volunteering activities during work time. It was suggested at one of our focus groups that if the government provided incentives for one paid day off per year to employees to engage in volunteering, the message it would send would be phenomenal. This is in the context of a decreased pool of available volunteers due to increasing employment rates.</li> </ul>
15	What steps can the Department and other stakeholders take to enhance engagement with European and international partners in volunteering?
	<p>The following are <b>suggestions</b> to increase engagement with European and international partners in volunteering. Please note that all of these suggestions require adequate resourcing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and fund exchanges and twinning arrangements</li> <li>• Learning and best practice visits for models of good practice across EU and further afield.</li> <li>• Fact finding visits and exchanges</li> <li>• Student exchanges for volunteer projects</li> <li>• Cross border research projects</li> </ul>
16	What other relevant stakeholders, if any, should be considered in developing a volunteering strategy to support volunteering in Ireland?
	<p>The answer outlined in Question 13 noted the importance of other relevant central government departments in relation to a national strategy on volunteering. Cork Volunteer Centre agrees that local authorities, the private sector, academics and research organisations, the Charities Regulator Authority and European and international partners can play a vital role in volunteering in Ireland.</p> <p>However, we note that other relevant stakeholders might include;</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Health Service Executive</b> as funders of projects across the community and voluntary sector and to collaborate on projects emphasising the health benefits of volunteering.</li> <li>• <b>Tusla</b> in relation to child protection policies.</li> <li>• The <b>Probation Service</b> to emphasise the potential rehabilitative aspects of volunteering.</li> </ul>
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	<b>Section 9: Governance and Funding</b>
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17	Do you agree with the approach outlined above? If not, please provide reasons.
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	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre agrees with the statement that multi-agencies provide funding to various types of voluntary organisations that provide supports and services. In an ideal world, one source of funding for all voluntary activity would be very clear and transparent but that would create problems for the sector due to its diversity. For example, Cork Volunteer Centre provides support for organisations engaged in sporting activities, arts and culture, community development and housing, law and advocacy, information advice and guidance, education, animal welfare and the environment to name but a few. Therefore, it is appropriate that funding is received from diverse sources.</p>
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18	Do you agree with the approach outlined above? If not, please provide reasons.
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	<p>YES. Cork Volunteer Centre agrees with the proposal that multi-annual funding is the approach that should be utilised in the sector for the following reasons;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisations can engage in longer-term strategic planning</li> <li>• Employees have stability and security and staff retention would increase.</li> </ul> <p>However, this approach should only be engaged in when funding is based on clearly defined and transparent metrics.</p>
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	<b>Section 10: Challenges to Volunteering</b>
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19	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to raise awareness of the benefits of volunteering?
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	<p>Again the suggestions outlined in this question have a very national focus. There is no mention of <b>funding local campaigns/events</b> to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities. For example, in Mallow, volunteers find it off putting travelling to Cork City to access services. Thus, funding national campaigns and national awards fails to recognise the extremely local nature of volunteering in rural Ireland. Focus group participants, across the board in Cork, wanted volunteering achievements recognised locally. National awards/events did not even register with them. Furthermore, of the volunteers who completed Volunteer Ireland survey on the call for input, 54% emphasised the need for more</p>
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	<p>local events and activities. 48% of survey participants representing volunteer involving organisations agreed with the need for more local events and activities. Therefore, Cork Volunteer Centre recommends that Volunteer Centres should receive more funding specifically for local marketing campaigns and events to promote the benefits of volunteering. In particular, funding towards outreach programmes to schools and employers across the City and County would be appropriate. In addition, volunteering should be recognised and celebrated locally. Due to budget restrictions Cork Volunteer Centre is currently seeking corporate sponsorship to fund a celebratory event for volunteers in Cork in 2019 in an effort to be responsive to the needs and wants outlined by our focus group participants.</p> <p>In addition to a call for local campaigns/events, focus group participants noted that leaflets and <b>a national media campaign</b> to emphasise the health benefits of volunteering would be appropriate. Participants also suggested that the Department could fund market research into what makes volunteers want to stay or continue to be volunteers, as retention is as important as initial recruitment. In addition, Of the 524 volunteers who completed Volunteer Ireland’s survey on the call for input, 71% suggested that there should be greater focus on the joy, fun and life enhancing aspects of volunteering, through all media platforms. Significantly, 85% of survey participants representing organisations emphasised the need for this, with 68% suggesting the need for a national awareness campaign.</p>
20	<p>What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities?</p>
	<p>It seems that a reoccurring theme in this call for input document is that it fails to recognise the very local nature of volunteering in communities. Yet again, in section 10.2.2 of the call for input document, there is no mention of the vital role Volunteer Centres play in raising awareness of volunteering opportunities, through their individual websites, social media campaigns and regular engagement with local media such as local radio stations, parish newsletters and regional newspapers.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>Cork Volunteer Centre suggests that as well as providing additional funding to Volunteer Centres to engage in promotional activities, the Department consider funding an annual national media campaign to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raise awareness of the role of Volunteer Centres</li> <li>• highlight the existence of I-Vol</li> <li>• extol the benefits of volunteering generally</li> </ul>
21	<p>What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage general participation in volunteering?</p>
	<p>Research suggests that in rural areas, volunteering is tied to the local community. Section 10.3.1 specifically mentions the role of Volunteer Ireland, PPNs and other national organisations to develop volunteering locally. However, there is no mention of the vital role</p>

	<p>that Volunteer Centres play in encouraging general participation in volunteering. The data that came through again and again from the focus groups held by Cork Volunteer Centre was that, in Ireland, people identify strongly with their locality and appreciate that they have local structures available to support and advise them on issues around volunteering. Therefore, as mentioned previously, more adequate resourcing needs to be given to Volunteer Centres to engage in promotional and outreach activities to encourage general participation in volunteering.</p> <p>In terms of resources, rural focus groups (Clonakilty, Mallow, Mitchelstown and Youghal) suggested that there should be a dedicated person to support volunteer recruitment in rural Cork. Cork Volunteer Centre is undergoing recruitment for such a person this year but due to the vast size of Cork County, there will be considerable travel costs associated with this role. In order to make such a role more effective in delivering its goals, Cork Volunteer Centre advocates for additional resources from the Department to make this a full time dedicated outreach post, with a permanent office outside of Cork City. Focus group participants argued that this dedicated outreach person for rural areas could potentially provide them with;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More support</li> <li>• More supervision</li> <li>• More training</li> <li>• More connection to their local Volunteer Centre</li> <li>• More local resources</li> </ul> <p>Not all focus group participants took a local view however, and many suggested the need for the Department to fund and engage in a national awareness campaign around the volunteering opportunities available on I-Vol and the important services that Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Ireland can provide.</p> <p>Volunteer survey participants emphasised the need for a national campaign 42%, with a further 35% requesting more local events. Respondents who are representatives of volunteer involving organisations to the same survey sought continuing support for Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Ireland to help support volunteering structures to develop locally (45%), with 26% seeking more local events. Many focus group participants advocated for real and meaningful recognition of volunteers with local events to celebrate them and their achievements. Others suggested incentives for those on social welfare and direct provision residents so that the most marginalised in society would not be financially disadvantaged by volunteering. Mallow participants specifically recommended that the government needs to do more to acknowledge all the local services provided by volunteers.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and adequately fund the promotional and outreach work of Volunteer Centres.</li> <li>• Fund a national awareness campaign.</li> <li>• Support and fund local events to celebrate volunteers.</li> </ul>
22	<p>What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage the participation of young people in volunteering?</p>

Cork Volunteer Centre welcomes that section 10.3.2 recognises the role that Volunteer Centres can play in encouraging the participation of young people in volunteering. However, these activities must be adequately and consistently funded.

Some focus group participants felt that young people were uninterested, unmotivated and unaware. They felt that volunteer involving organisations lacked structures that encouraged young people to engage in volunteering. Garda vetting was also seen as a barrier to young people volunteering on a regular basis as organisations felt that they might have to vet all staff and other volunteers engaging with volunteers under the age of 18.

Recent research conducted by Powell, Scanlon and Galvin (2018) on student volunteering in UCC outlines a number of key findings and recommendations. This report is based on a survey of more than **2,000 students in UCC** and represents one of the most comprehensive studies of student volunteering in Ireland to date. In spite of the view that not enough young people are volunteering, more than 46% of those surveyed had volunteered in the last six months. Furthermore, 58% of those who volunteer, state that they volunteered on an ongoing basis, with 37% volunteering for occasional or once off events such as fundraising. Over the month previous to the survey, 21% volunteered for 1-3 hours; 36% volunteered for between 4-9 hours; and, almost one in ten respondents volunteered for over 21 hours. The majority (63%) were very satisfied with their experience. As Powell, Scanlon and Galvin (2018) note *'the evidence suggests that volunteering is deeply valued by our students. They report significant social and personal development gains accrued from volunteering, a sense of making a difference to others, of being part of the community, meeting new people and making new friends, all positively impacting their own lives. It is also valued as a means of career development, through gaining work experience and related skills'*.

The report noted that most students became involved in volunteering **before** they came to UCC. Prior involvement appears to cultivate a commitment to volunteering that continues into third level. This ties in with recommendations from focus group participants in Mitchelstown, that the focus of a national strategy should be on school children. They recommended a schools programme to promote the benefits of volunteering for primary and post-primary school children. 76% of volunteers and 81% of volunteer involving organisations consulted as part of Volunteer Irelands survey on the call for input, felt that targeted programmes on schools and third level education facilities was the way to encourage more young people to volunteer, with 28% and 35% respectively arguing for more funding for Volunteer Centres and others to engage in community outreach; with 54% and 52% respectively stating that volunteer involving organisations should receive more help to specifically develop volunteer roles for young people. Indeed, Cork Volunteer Centre does some work around delivering information sessions to school children on the benefits of volunteering but needs more adequate resources to deliver this more comprehensively.

The UCC research noted that there is a need to **publicise and build awareness** of student volunteering locally and nationally. Cork Volunteer Centre delivers information sessions on volunteering to third level students whenever the opportunity arises, as well as attending student volunteer fairs in UCC and Cork College of Commerce. However, resources are an

	<p>issue and we would like to do more. On a positive note, the research also argued that ‘this research suggests that student volunteers are the cornerstone of higher education community engagement in Ireland, and the future bedrock of civil society’.</p> <p>On the one hand, focus group participants from organisations complained that they have succession issues, and on the other, participants felt that there was a lack of willingness in some organisations to embrace new blood. They felt that some sort of programme could be developed to facilitate younger people taking on roles in boards of management, in particular. They advocated for the introduction of strict time limits for board members. They felt that it was important to acknowledge the experience and value of long standing or founding members of some organisations but recognise formally the need for new blood on boards of management as a means to encourage youth participation.</p> <p>Other focus group participants argued that it is very important to deal with trust issues in the sector. They felt it was important that the Charities Regulatory Authority and other bodies such as Volunteer Ireland and Volunteer Centres encourage more transparency in organisations. For example, some participants felt that it should be mandatory to put funding, expenditure and budgets on organisations websites so people know who they are volunteering for. They argued that young people are more savvy when it comes to issues such as these.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund Volunteer Centres to engage in promotional and outreach activities with students in primary, post-primary and third level education to engage in volunteering.</li> <li>• Introduce measures to encourage young people to participate in boards of management.</li> <li>• Recognise and promote the value of young people volunteering generally.</li> <li>• Introduce more transparency around funding and expenditure of community and voluntary organisations.</li> </ul>
23	<p>What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage the participation of marginalised groups in volunteering?</p>
	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre welcomes that the Department recognises the vital role Volunteer Centres can play in increasing the participation of marginalised groups in volunteering. Indeed, 45% of volunteers and 48% of organisations surveyed by Volunteer Ireland, suggested that community outreach by Volunteer Centres was necessary through interest groups and social media.</p> <p>Approximately, 40% of volunteers currently registered with Cork Volunteer Centre come from a non-Irish background. According to BERHANU, (2017) <i>‘Needless to say, immigrants lose their social and human capital when they immigrate and settle down in a new country where the language and culture are quite different from their own. Volunteering helps immigrants to develop their social and human capital, and acquire other manifold benefits. ... Volunteering for immigrants is not just about fulfilling altruistic social obligations, it is also</i></p>

	<p><i>an important tool of integration. Immigrant organisations, local and national government, volunteer-involving organizations and organisations that promote volunteerism should make every effort to increase the demand for and supply of volunteering opportunities for immigrants to promote the social and economic inclusion of immigrants’.</i> To this end, Cork Volunteer Centre engages in the following activities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Volunteer Leadership Training to community and voluntary groups across the City and County. This training promotes intercultural awareness to groups with volunteer vacancies.</li> <li>• Assist with Garda Vetting queries for groups with volunteer vacancies.</li> <li>• Ensure that all volunteer vacancies advertised with us do not exclude any specific group or nationality.</li> <li>• Provide information sessions to migrant and other groups across the City and County about the benefits of volunteering.</li> </ul> <p>Cork Volunteer Centre leads by example and currently has volunteers on our reception desk from India, Nigeria, Spain and Poland. We also have two volunteers with physical disabilities. Furthermore, Cork Volunteer Centre is hosting upcoming Traveller Culture Awareness training in February for placement officers and managers across the Munster region. However, additional funding to address the needs to marginalised groups in Cork city and county would enhance these existing activities.</p> <p>Focus group participants identified a number of key groups within Cork that may be marginalised from accessing volunteering opportunities. The focus groups also suggested actions the proposed strategy could take to address the challenges these groups face. The <b>actions suggested</b> are as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide funding for volunteer involving organisations to ensure volunteering opportunities are accessible for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Funding volunteer involving organisations to provide language supports to migrants.</li> <li>• Social Welfare recipients: remove barriers/limitations to volunteering for social welfare recipients, in particular, those on jobseekers. Actively encourage volunteering for those claiming illness/disability related payments as a rehabilitative measure.</li> <li>• Direct provision: remove costs to volunteering. For example, City focus group participants pointed out that people in direct provision centres may have fantastic skills but access to transport may be cost prohibitive.</li> <li>• Rural issues: overall a strategy to improve rural transport and broadband accessibility as both impact significantly on rural residents’ ability to volunteer and access information about volunteering opportunities.</li> <li>• Funding and training for volunteer involving organisations to develop more inclusive marketing strategies.</li> </ul>
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24	Should the strategy seek to focus on or identify particular marginalised group(s) to encourage their participation in volunteering?
	Cork Volunteer Centres consultation process identified a number of marginalised groups in the Cork region that the strategy should address (and proposed solutions) as follows;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Parents including lone parents:</b> the provision of more childcare places in the community to facilitate access to volunteering opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>People on low incomes:</b> education around the benefits of volunteering, in particular the potential impact on employability.</li> <li>• <b>People with disabilities:</b> funding to deal with accessibility issues and require more supported volunteering. National campaign to recognise the benefits of volunteering to people’s health, both mental and physical. Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to actively encourage volunteering to those on illness and disability payments.</li> <li>• <b>Migrants:</b> (language barriers) develop volunteering opportunities to learn more English. Fund cultural awareness training for all volunteer involving organisations.</li> <li>• <b>Direct Provision residents:</b> recognise the importance of volunteering as a tool for integration into communities and do not financially disadvantage asylum seekers who wish to volunteer. For example, compensate them fully for travel expenses to volunteering opportunities.</li> <li>• <b>Members of the Travelling Community:</b> fund cultural awareness training for all volunteer involving organisations. Fund programmes to engage with members of the Travelling Community to encourage volunteerism.</li> <li>• <b>Rural Residents:</b> lack of quality and affordable public transport to engage in volunteering. More funding required to deal with this issue.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation</b> In all cases, further research is required to identify the barriers to those from marginalised groups taking up volunteering roles.</p>
25	<p>What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to mitigate the risks posed by the changing demographic of volunteers?</p>
	<p>The actions outlined in 10.3.2 and in our answer to Question 22 should be emphasised here as they are two sides of the same coin. The Mallow focus group outlined that more and more in rural communities, volunteering is falling to older people. Younger people, it was argued, are tied up with childcare responsibilities or have less time due to long commutes to work. They also noted that during the recession many young people in particular, moved to urban areas or abroad in order to access employment, leaving an aging population in many rural areas. Frequently, across all the focus groups, succession issues were discussed amongst participants. It was felt across the county that more needs to be done to encourage youth participation in volunteering.</p> <p>However, participants also noted the value that life experience can bring, in particular on boards of management, should be recognised and celebrated. Clonakilty focus group also felt that more needs to be done to recognise that volunteering can mitigate the effects of isolation in old age.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measures to encourage youth participation outlined in Q 22.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate and recognise the valuable contribution older people make to volunteering.</li> </ul>
26	<p>What specific audiences should the national volunteering strategy focus on?</p> <p>Cork Volunteer Centre avidly advocates that the strategy should be as inclusive as possible. Volunteering is for everyone and every community regardless of age, nationality, sexuality, race/ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, family status, marital status or membership of the Traveller community. The strategy should recognise this and promote inclusivity amongst volunteer involving organisations. While Volunteer Centres often conduct specific outreach work into marginalised groups, they do so on an ad-hoc basis dependant on available resources.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b>  Conduct further research into the specific needs of marginalised groups to ensure that everyone who wishes to volunteer in Irish society has their needs met.</p>
27	<p>What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage training and development opportunities for volunteers?</p> <p>Volunteers who participated in Volunteer Irelands survey noted the need for greater provision of courses and training opportunities for volunteers (71%). Furthermore, across all focus groups it was recognised that training is important to support volunteers Focus group participants emphasised the need to provide training in local locations. For example, volunteer leadership training is provided by Cork Volunteer Centre in their premises in the City. More funding would be required to provide this training in outreach locations across the county, in particular, in rural areas.</p> <p>Participants also advocated for funding for smaller organisations to provide training and upskilling to volunteers and funding to promote the availability of training to volunteers.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and enhance the capacity of Volunteer Centres to become centres of excellence in the provision of a training programme for volunteers.</li> <li>• In particular, recognise the specific support needs and capacity building required for trustees in smaller volunteer only organisations.</li> </ul>
28	<p>In what other ways can the Department support enhanced volunteer performance in Irish volunteering?</p> <p>Section 10.4.1 recognises the importance and value of training and education to enhance performance in Irish volunteering. Volunteers perform best when they are placed in roles that suit their skill set and where they are supported through good volunteer management practices. Therefore, continued support for existing services provided by Volunteer Centres</p>

	<p>such as placement services and Volunteer Leadership Training is essential. These vital supports could be enhanced by the introduction of dedicated volunteer management advisors in each Volunteer Centre.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced funding and support for existing placement services</li> <li>• Fund Volunteer Leadership Training</li> <li>• Fund a dedicated volunteer management advisor in each Volunteer Centre.</li> <li>• Fund Volunteer Centres to provide reduced cost volunteer leadership training for volunteer managers, in particular, in smaller volunteer led organisations.</li> <li>• Fund volunteer coordinator/manager roles within smaller organisations.</li> </ul>
29	<p>What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage training and development opportunities for volunteer managers?</p>
	<p>63% of respondents from volunteer involving organisations on Volunteer Irelands survey stated that Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Ireland do not provide enough development opportunities for volunteer managers.</p> <p>Respondents felt that the training provided by Volunteer Centres and Volunteer Ireland could be improved by the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more course dates/times 58%</li> <li>• Reduce the cost of training 52%</li> <li>• Provide courses on more topics 57%</li> <li>• Provide more online training 68%</li> </ul> <p>Currently Cork Volunteer Centre charges €100 for each place on its Volunteer Leadership Training programme. This programme covers four modules over two days. Training materials/booklets are provided, as well as refreshments for participants. To keep costs down, we hold the training in our own training room in Cork Volunteer Centre. Training is currently delivered by the Manager and Placement Officers.</p> <p>Focus group participants, in rural areas in particular, felt that volunteer leadership training should be delivered in more locations across the county. In particular, the financial and time costs of travelling almost 2 hours in some cases, to a City venue, was prohibitive for smaller volunteer only organisations. It was also noted that online provision of courses to areas that lack adequate broadband was meaningless. In light of the feedback from the survey and focus group participants, Cork Volunteer Centre would like to be in a position to deliver volunteer leadership training to smaller organisations for a reduced cost in outreach locations across the county.</p> <p>Furthermore, focus group participants noted the need for training in legislative requirements such as the new code of governance.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund Volunteer Centres to provide reduced cost volunteer leadership training for volunteer managers, in particular, in smaller volunteer led organisations.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund and support Volunteer Centres to deliver training programmes tailored to the governance requirements set out in legislation.</li> </ul>
30	What steps may be taken by the Department to support enhanced management performance in Irish volunteering?
	National government has a responsibility to support the work of Volunteer Centres to bear the costs of delivering training and support initiatives outlined in Question 29.
31	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to address the perception of volunteering involving too large a commitment of time?
	<p>As noted in Question 1 of Cork Volunteer Centres submission, when asked about the first words that come to mind when thinking of volunteering, the word time was mentioned 15 times by participants. Volunteering is time consuming, but the perception that it involves too large a commitment of time does require addressing. When asked how to deal with this perception the volunteers who completed Volunteer Irelands survey put forward the following suggestions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60% felt that more information should be provided on the availability of short term volunteering opportunities;</li> <li>• 57% felt that actions should be taken to increase public awareness of volunteering opportunities; and,</li> <li>• 54% felt that ‘micro-volunteering’ should be encouraged.</li> </ul> <p>The UCC research report on student volunteering noted that time commitment is the main challenge to student participation in volunteering. Academic work, part-time jobs and, in some cases a lengthy commute to and from college make volunteering challenging and can curtail participation. In line with the Volunteer Ireland survey, the UCC report also recommended offering more one-off volunteering opportunities and increasing publicity and awareness of volunteering are the most important means to increase volunteering amongst students.</p> <p>As argued consistently throughout this submission, more work needs to be done to promote the value of volunteering generally. Emphasising the benefits of volunteering to the individual is extremely important. It has both physical and mental health benefits and also serves as a means to integrate into local communities. It can also serve to increase social capital and provide invaluable skills and experience relevant to employment.</p> <p>Focus group participants had a variety of ideas on how to deal with this issue. One focus group in the City proposed that employers should be incentivised to allow employees to take paid time off to engage in voluntary activities. Rural focus group participants mentioned that due to governance and Garda vetting requirements; and extensive regulation, that volunteering increasingly involves extensive time commitment. They argue that more work needs to be done to support them around these issues.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund awareness campaign on the benefits of volunteering</li> <li>• Enhance and fund capacity of Volunteer Centres to support organisations with governance and regulation burden.</li> <li>• Incentives for employers to allow staff to engage in volunteering opportunities.</li> <li>• Promote and encourage once off volunteering opportunities.</li> </ul>
32	Should a volunteering code of conduct for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) be developed and implemented? What should this code include?
	<p>In general, there was a consensus that volunteers need to be supported and protected. Of the 524 volunteers who completed Volunteer Ireland’s survey on the call for input, 94% felt there was a need for a code of conduct, with 49% stating it should be mandatory. Of the organisational representatives, 93% felt the need for a code of conduct, with 45% stating that it should be mandatory. Indeed, many organisations have a policy or document that outlines the rights and responsibilities of their volunteers, in conjunction with clear complaints procedures. Indeed, this is recommended good practice at volunteer leadership training.</p> <p>There were mixed opinions on this question in focus groups. Participants felt that something should be in place to prevent the exploitation of volunteers and those on work placement. They felt that there was a possibility that organisations were abusing the system to obtain free labour. They felt that the government should play a stronger role in protecting volunteers but many were not sure what form this protection should take. Mitchelstown participants argued that legal rights should be afforded to volunteers to give protection from exploitation.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a code of conduct for volunteers</li> </ul>
33	Should a potential Irish code of conduct for volunteers and VIOs be mandatory or optional? Who would regulate it?
	<p>As stated in Question 32 above, there is a general consensus that a code of conduct is needed for volunteers in Ireland. With the exception of Youghal, the focus groups did not discuss who should regulate such a code if it was introduced. In Youghal, participants felt that an authoritative body should oversee the implementation of a code of conduct for volunteers and volunteer involving organisations, to ensure that volunteers are protected and supported. However, the volunteers who participated in Volunteer Irelands survey had mixed feelings about who should regulate such a code as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Government Department 15%</li> <li>• The Local Authority 18%</li> <li>• A Government Agency/Statutory Body 30%</li> <li>• A Non-Governmental Organisation 36%</li> </ul> <p>Survey participants from volunteer involving organisations were clearer about who should regulate such a code with respondents stating the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Government Department 15%</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Local Authority 10%</li> <li>• A Government Agency/Statutory Body 38%</li> <li>• A Non-Governmental Organisation 37%</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation</b> Whomever regulates a code of conduct, the code itself should be proportionate and relevant to both smaller and larger volunteer involving organisations.</p>
34	<p>What particular challenges are facing smaller volunteer involving organisations and how can the Department assist?</p>
	<p><b>Regulation</b> Smaller volunteer involving organisations are subject to the same legislation, rules and regulations as larger organisations. However, many lack the manpower, knowledge or capacity to deal with these issues. Bureaucracy generally was stated as impacting on organisations across all the focus groups. Many expressed a real fear of the legal implications of some roles within smaller organisations. People do not want to take responsibility for Garda vetting and some noted the lack of support for volunteer only organisations around issues such as GDPR. Participants noted a lack of resources to manage compliance issues such as Garda vetting, child protection, health and safety, charity regulations. Others noted a lack of skills on their boards of management to identify and deal with all of these issues. For example, there is an expectation that committee members or trustees have the necessary skills to engage in reporting online. Participants identified a strong need for support and assistance in relation to governance issues, such as strategic planning, compliance with regulation etc. Many felt that their local Volunteer Centre would be idea to assist with these issues as they are uniquely placed to be aware of the issues on the ground.</p> <p><b>Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers</b> In particular, in smaller rural areas, there are issues of volunteer burn out and a need to attract new volunteers. In Mitchelstown, one participant argued that ‘it’s the same suspects contributing to all the committees and organisations’. This point was reiterated in Clonakilty where participants noted that volunteer burnout was common and that organisations in rural areas were competing against each other to recruit from the same small pool of volunteers. Some felt that there was general apathy amongst Irish people and that scandals in the sector have turned people off volunteering.</p> <p><b>Finance</b> Many noted that smaller organisations struggle with fundraising and crippling insurance costs. For example, Mallow nearly had to cancel their Saint Patricks Day parade due to insurance costs. Many smaller volunteer led organisations in rural communities do not have the skills or capacity to deal with the complex realities of funding applications which are often online.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop opportunities for networking with other smaller organisations</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource Volunteer Centres to engage, train and support volunteer involving organisations to engage with governance issues.</li> <li>• In relation to recruitment, many focus group participants felt that the government could do more to encourage social welfare recipients to volunteer, or at the very least remove existing barriers.</li> <li>• More funding for training to be delivered in easily assessable local locations across the county.</li> <li>• Streamline Garda vetting procedures to reduce the administrative burden on smaller organisations.</li> </ul>
35	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to facilitate QQI assessment of volunteers for the purposes of accrediting skills?
	66% of Volunteers who participated in Volunteer Irelands survey on the call for input felt that gaining credit towards a formal qualification through volunteering would encourage training and development opportunities for volunteers.
36	What actions should be included in a volunteering strategy to encourage the creation of volunteering opportunities?
	<p>As outlined in previous questions, it is important that the government continues to support and enhance the capacity of Volunteer Centres to provide support and training to volunteer involving organisations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in the development of roles</li> <li>• on effective volunteer management and support in order to retain volunteers</li> </ul> <p>The role of Volunteer Centres could be greater enhanced with dedicated funding for an organisation support and training officer in each Volunteer Centre. The Department should also consider funding the roll out nationally of the TrustIE project which assisted community and voluntary groups in the development of opportunities for volunteers to become trustees.</p> <p>As also stated previously, the Department should give consideration to funding a national media campaign to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities on I-Vol.</p>
37	What <b>other</b> significant challenges to volunteering should be considered as part of this strategy? How can they be addressed?
	<p>Time and time again, participants in the focus groups across Cork City and Country noted that the following issues should be urgently addressed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support needs of organisations around governance and regulation</li> <li>• Garda vetting procedures</li> <li>• Rural and urban divide in relation to broadband and transport links</li> <li>• National campaign to promote and celebrate volunteers</li> </ul>

	<b>Cork Volunteer Centre has made numerous recommendations throughout this submission in relation to the above points.</b>
38	Are there any further challenges, strategic objectives and actions that you feel should be included in a national volunteering strategy?
	<p>Overall, Cork Volunteer Centre welcomes this call for input document. However, a huge piece of work was done by the Managers across the Munster region to try to ask the volunteers and volunteer involving organisations on the ground, questions on this strategy that were relevant to them. The call for input document itself is cumbersome and often does not make sense. There are too many questions and the questions themselves are difficult to interpret. The feedback generally from focus group participants was that the call for input was launched with too short a timeframe to respond; at a time of year when most people were focused on their Christmas holidays; and, in language that was not easy for a lay person to understand. Participants welcomed the approach taken across the Munster region and they would ask that their voices are heard and that their needs are responded to.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>When a draft strategy is eventually launched, it needs to be in language that is relevant for all members of the volunteering community. It should be accessible, easy to understand and allow adequate time for consultation to occur.</p>

	<b>Section 11: Monitoring, Measuring and Evaluating the Impact of Volunteering</b>
39	What criteria should be used to assess our progress in assessing the impacts of volunteering?
	<p>All of the criteria listed in section 11 are valuable measures of success for a volunteering strategy. Cork Volunteer Centre suggests a number of additional key outcomes of the strategy as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of volunteers in low population density areas</li> <li>• Developing supports and building capacity for voluntary organisations in those low density areas</li> <li>• Multi annual funding for the sector to allow for real strategic planning and staff retention</li> <li>• Funding for organisational support and training officers for Volunteer Centres to support organisations</li> <li>• Funding for dedicated outreach officers and offices for Volunteer Centres.</li> </ul>
40	What criteria should be used to gauge success in delivery of the National Volunteering Strategy?
	<p>Focus group participants were asked 'if we were to look into the future and to reflect on the volunteering strategy – what would you have liked it to achieve'? The following reflects the answers given;</p>

- Better youth participation
- An education programme in primary schools
- Greater regulative protection for volunteers
- More done locally to recognise volunteers
- Better inter-departmental communication on issues that affect volunteering
- Junior Minister for Volunteering
- More volunteering opportunities created
- More volunteers retained
- Profile of volunteering raised through centrally funded campaign.
- Bridge the gap in the provision of services between rural and urban areas
- Better recognition of volunteers
- More supports and services provided by Volunteer Centres

Volunteer Ireland survey participants were asked about what they would like to see a national volunteering strategy achieve? Volunteers stated the following;

- Greater supports for volunteers 41%
- More diversity in volunteering 31%
- More public awareness of volunteering and its benefits 50%
- More support and investment in the volunteering infrastructure 22%
- More volunteering opportunities 36%
- More corporate volunteering programmes 19%
- Increase general participation in volunteering 34%
- Greater support/funding for organisations that involve volunteers 38%
- Other 3%

While participants representing volunteer involving organisations advocated for;

- Greater supports for volunteers 53%
- More diversity in volunteering 13%
- More public awareness of volunteering and its benefits 58%
- More support and investment in the volunteering infrastructure 42%
- More volunteering opportunities 12%
- More corporate volunteering programmes 15%
- Increase general participation in volunteering 31%
- Greater support/funding for organisations that involve volunteers 65%
- Other 3%

What is interesting about the survey results here is that both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations emphasised the need for more public awareness of volunteering and its benefits and supports for volunteers.

#### **Recommendation**

A strong recommendation that comes through this entire submission is the need for more work to be done on national campaigns to promote the benefits of volunteering to individuals and communities.

<b>Section 12: Proposed National Advisory Group on Volunteering</b>	
41	Do you agree that a National Advisory Group is the most suitable vehicle to drive this strategy forward?
	No. Please see our answer outlined in Question 44.
42	Who should participate in a National Advisory Group?
	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre welcomes the ‘call for input’ paper but notes that in many aspects it fails to take the local view into account. Therefore, to avoid this occurring with the draft strategy, it strongly recommends Volunteer Centre representation in a National Advisory Group or whatever mechanism is utilised to drive the strategy forward. Staunton and O’Haodáin (2001), outlined the need for Volunteer Centres to have a role in influencing government policy. Indeed, Cork Volunteer Centre would go so far as to state that there should be Volunteer Centre representatives from each of the five regions (Munster, Connaught, Ulster, Dublin, and Leinster).</p> <p>Cork Volunteer Centre recognises the need for experts on a National Advisory Group and thus also recommends the inclusion of leading academics in the field of civic engagement such as Professor Fred Powell. In our response to Question 13, we also indicated that some central government departments have a vital role to play in the delivery of a national strategy on volunteering and we recommend representatives from these Departments, along with representatives from the Department of Rural and Community Development, sit on a National Advisory Group or whatever mechanism is utilised to drive the strategy forward.</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?
	<p>Cork Volunteer Centre argues that whatever mechanism is chosen to drive the strategy forward it should oversee both the development of the national volunteering strategy itself, and its subsequent implementation. We would recommend that the oversight mechanism should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power to make recommendations on funding arrangements</li> <li>• Oversight on the delivery of the strategy</li> <li>• Ability to make recommendations for amendments to the strategy</li> <li>• Engage in periodic reviews of the strategy</li> <li>• Reporting mechanisms to regional structures</li> <li>• As a matter of course, receive regular feedback from the Department on the delivery of the strategy</li> <li>• Adequate resources to carry out its functions and deliver the terms of reference.</li> <li>• Open to submissions on primary research data throughout the lifetime of the strategy</li> <li>• Ability to decide the best structure to drive the delivery of the strategy.</li> </ul>

	Cork Volunteer Centre envisages that an early outcome might be that the advisory group becomes an executive board which is democratically mandated from its constituents.
44	Does any better mechanism exist to drive this strategy forward?
	<p>In light of the recommendations made in Question 43, we proposed the following structure;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A representative board with executive powers and a clear remit</li> <li>• Power to decide on the direction of work and the allocation of funding</li> <li>• Should be autonomous from the Department</li> <li>• With an adequate ring fenced budget</li> </ul>

## References

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