

# Managers Matter

## Who Manages New Zealand's Volunteers?

### SUMMARY

Karen Smith, PhD

Carolyn Cordery, PhD

June 2010

Nicholas Dutton

### The study



In partnership with Volunteering New Zealand, Victoria University of Wellington undertook a nationwide survey of volunteer managers between December 2009 and February 2010. The research was funded by a Tindall Foundation grant.

The online survey was open to anyone involved in the management of volunteers. Over 800 individuals participated from a diverse range of sectors and positions across New Zealand.

To benchmark the New Zealand volunteer management profession, selected findings are compared to similar overseas studies, from Canada (Zarinpoush et al., 2004), the UK (Machin and Ellis Paine, 2008), and globally (People First - Total Solutions, 2008).

### Organisations with volunteer managers

Responses came from across the country, from those managing volunteers in a diverse range of organisations, mainly in the not-for-profit sector, but also in the public sector.

Large and small organisations and volunteer programmes were included in the responses.

Culture, sport and recreation organisations (27% of respondents), social services (26%), and health (13%) were well represented.

## Profile of Managers

Those managing volunteers are well educated with close to half (47%) having completed study to tertiary level.

Just over half (54%) indicated they are over 50 years of age.

Twice as many women as men responded to the survey (67% vs. 33%).

Respondents predominately identify as New Zealand European (82%), with 10% Maori, 4% Pacific Peoples, and 4% Asian.

They are experienced in managing of volunteers – 62% had five or more years’ experience in volunteer administration, including 31% with 12 or more years’ experience.

## The Volunteer Management Role

### ***Job title***

Those managing volunteers have a huge variety of job titles:

38% of respondents have ‘volunteer’ in their title and identified themselves as Volunteer Manager, Coordinator, or Administrator. They are referred to as ‘Volunteer Coordinators’ in the report.

The remaining 63% have a myriad of job titles and responsibilities; they are referred to as ‘Manager of Volunteers’.

The term ‘manager’ is used to refer to all respondents.

### ***Employment status***

One third of respondents are unpaid managers and are themselves volunteers.

Paid managers are more prevalent within health and social services; in national and regional volunteer programmes; in larger organisations; in organisations with more than 5 paid employees; and with larger volunteer programmes.

Of the two thirds in paid positions, 68% are full-time, 32% are part-time.

The median annual salary of fulltime paid managers is \$40,000-\$59,999. Managers of Volunteers are better paid than Volunteer Coordinators.

### ***Job satisfaction***

Overall, respondents are satisfied in their volunteer management role, with 90% of respondents attesting to this ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’. However, fewer (63%) strongly or somewhat agreed they receive adequate compensation.

### ***Future career plans***

In the short-term (1 year), 70% of respondents believe they will continue in the same role with the same organisation; longer-term (5 years) there is more movement, including 19% of respondents who will retire in the next five years. For unpaid managers, it is the organisation rather than the role that is important.

***Support for managers*** Managers believe their organisation supports the volunteer programme. The governing board and paid staff are also supportive.

***Volunteer management challenges*** The greatest challenge these managers face is recruiting of volunteers, followed by not having enough time to achieve goals, not having enough money to achieve goals, and matching and retaining volunteers. Time is clearly an issue for respondents with 44% reporting they ‘squeeze their volunteer role around their other work’.

***Training needs*** Three-quarters of respondents reported there are aspects of their jobs where they would find extra training useful. The highest demand is for training in management skills, volunteer recruitment and communications.

Unpaid managers are most needy in respect of volunteer recruitment training: 90% would find this useful. Conversely, this is not a training need for paid managers (only 15% would find this useful).

## **Conclusions and further questions**

This report provides much needed baseline data for understanding the sector and the role and importance of those managing volunteers. It is a snapshot. It tells us who are managing volunteers, what their role involves, how they feel about their role overall, their broad training needs, and where they see themselves in the future.

There were some heartening revelations about volunteer management. In many respects, the responses to the survey are similar to those undertaken overseas. This is surprising as volunteer management is often seen as being less developed in New Zealand.

The limitations of this piece of quantitative research have to be recognised. To understand the ‘why’, further research is required to investigate some of the emerging findings in more detail. The full report provides a section analysing the opportunities for future research in order to further develop capacity in the sector. In addition, recommendations are made to encourage better management of volunteers.

***Organisations managing volunteers*** The survey found that larger organisations tend to place more resources and effort into managing their large number of volunteers, than those with fewer resources. This is similar to overseas research, however the concern is that a number of managers are either unaware of having a budget to support their volunteers, or have no budget at all. Prior research showed that costs can be a barrier to the availability of volunteers. Since that research in New Zealand, the Income Tax Act (2009) simplified the reimbursement of volunteers. Organisations are encouraged to budget to reimburse costs for those for whom expenses are a barrier to volunteering.

Job titles are also an area that has been analysed in overseas studies. For example, in Canada Zarinpoush et al. (2004) stated that managers whose

titles do not reflect their volunteer management responsibilities may find themselves in an ambiguous situation. In this survey, more of the respondents who do not have ‘volunteer’ in their job title feel squeezed in terms of their management of volunteers, than those who do have ‘volunteer’ in their job title. Organisations would do well to define carefully the jobs and titles of their managers of volunteers, to ensure the time this important job requires is acknowledged and allocated.

***Job satisfaction,  
organisational  
support and rewards***

The survey suggests high levels of satisfaction with the volunteer management role, and the support from organisations. Conversely, lack of time and money to achieve goals are challenges, and there are concerns related to inadequacy of compensation.

There are contradictions regarding organisational support for volunteer management and managers. While most managers state that they are supported by their organisations, a majority also state that they squeeze their volunteer management role in around all of their other responsibilities. Focus groups or interviews with managers would be valuable to tease out the factors contributing to these reported levels of satisfaction.

***Career paths, training  
and external support***

The survey indicates a strong desire for further professional development. However, how will managers find the time and resources to attend training and development, whether on-the-job or externally, especially those who undertake this management role on an unpaid basis?

Volunteer management is a dynamic profession; the survey suggests there may be multiple routes into and out of volunteer management. Further research should explore these various career paths in order to understand prior learning and support professional development.

***Reaching out to the  
diversity of managers***

This survey gathered responses from across a wide area of the sector and included paid and unpaid managers, but it was still heavily weighted towards the more formal end of the not-for-profit sector. Further research should attempt to recruit participants from across the sector, including those for whom volunteer management is not a core role. This should include those who have less contact with existing volunteering support, for example organisations who are not members of Volunteer Centres. Two-thirds of respondents submitted their details to a database to be held by Volunteering New Zealand to promote professional development.

## **Further Information**

***For a copy of the full  
report:***

***Volunteer management  
initiatives information:***

**Click on ‘Research’ at [www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fca/) or contact:**

**Dr Karen Smith:** karen.smith@vuw.ac.nz 04 463 5721

**Dr Carolyn Cordery:** carolyn.cordery@vuw.ac.nz 04 463 5761

**Volunteering New Zealand:** [www.volunteeringnz.org.nz](http://www.volunteeringnz.org.nz)

office@volunteeringnz.org.nz 04 384 3636