



# volunteer centre

Ionad d'Obair Dheonach Corcaigh

CORK



## **Pre-Budget Submission 2020**



An Roinn Forbartha  
Tuaithe agus Pobail  
Department of Rural and  
Community Development

# Introduction

Cork Volunteer Centre offers support and guidance to individuals and volunteer-involving organisations to reach their goals while making a significant contribution to their local community and society.

We provide a placement service matching individuals who would like to volunteer with non-profit organisations who need volunteers. Advice and support is offered to both through a range of services including information, consultation, volunteer management training and Garda vetting administration.

In 2018, we supported more than 1,500 volunteers from 85 countries who contributed 44,841 hours of their time to non-profit organisations. This represented a contribution of €1,040,855.40<sup>1</sup> to Cork's Economy in 2018. 48 new organisations registered with us last year, representing a 30% increase on 2017. In total, 657 volunteers were referred to volunteer-involving organisations last year alone.

## National Strategy on Volunteering

Cork Volunteer Centre welcomed the announcement by the Department of Rural and Community Development to develop a National Strategy on Volunteering. 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 (the main findings of these focus groups are represented in the infographic below).

- 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,

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<sup>1</sup> CSO Q1 2018 Average Hourly Earnings €23.40.

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. Evidently, 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 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 pre-budget submission represent the views of those listed above and reiterates the recommendations in our submission to the call for input.**

# 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



# Recommendations from the Call from Input:

## 1. A Robust Volunteering Infrastructure

The economic benefits of volunteering should not be underestimated. The Quarterly National Household Survey (2013) estimates 232.8 million of hours are volunteered annually which is worth over €2bn to the economy when calculated at minimum wage.

The McLaughlin Report, 'Developing Funding Criteria for Volunteer Centres in Ireland' (2018) highlighted some of the inconsistencies and shortcomings of Volunteer Centre funding. The report states that, "Core funding for Volunteer Centres is unevenly distributed and it is difficult to discern a consistent approach or framework for determining how funding is allocated". This haphazard approach to funding that appears to be based on historical agreements is "inconsistent with modern public management" (ibid) which advocates a more strategic allocating of funds to maximise benefits.

The McLaughlin Report (2018) indicated that there should be a minimum amount of funding that every Volunteer Centre receive. This funding will cover staff and overhead costs. However, the report correctly identified other factors that should determine additional funding for Volunteer Centres. These were population size; geographic area; and level of deprivation and disadvantage, in that area.

The population of Cork City according to the 2016 census was 125,657 while 417,211 people resided in the rest of the county. This brings the total population of Cork to 542,868 (CSO, 2016). This number represents a staggering 11.4% of the entire country. However, it is up to only one Volunteer Centre to provide our services for all these people. The McLaughlin Report (2018) revealed that this was the highest amount of people being served by any one volunteer centre.

County Cork is the largest county in Ireland by geographical area at approximately 7,500 km<sup>2</sup>. With major towns scattered throughout this area, outreach is a costly venture. Cork Volunteer Centre has recently hired a part-time placement officer (outreach) with the County of Cork as their main focus. This role brings with it significant travel costs. More funding from the Department is required to ensure this role is adequately resourced to deliver must needed resources to the rural population of Cork. Cork Volunteer Centre feels this should be a full-time position with a permanent office based in Cork County.

With the most people to serve over the largest area, Cork Volunteer Centre needs to be adequately and proportionally funded, however the McLaughlin Report (2018) showed that in 2016, Cork Volunteer Centre received the lowest funding per capita across the entire country. In 2019, Cork Volunteer Centres allocation for funding was €123,800. In our funding application for 2019, we requested at total figure of **€168,816.75** (128,262.43 to cover total salaries – inclusive of Employers PRSI) and €40,599.32 (to adequately cover our overheads and administration). Please note that this estimate is conservative in that it does not cover the extensive amount of outreach activities required to provide services to such an extensive geographical area, nor does it cover the administrative costs of a permanent office in a county location. Given that the population of Cork City and County is approximately 542,868 people (2016 Census), we are asking that our funding allocation be increased to at least €200,000 per annum<sup>2</sup>.

### **Multi-Annual Funding**

Cork Volunteer Centre advocates for multi-annual funding for the sector. This would allow for long-term projects and help with staff retention. The volunteer centre network has only begun to realise its potential and strategic planning and cooperation between centres can make volunteerism more central and dynamic in Ireland. Multi-annual funding will facilitate this. Numerous reports such as the White Paper (2000) and the Independent Review Group Report (2019), have recommended multi-annual funding for the sector. “There should be a move to multi-annual budgets for 3-5 years in duration to facilitate strategic service planning and reform of services” (IRG, 2019).

#### **Recommendations:**

- Currently, there is no clear and transparent funding model for volunteer centres. This should be a priority, with each centre receiving additional funding depending on factors such as population and geographical area.
- Bearing in mind factors such as population size, geographical area and outreach burden, fund Cork Volunteer Centre in 2020 to at least the amount of €200,000.
- multi-annual funding across the volunteer centre network for more effective strategic planning.

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<sup>2</sup> Population of Dublin City local authority area 527,612 (2011 census) – 2019 funding allocation Dublin City VC €282,400

Population of South Dublin local authority area 265,205 (2016 census) – 2019 funding allocation South Dublin VC €171,100



## 2. Promotion of Volunteering through a National Campaign.

The Charities Aid Foundation's (CAF) 'World Giving Index 2018' saw Ireland place 7<sup>th</sup> overall in the proportion of people who volunteer. This is a statistic that should be celebrated and used to motivate further participation in volunteering in Ireland. What cannot happen is complacency, especially considering the ever-changing landscape of Irish civil society. The National Committee on Volunteering (NCV, 2002) commented on the changing nature of volunteering in Ireland and concluded, "that it is vital to plan for such change and to chart the future".

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the network of Volunteer Centres are in the perfect position to collaborate on both the national and local promotion of volunteering. Cork Volunteer Centre has led the way in social media promotion of volunteering, with an ever-increasing amount of followers spreading our volunteering message. 68% of 524 volunteers surveyed by Volunteer Ireland (Connelly, 2019) suggested the need for a national awareness campaign on volunteering. While Cork Volunteer Centre works hard to raise awareness locally, it needs the backing of a national media campaign to complement it. This campaign could be used to:

- Raise awareness of the existence and the role of the network of volunteer centres.
- Highlight the existence of I-Vol.
- Promote the benefits of volunteering.

**Recommendation:** A national media campaign should be carried out to raise the awareness of all volunteer centres and the existence of I-Vol, the dedicated volunteering database. The campaign should also focus on the numerous health benefits associated with volunteering.

## 3. Assistance to Small Organisations

### A. Training

Cork Volunteer Centre provides Volunteer Leadership Training (VLT) for non-profit organisations throughout the city and county. In their 2005 report, the Joint Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs stressed the importance of VLT. "By investing in the training of volunteer managers, the value of volunteering output will be

increased, thus increasing the return on the State's investment in the volunteering sector (Joint Committee Report, 2005). VLT is also important for the retention of volunteers in an organisation. The National Youth Council of Ireland (2011) found that young people give up volunteering for reasons such as 'pressure from their volunteer manager' or 'being taken for granted'. The Department should further fund the VLT programme that Cork Volunteer Centre runs to help organisations retain their volunteers.

## **B. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers**

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.

## **C. Finance**

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.

### **Recommendations:**

- Develop opportunities for networking with other smaller organisations.
- The Department should further support the training carried out by Cork Volunteer Centre.
- 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.
- More funding for training to be delivered in easily accessible local locations across the county.



#### **4. A National Strategy on Volunteering that recognises the Regulatory and Governance burden on smaller volunteer involving organisations.**

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.

##### **Recommendations:**

- Resource Volunteer Centres to engage, train and support volunteer involving organisations to engage with governance issues.
- Streamline Garda vetting procedures to reduce the administrative burden on smaller organisations.

#### **5. National Strategy on Volunteering that is representative of the needs of volunteers and volunteer involving organisations in both urban and rural areas.**

The consultation process for the call for input clearly identified that there are significant challenges facing rural communities in particular. Research suggests that in rural areas, volunteering is tied to the local community. 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.

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 has undergone 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;

- More support to assist with the development of volunteer roles.
- More training on Volunteer Leadership, Garda Vetting and Governance delivered locally.
- More connection to their local Volunteer Centre.
- More local resources generally in line with other rural development policies.

**Recommendation:**

- Adequately fund and support a full-time outreach officer for Cork Volunteer Centre. Cost of this recommendation is €29,956.50 salary (including employers PRSI) plus €15,000 travel and subsistence<sup>3</sup>. Additional funding would be required to provide a permanent office in a county location.

**6. Opportunities for feedback into the implementation of the strategy.**

Overall, Cork Volunteer Centre welcomes the opportunity given to respond to the 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 was cumbersome. There were too many questions and the questions themselves were difficult to interpret. The feedback generally from focus group participants was that the call for input was launched with

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<sup>3</sup> Projections based on calculation of cost of delivering outreach in Q4 2019.

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. There was a strong sense from this consultation process that volunteers and volunteer involving organisations would be offered further opportunities to give feedback on the implementation of the strategy.

### **Recommendations:**

- 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.
- An inbuilt feedback process on the implementation of the strategy should be made available to the public.

## **Other recommendations**

### **7. Record levels of volunteering on the census.**

Cork Volunteer Centre welcomes the recognition of the value of research on volunteering in the call for input to the National Strategy. However, without sufficient local and national data research becomes difficult.

Volunteering is at the heart of every community across Ireland and affects every member of the population either directly or indirectly. It supports a number of key Government priority areas which include homelessness, mental health and the environment. Current, detailed data is vital to ensuring that volunteering is accessible to all and remains at the core of Irish society.

For the first time ever in an Irish census, a question on voluntary activity appeared in the 2006 census. Respondents were also asked to note if they had not engaged in voluntary activity. There have been no such questions in subsequent censuses. Since the 2006 census, the country has experienced major changes including a recession, high unemployment and immigration/emigration. More recently, the economy is becoming revitalised and the pool of potential available volunteer is perhaps reducing due to increasing unemployment. Up to date data is vital to ensure that both the volunteering infrastructure and the Government can appropriately address the challenges and opportunities in volunteering in Ireland.

There is currently a dearth of research on volunteering in Ireland. Nationwide, comprehensive data will allow researchers to understand and identify the areas where more research is needed to inform practice. For example, knowing the ratio of rural to urban volunteers will allow us to direct resources where they are most required. This type of information can also inform the work of government, particularly in areas such as homelessness and mental health – services currently heavily supported but the community and voluntary sector.

There are almost 10,000 registered charities in Ireland, the majority of which involve volunteers and over half of which would not survive without volunteers. Their work is vital to Irish society and having hard data on volunteering in Ireland will support them to recruit volunteers effectively and continue to deliver their mission.

A question on volunteering in the 2021 census would allow the volunteer infrastructure to learn if levels of volunteering in Ireland are increasing, decreasing or staying the same. This will allow the government to develop appropriate interventions and help ensure that volunteering continues to thrive.

Local areas and regions have different challenges when it comes to volunteering, for example, rural isolation, older populations, lack of transport options. Breaking volunteering data down to small areas and population groups will allow us to address these in a targeted and more impactful way. Small area and population data will allow Government to invest in the local infrastructure based on the real needs of the area. Cross tabular analysis across age, gender and location will allow for a targeted approach to the implementation of the proposed national strategy on volunteering and ensure maximum impact<sup>4</sup>.

**Recommendation:**

- Record levels of volunteering on all forthcoming census.

**8. Encourage and incentivise employers to allow employees take paid time off to volunteer.**

The biggest barrier to volunteering that the research continues to identify is time (NCV 2002, NYCI 2011). With this in mind, Cork Volunteer Centre has actively engaged in promoting

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<sup>4</sup> Note: this section of our submission is a slightly edited version of Volunteer Ireland Submission to CSO on 2021 Census.

once-off opportunities in volunteering such as festival volunteers. Another avenue that we continue to explore and promote is corporate volunteering. At a time when employment levels in Ireland are high (CSO, 2019), corporate volunteering becomes ever-more important. Corporate volunteering has the potential to benefit numerous stakeholders:

- The volunteering organisation fulfils part of their social responsibility.
- The volunteers themselves receive the benefits oft cited by research (Jenkinson *et al*, 2013).
- The charity or not-for-profit may get a major project completed.
- Completion of this project will be of benefit to the service users.

Samuel, Wolf and Schilling (2013) “suggest that a majority of the questioned non-profits lack strategic behaviour and management tools for undertaking volunteer partnership projects with companies.” Through training and guidance, the Volunteer Centres are well placed to organise and develop a firm corporate volunteering strategy that would help maximise the benefits for all interested parties. Help is needed from the Government to fund this strategy. Government should also incentivise corporate volunteering through promotion and subsidy. Most recently, University College Cork staff members have been provided with one paid day per year to engage in voluntary activity. Cork Volunteer Centre is actively advocating that Cork City and County Council follows their lead. However, there is only so much that we can achieve locally. Cork Volunteer Centre recommends that the government consider allocating a paid day off to volunteer to public sector organisations to demonstrate and encourage best practice to all employers. Indeed, Connelly (2013: 225) found that public sector employees involved in the delivery of social services donated more blood and time than the national average, and at least as much money to charity. Thus, we can envisage that there would be ample uptake of our proposed scheme.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Collaborate with Cork Volunteer Centre and other volunteer centres to roll out a corporate volunteering strategy.
- A media campaign to tackle the perceived barrier of time is also recommended.
- Incentivise employers to allow employees to take paid time off work to volunteer.
- Provide public sector employees with paid time off to volunteer.

## **9. Celebrate Volunteering Locally.**

Volunteer Ireland currently host a national volunteer awards ceremony on an annual basis to recognise and celebrate volunteers. Cork Volunteer Centre recognises that this is a fantastic event and encourages Cork based groups to nominate their volunteer for the awards. However, the feedback from Cork based organisations and volunteers is that they would prefer to be recognised locally. With this in mind, Cork Volunteer Centre is planning to host an awards ceremony in Cork to celebrate those who give their time and effort to help charities and non-profits across the city and county. This ceremony will only go ahead if corporate sponsorship is secured. Celebrating Cork volunteers with this ceremony not only acknowledges the hard work of local people but also works as a way of promoting local volunteerism. Funding to secure this ceremony as a permanent fixture in Cork should be provided by the Department.

### **Recommendation:**

- Funding for Volunteer Centres to celebrate volunteering locally. Representatives from Department of Rural and Community Development to attend these local events.

## **Conclusion**

Cork Volunteer Centre is maximising the voice of volunteering. It champions the benefits of volunteering. It provides opportunities for community involvement and social inclusion. It supports the over 600 non-profit organisations registered with us.

We at Cork Volunteer Centre are proud of the achievements of our staff and volunteers over the past number of years. We also recognise, however, how much more we can achieve with the adequate support from the Department of Rural and Community Development. We request that Government seriously consider all of our recommendations to ensure a brighter future for volunteering in Cork and nationwide.



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