

Volunteering and tangata whenua (Māori)

1. This paper is a summary of comments and advice received from tangata whenua (Māori) during policy development on volunteering, as part of the Volunteers and Volunteering Policy project. The comments in this paper do not reflect government policy or the views of the Ministry of Social Development.
2. The issues were taken into account by the Ministry of Social Development when developing advice to the government on volunteering in late 2002. (The project had been due to report in June 2002 but this was delayed due to the 2002 general election).

Consultation process with Maori

3. A Māori sub-group was formed in late 2001 to lead in the development of a tangata whenua perspective to the project.
4. In recognition that volunteering is not a cultural concept of tangata whenua, the project team included the term 'fulfilment of cultural obligations by whānau, hapū, iwi, and Māori', alongside volunteering, to ensure the project had relevance to tangata whenua.
5. A summary of submissions, published in January 2002 is available on the Ministry of Social Development website (www.msd.govt.nz/voluntary/index). Only a small number of submissions were received from Māori individuals and organisations. Further consultation was therefore conducted by the Māori sub-group in early 2002.

Defining what volunteering means for tangata whenua

6. In submissions, some tangata whenua commented that they do not necessarily see their voluntary activity as 'volunteering'. Some quotes from people were:
"Labour-for-aroha is not necessarily about free choice, it may be an effect of alienation of Māori from a culture of education and subsequent wage earning opportunities."
"Volunteering [i.e the pakeha notion of volunteering] in some cases is foreign to Māori, it is manaaki or awhina te kaupapa."
"The cultural obligation is whanaungatanga and koha where care and maintenance rely on reciprocity."
7. Volunteering for tangata whenua is based upon the notion of *whanaungatanga* (kinship) and the benefits derived from contributing to the common good. There is no direct equivalent word for 'volunteering' in te reo Māori. Similar concepts relate to activity which is unpaid and carried out in a context of cultural obligation, duty, reciprocity and collective benefit. *Aroha* (love), *tikanga* (justice, order, the right way of doing things), *manaakitanga* (the implementation of aroha, caring for each other), *mahi aroha* (working willingly) and *mahi koha* (working as a contribution or gift) are concepts of tangata whenua similar to volunteering.

8. Whereas volunteering is often thought of as helping 'others', voluntary activity of tangata whenua is more often about working within a group for the mutual benefit of group members. For many tangata whenua the motivation for such activity flows from passion and commitment towards their whānau, hapū and iwi. This in turn is linked to a desire to enhance their community's sense of cultural identity and overall wellbeing.
9. While the term 'fulfilment of cultural obligations' (used by the Volunteers and Volunteering Policy Project) describes conceptually similar activity to 'volunteering', it is not the same as volunteering.
10. Tangata whenua volunteering also occurs within mainstream organisations. Many tangata whenua, therefore, contribute voluntarily to organisations in the community and voluntary sector, as well as within their own culture, through practising *whanaungatanga*.

Need for government recognition

11. Tangata whenua commented that government needs to recognise the role of voluntary activity in maintaining and developing their institutions, cultural activities, and communities.
12. The government also needs to acknowledge, recognise and value the contribution that tangata whenua make to the larger community through their in-kind and intellectual input to specific projects, coordinating consultation between government agencies and the community, and enhancing community events.

Employer recognition of cultural obligations

13. Tangata whenua leaders including kaumatua, kuia, and others, have special status because they have specific skills and knowledge. They are often required to attend special events such as a tangi or blessing, which can be difficult if it interrupts their employment obligations. Tangata whenua would like employers to provide greater recognition of the obligations that some Māori have to their communities, and encourage this participation through such avenues as special leave.

Research

14. There is inadequate information and research available about 'volunteering' for tangata whenua. Tangata whenua would like greater research into activities that fall within the definition of volunteering and the fulfilment of cultural obligations. This should include data that provides explicit recognition of how these activities contribute to the economy.

Costs of volunteering

15. There are expenses involved in volunteering; for example transport and childcare costs. Transport can be particularly costly in rural areas where volunteers may need to travel long distances. Costs associated with attending

hui can be a burden for many volunteers if these costs are not able to be reimbursed.

Consultation

16. Engaging in consultative processes, such as writing submissions, is often something people do in a voluntary capacity. Attending consultative meetings can require time off from paid work. More thorough consultative processes are needed but at the same time people do not want to be constantly consulted. Tangata whenua are concerned that they are not always treated as Treaty partners. It is not sufficient for government to attempt to engage with them primarily as 'community groups'. As tangata whenua they have needs and perspectives that are separate from the community and voluntary sector.

Benefits

17. Some tangata whenua commented that Work and Income (a service of the Ministry of Social Development) does not always sufficiently recognise cultural obligations of tangata whenua. For example, it was reported during consultation that some beneficiaries who are organising or attending hui or tangi have been required to forego these obligations to meet Work and Income requirements to attend training or interviews. It was also reported that when beneficiaries have attempted to delay an appointment with Work and Income, due to a volunteering or cultural commitment, they face considerable delays before a new time is found.
18. Some people commented in submissions that in many cases volunteering can have positive flow-on effects, such as gaining skills. These skills are then transferred to other areas of activity, benefiting the wider whanau.

Recruitment and retention

19. Difficulties recruiting volunteers with specific skills was reported as an issue for both Māori and non-Māori organisations. Management, governance, and administration were most commonly mentioned as the skill areas where there were too few people coming forward. Small tangata whenua communities also have a smaller pool of people who can fill these roles.
20. Some organisations reported that they are finding it harder, generally, to recruit volunteers; others said they had no problem getting involved. There were also varying comments about the extent to which young people were involved in volunteering. One organisation said that they had a large waiting list of young people wanting to volunteer. Another organisation commented:
"Young [Māori] people are increasingly reluctant to offer their help or expertise without fees or wages. [They] are focussed on becoming employed as a validation of their worth."
21. Two barriers to tangata whenua becoming involved in mainstream organisations are lack of appreciation from mainstream organisations of tangata whenua's commitment to whanaungatanga, and the hierarchal structures in many mainstream agencies.

22. One response to this could be the provision of mentors, as some people will not put their names forward to volunteer in case it is seen as being boastful as opposed to being an expression of manaakitanga.

Employment and unemployment

23. The impact of the labour market and employment conditions was raised as an issue that relates closely to volunteering. Some tangata whenua have several part-time (often temporary or casual) jobs to make up an adequate income, rather than one permanent full-time position. This can hinder them from performing their duty or mahi aroha to the whānau, hapū and iwi. This can impact on the mana of tangata whenua. One comment was

“the issue of retaining, maintaining and achieving mana is critical to Māori, it is what they strive for, it is central to their personal wellbeing and the basis from which they achieve”.

Health and safety, liability and insurance

24. Some organisations and volunteers are unsure about how health and safety legislation affects them, what liabilities they may face, and/or what insurance they may require.
25. Insurance can be a huge cost for Māori, iwi and hapū who have responsibility for a marae or local gathering place. Legal risk and/or indemnity insurance costs are also a disincentive for volunteers to participate at a governance level in voluntary organisations. Better information about insurance may help to address this problem.

ACC

26. There is some confusion amongst volunteers about whether they are eligible for ACC if they are injured. ACC has updated a leaflet on ACC and volunteers.

Tax

27. Sometimes people on committees are paid ‘honoraria’, i.e. a payment in recognition of their contribution. Some honoraria are very large (i.e. the work is paid, and not voluntary), while others are small ‘token’ payments (i.e. enough to meet some of the expenses involved in filling that role). Honoraria are taxable, and where they amount to someone’s only self-employed income, can require time and effort to fill in a tax return.
28. Another tax issue for volunteers is that if they receive a koha, it is not clear whether this should always be declared, and if so, what it should be declared as. Inland Revenue has a booklet on koha that clarifies this: [Payments and Gifts in the Māori Community](#) (pdf 130k)

‘Employment’ problems

29. There is no clear process for ‘sacking’ and disciplining volunteers, or for volunteers to access mediation and support when problems arise in the workplace. Some organisations have established good practice guidelines for

managing volunteers, which outline good processes for dealing with these kinds of problems.

Information provision

30. Education campaigns need to reach across tangata whenua communities, including Māori sports clubs and marae. Māori radio could be utilised, and material should be available in te reo Māori.

Conclusion

Key issues raised by tangata whenua in consultation for the Volunteers and Volunteering Policy Project were:

- Volunteering is not a cultural concept of tangata whenua. There is no direct equivalent word for 'volunteering' in te reo Māori. The term 'fulfilment of cultural obligations' (used by the project) describes similar unpaid and voluntary activity of tangata whenua, but it is not the same as volunteering.
- Government needs to recognise the role of voluntary activity in maintaining and developing the institutions, cultural activities, and communities of tangata whenua.
- Greater recognition is required of the costs associated with volunteering such as transport and childcare costs, which can become a significant barrier to volunteering. Transport costs are particularly significant in rural areas.
- Government needs to acknowledge, recognise and value the in-kind and intellectual contribution that tangata whenua make to the community through having input to specific projects, coordinating consultation between government agencies and the community, and enhancing community events.
- Employers could do more to recognise the special status of kaumatua, kuia and other tangata whenua, through such avenues as special leave.
- There needs to be greater research into tangata whenua volunteering and fulfilment of cultural obligations.
- There are information gaps relating to health and safety legislation, ACC, liability and insurance that need to be addressed. Information should be accessible, widely distributed, and available in te reo Māori.