

What you told us - NSW Volunteering Strategy 2020-2030

In August – December 2019, the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) conducted a consultation process with the NSW volunteer sector to help develop the third NSW Volunteering Strategy.

The NSW Government would like to thank all those who contributed to the development of the NSW Volunteering Strategy 2020-2030, in particular the:

- NSW peak body for volunteering, The Centre for volunteering
- NSW peak body for sport, Sport NSW
- 1204 individuals and volunteer involving organisations that participated in the survey
- 62 volunteer involving organisations and NSW Government agencies that participated in the Strategy development process.

The contributions of all those involved have directly helped to shape the new Strategy that will support the NSW volunteering sector for the next decade.

What you told us

The below provides a summary of what the sector told us. The consultation process involved a sharing of experience and views of volunteer involving organisations (VIOs), as well as helped to identify key themes and priorities.

The NSW volunteering sector is large, diverse and often considered complex. It is vital to our state's wellbeing and impacts the lives of our citizens. The experience of VIOs varies and has many commonalities. At a local and state level, volunteering is part of our social fabric.

Overwhelmingly, the sector (government and non-government organisations and volunteers) told us that volunteering in NSW needs to be valued and invested in if it is to thrive and be world class in 2030.

Volunteering builds resilience in individuals, organisations and communities. During the consultations, the sector told us more needs to be done to recognise this as volunteering increases community wellbeing and social cohesion.

The sector told us that based on their experience:

- while there have been achievements made under the earlier strategies more needs to be done, building on successes, expanding the reach of existing initiatives and addressing the gaps
- if volunteering is done badly it can divide and have a negative impact on a community, an organisation and individuals
- while volunteers are not paid volunteering is not free, it comes at a cost that needs to be recognised and supported
- they wish to work in partnership with the NSW Government, they want to collaborate
- they wish to make bigger impacts, embrace diversity and inclusivity
- they wish to continue the life course approach of earlier strategies and be volunteer-centered
- one of the biggest challenges is ongoing volunteer supervision while juggling multiple demands on a volunteer manager's time

- initiatives need to be a combination of state-wide and local or place-based; that a one size fits all approach will not work in all cases, there needs to be flexibility
- there is a need for more resources and diverse forms of support
- the sector is under researched and needs a better knowledge base if the sector as a whole are to make better decisions
- the sector has a way to go before it is truly inclusive, barriers to participation need to be reduced or removed – improvements can be made to help young people, people with disability, veterans, Aboriginal people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- there is a need to consider and explore ways to reward or incentivize volunteering, through things such as discounts for volunteers – discounts will help to offset the cost burden incurred by volunteers
- many volunteer managers, coordinators and leaders are overburdened and under-supported; there are opportunities to streamline and make these roles easier, and there needs to be adequate funding provided to operate volunteer programs and manage volunteers
- volunteer managers need better access to software, additional tools and resources that are freely available at any time they need
- the sector needs a vibrant volunteer workforce, one that is growing as more volunteers are needed
- the sector needs to be agile with a good blend of being proactive and responsive
- the sector needs support to develop and promote flexible volunteering opportunities
- the sector needs help to keep pace with technology
- the sector would benefit from a simple standard code of conduct or charter ensuring everyone is working towards a common benchmark of good behavior
- VIOs and communities need help to better manage spontaneous volunteers during times of emergency, significant weather events or natural disaster
- the sector needs to be open to culture shifts, business as usual practices may not be viable moving forward
- the sector need to utilize the definition of volunteering established by Volunteering Australia, this will help with consistency
- we need to know more about volunteering and its impact if better decisions are to be made and a culture of innovation and excellence can be supported
- there is a need for recognition that supporting volunteers is an investment in our organisations, our communities and our State
- there is a need for a wide reaching communications and promotion campaign to help grow volunteering and promotes its benefits
- there is a need for flexible training options for volunteer managers, and coordinators
- there is a need for increased recognition of volunteers and their contributions during National Volunteer Week and International Volunteer Day
- the sector needs help to ensure that insurance for the sector is relevant with its changing needs
- volunteering for many is a pathway to employment, and more needs to be done to support and recognise this
- opportunities to work in partnership and collaborate are key to the sector's success.

Ideas and initiatives from the consultation process

A wide range of ideas and possible initiatives were identified during the consultation process. These ideas and possible initiatives have helped to shape the Strategy's: Guiding Principles, Strategic Approach, Vision and Key Focus Areas.

The Way Forward

Moving forward, the NSW Government and the volunteering sector will continue to work together. Drawing on what you told us, we will co-design solutions to help each other grow, and go from strength to strength. We will continue to communicate and share experiences as we look to the future of volunteering.