



Volunteer Ireland **Pre-Budget Submission 2020**



volunteer ireland
obair dheonach éireann

Funding

Current €3,143,800



€2,692,000 to support a network of **21 local county-based Volunteer Centres**



€100,000 to support **8 Volunteering Information Services**



€351,800 to support the national volunteer development organisation **Volunteer Ireland**

Proposed €4,665,236



€2,845,308 to ensure adequate minimum funding for each of the **21 local county-based Volunteer Centres**



€968,128 for creation of **8 new Volunteer Centres**



€451,800 for increased support to Volunteer Ireland for the **national volunteering database I-VOL**



€400,000 for creation of a new fund to support **volunteer programmes within organisations**

Summary of requested budget allocation for volunteering

Volunteer Ireland requests a total increase of €1,521,436 (from €3,143,800 to €4,665,236) to the volunteer infrastructure and the voluntary sector to support volunteering.

This requested allocation is calculated as follows:

- Increased support to ensure adequate minimum funding for each of the 21 local county-based Volunteer Centres, at an **additional cost** of €153,308 (from €2,692,000 to €2,845,308).
- Complete the creation of eight new Volunteer Centres in counties that currently have only a Volunteering Information Service, at an **additional cost** of €868,128 (from €100,000 to €968,128).
- Increased support to Volunteer Ireland to allow for the development of the national volunteering database, I-VOL, at an **additional cost** of €100,000 (from €351,800 to €451,800).
- Creation of a new grant fund to support volunteer involving organisations, at an **additional cost** of €400,000.

Volunteer Ireland is available to discuss this submission and to provide any additional information or research required to support the rationale for greater support for volunteers in Ireland.

Introduction

Volunteer Ireland welcomes the opportunity to outline measures that we believe should be reflected in Budget 2020.

Volunteering has long been at the core of Irish society. From our sports clubs and schools to hospice care, volunteering is the lifeblood of communities and services throughout the country. Yet, as a sector we faces huge challenges, with many organisations that involve volunteers operating on a knife's edge.

It is vital that the current level of funding to the volunteering infrastructure is sustainable and pitched at a level to allow volunteering to continue to deliver for organisations and individuals across Ireland. Budget 2020 also represents a key opportunity for the Government to support volunteers and volunteering by increasing key allocations in order to bring the sector's funding to a sustainable level.

About Volunteer Ireland

Volunteer Ireland is the national volunteer development organisation. We are the voice of volunteering and the national support organisation for Volunteer Centres and Volunteering Information Services in Ireland. We believe volunteering has the power to transform our world for the better, and that through it people can fulfil their potential while building healthier and more resilient communities. We work collegially and collaboratively to maximise the reach and impact of volunteering in Ireland, and encourage good practice in volunteering across all sectors.

Volunteering in Ireland

Volunteering is at the heart of every community across Ireland and affects every member of the population either directly or indirectly. It provides a wealth of benefits to the organisations that involve volunteers, the volunteers themselves and the wider community. Volunteering is a proven method of tackling loneliness and isolation, improving mental health, and building healthier and more resilient communities in rural and urban areas.¹ According to the most recent figures from the CSO, 28.4% of adults in Ireland volunteer.² That is over 1 million people nationwide. In terms of the proportion of the population that volunteers, Ireland is number one in Europe and 9th in the world. However, the future of volunteering in Ireland is facing a number of challenges:

- A high percentage of volunteering is undertaken by a very small percentage of individuals;
- Organisations that involve volunteers are struggling to keep up with the changing demand from younger volunteers for more flexible, short-term and skilled volunteering roles; and
- The cohort of volunteers is ageing with 40% of volunteers now over 55.

The fact is Ireland runs on the energy of volunteers. Everything from our tidy towns groups to our hospitals and schools depends on volunteers. These vital services simply would not function without them. This is why the Government must prioritise volunteering in Budget 2020 and take this opportunity to invest in volunteering.

¹ https://www.volunteer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Volunteer_Ireland-Report_FINAL.pdf

² <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-vwb/qnhsvolunteeringandwellbeingq32013/>

Current funding

The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) currently support volunteering through a budget of €3,143,800, broken down as follows:

- €2,692,000 to support a network of 21 local county-based Volunteer Centres.
- €100,000 to support eight Volunteering Information Services in eight counties that do not have a Volunteer Centre.
- €351,800 to support the national volunteer development organisation Volunteer Ireland.

This funding is very important to support volunteering and is gratefully acknowledged by Volunteer Ireland.

Budget 2020 priorities

Every county should have access to a Volunteer Centre

We welcome the ongoing development of a National Volunteering Strategy by the Department for Rural and Community Development. However, the Government must put in place the conditions necessary for its successful implementation. The network of Volunteer Centres (VCs) and Volunteering Information Services (VISs) throughout the country is a critical resource in this regard, and in developing volunteering in Ireland more generally.

The volunteering infrastructure supports over 8,500 volunteer involving organisations, by helping them to recruit thousands of volunteers, providing a Garda vetting service and providing training and support on volunteer management. However, the volunteer infrastructure is under severe financial pressure and many Centres find themselves struggling to meet the demand for their services.

In 2016 the DRCD published the Dermot McLaughlin report *Developing Funding Criteria for Volunteer Centres in Ireland*, which identified €121,016 as the minimum funding necessary for each centre to deliver the current expectations on them. Unfortunately, twelve volunteer centres³ are still in receipt of funding far below this figure. In addition, there are eight counties⁴ with no Volunteer Centre at all, operating only with the support of a very small Volunteering Information Service funded at about €12,000 per year. These situations have resulted in a postcode lottery for potential volunteers.

We endeavour to ensure a consistent service throughout the country, but the level of funding available to many VCs simply is not enough to allow them to continue to function at their current level.

This is compounded by the fact funding to upgrade VISs into VCs has yet to be issued, despite the Department's commitment to provide up to €1.2 million to do so from the Dormant Accounts Fund.⁵ We appreciate the Department's commitment to this project, and have every faith that this process will begin in the near future. The establishment of a VC in every county is key to ensuring it is as easy to volunteer in Offaly or Cavan, as it is in Dublin. However, this goal will only be sustainable if ongoing funding is put in place to allow the former Volunteering Information Services to continue to deliver the full services offered by Volunteer Centres once their transition is completed. To unlock the network's full potential, and ensure equal access to the volunteer infrastructure, the core funding provided to the VCs must be increased to reflect the expansion of the network.

3 Carlow Volunteer Centre; Clare Volunteer Centre; Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Volunteer Centre; Fingal Volunteer Centre; Kerry Volunteer Centre; Longford Volunteer Centre; Louth Volunteer Centre; Mayo Volunteer Centre; Meath Volunteer Centre; Monaghan Volunteer Centre; Sligo Volunteer Centre; and Westmeath Volunteer Centre.

4 Cavan; Kilkenny; Leitrim; Laois; Offaly; Roscommon; Waterford; and Wexford.

5 https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debateRecord/select_committee_on_rural_and_community_development/2019-04-03/debate/mul@/main.pdf

Recommendation 1:

Adequately fund existing Volunteer Centres

Increase the core funding allocated to existing VCs from €2,692,000 to €2,845,308 to bring all existing centres up to the minimum amount necessary to continue to function, as identified by the McLaughlin report.

Estimated Additional Cost: €153,308⁶

Recommendation 2:

Upgrade all VISs to VCs and mainstream funding

Once the previously allocated Dormant Accounts Funding is released and all VISs are upgraded to full VC status, it will be necessary for an increased allocation of €968,128 to be included in future core allocations made to VCs. This will ensure the eight new Volunteer Centres are in a position to continue to operate at the minimum level identified by the McLaughlin report into the future.

Estimated Additional Cost: €868,128⁷

⁶ Appendix 1

⁷ The additional expenditure cost is reduced by €100,000 as the separate funding to VISs will no longer be required

Budget 2020 priorities

Develop the national volunteering database

The national volunteering database, I-VOL, is a critical tool in the current volunteering model. Managed by Volunteer Ireland and the network of county-based Volunteer Centres, I-VOL is an online database that allows everyone in Ireland to search for volunteer opportunities and organisations to post volunteering roles. The database currently has 80,000 people registered on it, with roughly 15,000 new people joining each year.

Given the risks posed by the changing demographics of volunteering, it has never been more important to continue to develop innovative recruitment methods such as I-VOL. For example, the database reaches a younger cohort of volunteers, which is a critical audience to engage. Only 38.5% of volunteers nationally are under 35, yet about 65% of applicants through the database are from people 35 and under. I-VOL is vital to the continued development of volunteering. It also provides an unprecedented level of data, which we have yet to fully exploit due to a shortage of resources.

We are very grateful for recent capital investment to develop and improve the national volunteering database. However, this funding reflects one-off development work. It needs to be complemented by annual resources to support adequate administration, oversight, data analysis and training around the technology. For example, with regard to administration, most organisations that operate a Salesforce system such as I-VOL with more than 50 users have a full-time Super Administrator. I-VOL has over 90 users, and only the equivalent of a 2/5 FTE (full time equivalent) Super Administrator. This is wholly inadequate, and impacts how we are able to make the most of I-VOL to maximise volunteering. With a full time administrator we could significantly improve both the quality of the service I-VOL provides the public, and the vital data we collect from it.

Recommendation 3:

Allow I-VOL to reach its full potential

To address the challenges facing the voluntary sector, ongoing investment and technological development is vital. I-VOL is a powerful resource in this regard but requires ongoing, sustainable investment to allow the database to reach its full potential. An allocation of €100,000 would provide for the recruitment of a super administrator, additional data storage, ongoing training for licence users to improve the public's experience, and further data protection and compliance assessments.

Estimated Additional Cost: €100,000

Budget 2020 priorities

Invest in small volunteer involving organisations

Throughout the country, small community groups and volunteer involving organisations (VIOs) are struggling to meet the cost of insurance, compliance and other regulatory requirements. As a result, their ability to adequately support, train and recognise volunteers is severely limited. In fact, a significant barrier to volunteering in Ireland comes from organisations' ability to recruit and support volunteers, not the willingness of people to volunteer. The availability of a small grant would have a significant impact on these organisations, and the services they provide that are so vital to communities throughout the country.

It would allow small VIOs to train volunteers, organise transportation, pay expenses and recognise their volunteers' contributions. In turn, this would facilitate community revitalisation, address rural isolation⁸, and improve the quality of volunteering opportunities throughout the country.

⁸ <https://www.volunteer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Rural-Volunteerism-Report.pdf>

Recommendation 4:

Establish a small VIO bursary grant

According to I-VOL data, almost 50% of the VIOs registered last year operate with less than five staff members, with the majority of these being exclusively volunteer run organisations. Making a small grant of up to €500 per organisation available would deliver significant returns in terms of increased participation, particularly in rural areas where volunteers frequently report transport costs as a barrier to greater involvement.

Estimated Cost (including administration): €400,000

Appendix 1⁹

Centre	2018 Allocation	Level of Underfunding	Proposed Allocation
Carlow Volunteer Centre	€110,600	€10,416	€121,016
Clare Volunteer Centre	€103,000	€18,016	€121,016
Cork Volunteer Centre	€123,800	€0	€123,800
Donegal Volunteer Centre	€129,800	€0	€129,800
Dublin City Volunteer Centre	€282,400	€0	€282,400
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Volunteer Centre	€103,000	€18,016	€121,016
Fingal Volunteer Centre	€114,700	€6,316	€121,016
Galway Volunteer Centre	€133,200	€0	€133,200
Kerry Volunteer Centre	€118,800	€2,216	€121,016
Kildare Volunteer Centre	€121,000	€16	€121,016
Limerick Volunteer Centre	€146,600	€0	€146,600
Longford Volunteer Centre	€95,000	€26,016	€121,016
Louth Volunteer Centre	€114,100	€6,916	€121,016
Mayo Volunteer Centre	€112,500	€8,516	€121,016
Meath Volunteer Centre	€110,600	€10,416	€121,016
Monaghan Volunteer Centre	€95,000	€26,016	€121,016
Sligo Volunteer Centre	€106,400	€14,616	€121,016
South Dublin Volunteer Centre	€171,100	€0	€171,100
Tipperary Volunteer Centre	€156,400	€0	€156,400
Westmeath Volunteer Centre	€115,200	€5,816	€121,016
Wicklow Volunteer Centre	€128,800	€0	€128,800
Overall Total:	€2,692,000	€153,308	€2,845,308

⁹ Source: PQ [54291/18], Tuesday, 15 January 2019

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