

<Insert your organisation name> feedback on the draft National Volunteering Strategy

We welcome the government's commitment to a new strategy on volunteering and the opportunity to give feedback on same.

We will seek to ensure that regardless of the outcome of the upcoming election this National Volunteering Strategy will be supported and adequate resources for its implementation put in place.

Strategic Objective 1

To increase the participation and diversity in volunteering including embracing new trends and innovation

This objective needs to do more to address the barriers to volunteering in order to increase the participation and diversity in volunteering in Ireland. Such barriers include:

- Garda Vetting
- Cost of Insurance
- Rurality (infrastructure/transport/isolation)
- Expenses and Costs (eg. transport, parking, childcare)
- Social barriers (language, literacy, urban isolation)
- Budgets allocated by Departments rarely recognise the costs associated with involving volunteers, from marketing a volunteer programme, managing volunteers to recognising volunteers within your organisation.

Strategic Objective 2

To facilitate, develop and support the Volunteering Environment so that it contributes to vibrant and sustainable communities

We welcome the development of a code of conduct for both volunteers and volunteer involving organisations however this must be voluntary. Such codes must be simple and aligned to existing codes such as the Charities Regulators Governance Code. But importantly, they must not add to the considerable regulatory and legislative burdens being experienced by organisations like ours.

We also welcome that actions under this objective identify and address the need for resourcing to enhance the capacity of volunteer involving organisations and the volunteering environment as a whole, such as the provision of a bursary fund , investing in capacity building of VIOs to manage their volunteers and investment in the national volunteering database (I-VOL)

Strategic Objective 3

To recognise, celebrate and communicate the value and impact of volunteers and volunteering in all its forms

We welcome a national communications strategy which values and celebrates the impact of volunteering. This needs to be resourced at both local and national level.

We would like to see recognition of volunteering at local level through innovative approaches to thank and recognise that all contributions are equally valued rather than formal award ceremonies. For example, ensuring that all VIOs have sufficient budget to hold volunteer recognition events or rolling out of local volunteer rewards scheme offering volunteers "thank you" gifts such as a free coffee in a local coffee shop or cheaper/occasional free access to local services (cinema, swimming pool, etc)

Strategic Objective 4

To promote ethical and skills-based overseas volunteering to deliver results for beneficiaries to enhance Global Citizenship in Ireland

We welcome that this strategy has an international component. We would like to see action(s) relating to the harnessing of the experience and expertise of those who have returned from volunteering abroad at local level.

Strategic Objective 5

To improve policy coherence on Volunteering across Government both nationally and locally

We greatly welcome any action which would improve policy coherence in relation to volunteering as this is a significant issue which we encounter on a daily basis. As an example, in relation to Garda Vetting, we are receiving mixed messages from a variety of government Departments and agencies. We recognise that regulatory compliance is good for the sector but must emphasise that ongoing, hands on support at local level is essential to achieve and maintain compliance. We appreciate that Section 2 actions work towards this however the Volunteer Centres network has a proven track record in taking this to the next level including pop-up volunteer centres and outreach clinics.

We further welcome the importance of volunteering in delivering results for beneficiaries and in fostering Global Citizenship is recognised in this strategy. We would like to see a mapping of actions within the strategy and at local level against the UN Specific Development Goals (SDGs).

<insert name(s) of organisation representatives, if you wish>