

Volunteer Ireland Pre-Budget Submission 2026

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Summary of requested budget allocation for volunteering

Volunteering is a cornerstone of Irish society, contributing significantly to public wellbeing, community cohesion, and service delivery across key sectors such as health, youth, homelessness, disability, and sport. Volunteering strengthens communities by building resilience, promoting integration and social inclusion, and contributing to a sustainable future for all. Volunteering contributes an estimated €2.5 billion annually to the Irish economy.¹ Volunteering is not just a "nice to have" – it is a necessity for Ireland. Yet, despite its immense economic and social value, volunteering is taken for granted and remains underfunded.

The World Giving Index measures volunteering annually in every country using the same methodology and question year on year. According to the World Giving Index, volunteering in Ireland was at 35% in 2009, peaked at 41% in 2013 and 2014, and then decreased to 29% in 2023.² Organisations report an increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers. If we are to reverse this downward trend, Government needs to invest in volunteering. An investment of €3,438,454 is required to ensure that volunteering continues to thrive in Ireland. The return on this investment in terms of savings to the State and the value of volunteering to our society is enormous.

1. Indecon (2018). Assessment of the Economic Value of Volunteering in Ireland

^{2.} https://www.cafonline.org/insights/research/world-giving-index





The requested investment is in addition to core funding currently provided to Volunteer Ireland and Volunteer Centres, and is calculated as follows:

Ensure the sustainable delivery of the Government's current National Volunteering Strategy (NVS) and adequate support for the Volunteer Centres, at a cost of €100,000.

Provide funding to deliver recommendations from the NVS regarding training for volunteer managers ($\leq 265,442$), improve quality in volunteer programmes through the Volunteer Friendly quality mark ($\leq 50,000$) and celebrate volunteers through the Volunteer Ireland Awards ($\leq 15,000$).

Continue to fund the Community Volunteers programme on a permanent basis at a cost of €591,344.

Continue to support the national volunteering database I–VOL by funding Salesforce licenses at a cost of €49,778 and the continued support and maintenance of I–VOL at €66,890.

Fund a full-time Volunteer Network Support Officer to support the growing volunteering infrastructure at a cost of \in 50,000, and maintain the \in 1 million funding provided to Volunteer Centres to support International Protection Applicants and displaced people from Ukraine.

Create a fund to support volunteer involving organisations to recruit and retain volunteers at a cost of €1,000,000.

Allocate a budget for Ireland to celebrate International Volunteer Year 2026 at a cost of €250,000.

Introduction

Volunteer Ireland welcomes the opportunity to outline measures that we believe should be reflected in Budget 2026. Volunteering has long been at the core of Irish society. It ensures the delivery of vital services that otherwise would not be delivered or be delivered at great cost to the State. In research carried out by Volunteer Ireland, the public identified "not enough support for people in society who need our help" as the number one issue of concern.³ In many cases, volunteers and the organisations that engage them are at the core of providing help to the most vulnerable members of society. We saw that throughout the pandemic, in our response to the war in Ukraine and more recently in response to Storm Éowyn.

As we experience more frequent emergencies and tackle a cost-of-living crisis, volunteering continues to play a critical role in our society. Beyond fiscal savings to the state, volunteering creates social capital that helps our communities survive in times of crisis and thrive in better times. From sports clubs to cleanup groups and support lines, volunteering is not just 'nice to have', it's critical to the health and survival of our communities. With the current National Volunteering Strategy coming to an end in December of 2025, it is imperative that its successor is fully resourced to ensure continuity and to sustain the progress that has been made under the current strategy. Increased funding to Volunteer Ireland is key to ensuring full implementation of aspects of the new strategy and adequately support Volunteer Centres whose capacity and support needs have also increased. With Ireland taking on the European Presidency in the second half of the year and the United Nations declaring 2026 the International Volunteer Year, Budget 2026 is an opportunity for the Government to further demonstrate its commitment to volunteering for all and upholding Irish values of inclusion, tolerance, solidarity, justice and civic participation.

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^{3.} Irish Charity Engagement Monitor, Winter Report 2022

About Volunteer Ireland

Volunteer Ireland is the national organisation that promotes, supports and advocates for volunteering in Ireland.

Our vision is an Ireland where volunteering thrives.

We work with a range of stakeholders to make volunteering accessible, inclusive and of high quality.

We build capacity in organisations and companies to create meaningful volunteering experiences.

We celebrate volunteering and communicate its impact to Government and the wider public.

We advocate for volunteers so that their value is recognised.

We support the network of Volunteer Centres and work closely with them to ensure volunteering thrives at local and national level.

Volunteering in Ireland

Volunteering is at the heart of every community across Ireland and affects every member of the population either directly or indirectly. Volunteering is a cornerstone of Irish society, contributing significantly to public wellbeing, community cohesion, and service delivery across key sectors such as health, youth, homelessness, disability, and sport. It provides a wealth of benefits to the organisations that involve volunteers, the volunteers themselves and the wider community.

As our country continues to recover from recent global events and faces a cost-of-living crisis, volunteers will continue to play a critical role in our future.

Economic value

Results from Census 2022 show that more than 700,000 people in Ireland regularly volunteer each year.⁴ Volunteering contributes an estimated €2.5 billion annually to the Irish economy, not including the unquantified social capital generated through community resilience, improved wellbeing, and civic engagement.⁵ In addition, volunteering produces cost savings by delivering services in areas such as homelessness, disability and health that otherwise would need to be delivered by the Government. Volunteering has a real impact that contributes to our economy in several ways:



Volunteering plays a key role in preparing the workforce of the future, with 70% of those between 16 and 24 saying they volunteer to develop skills to help their career.⁶ Aside from skills development, volunteering also provides young people with a broader perspective and awareness of society, making them more wellrounded professionals.



Volunteering has a significant economic impact in rural areas. According to Volunteer Ireland's research into rural volunteerism, 83% said that volunteering in their area saved on public spending by relieving pressure on public services, while 74% felt that it increased funding coming into the community.⁷



Volunteering is proven to increase the physical and mental health of volunteers and, by extension, their communities. Our 2024 survey of volunteers showed that 85% of volunteers reported an improvement to their wellbeing as a result of volunteering, and 95% of volunteers experienced an improvement to their mental health as a result of volunteering.⁸ This represents a significant cost saving to an already overstretched HSE.

- 5. Indecon (2018). Assessment of the Economic Value of Volunteering in Ireland.
- 6. Irish Charity Engagement Monitor, Winter Report 2022
- 7. https://www.volunteer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Rural-Volunteerism-Report.pdf
- 8. National Survey of Volunteers 2024, Volunteer Ireland

Social value

Volunteering offers a wealth of benefits to individuals, communities and society. Without volunteering, we would see more division, lower sense of belonging in our communities, and increased isolation.⁹ 'Loneliness and a lack of human connection' was identified as a top concern in recent research commissioned by Volunteer Ireland.¹⁰ We saw evidence of the importance of volunteering for social connection during the pandemic when many volunteers spoke to us of their increased isolation, as for many, volunteering was their only social outlet. Volunteering continues to provide social value in our communities in several ways:



In rural areas, which typically suffer from greater levels of isolation, volunteering has been shown to be a key social connector with volunteers reporting increased access to support networks as a result of their volunteering.¹¹ Delivering on the commitments in the National Volunteering Strategy will be key to addressing challenges unique to rural organisations like access to transport and quality internet.



Volunteering plays a significant role in social cohesion and integration by bringing people together, fostering mutual understanding and bridging the cultural divide. Our 2024 survey of volunteers also showed that 90% of volunteers had an increased sense of being part of or belonging to the community as a result of volunteering, while 83% of respondents reported that volunteering helped them understand different cultures within the community.¹²



Local Volunteer Centres (VCs) play a critical role supporting those with additional support needs to volunteer. People with disabilities, chronic illnesses or poor mental health often need extra support to find a suitable volunteer role and the VC is uniquely placed to support them on their journey. They also act as a social hub in the community providing training, support, advice and vital services like Garda vetting.



The services delivered by volunteers across the country are vital to growing our social capital. From critical services like Meals on Wheels to support lines like the Samaritans, volunteers connect our communities in incalculable ways. Initiatives like befriending services, dementia cafes, knitting groups and community choirs, to name just a few, are all part of our rich social fabric



The Community Volunteers programme, funded by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht and Local Authorities, and delivered by Volunteer Ireland and Volunteer Centres, plays a huge role in supporting social inclusion in our communities. For example, over 60% of Community Volunteers list their nationality as being other than Irish which highlights the critical role volunteering plays in increasing integration, diversity and inclusion in Ireland.

^{9.} https://www.volunteer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Volunteer-Ireland-Report-FINAL.pdf

^{10.} Irish Charity Engagement Monitor, Winter Report 2022

^{11.} https://www.volunteer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Rural-Volunteerism-Report.pdf

^{12.} National Survey of Volunteers 2024, Volunteer Ireland

Imagine the improved health outcomes, the increased sense of belonging, and the reduced social isolation we could achieve if we invest in volunteering.

As volunteering plays such a huge role in our society, it is imperative that we protect it.

Volunteering doesn't happen without investment and support. Many organisations report increasing difficulties in both recruiting and retaining volunteers, and the way people want to volunteer continues to change.

We must address these challenges and invest in volunteering now or we risk a drop in levels of volunteering. Not only would this lead to negative social outcomes in our communities, but it would also lead to gaps in delivery of critical services in many areas. Volunteering is critical to strong, sustainable communities and continued support and investment is needed to ensure volunteering continues to thrive.

Current Funding

The Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht currently supports the volunteering infrastructure through a core budget of €5,740,040 broken down as follows:

- €5,361,855 to support a network of 29 local county-based Volunteer Centres.
- €378,185 to support Volunteer Ireland, the national volunteer development organisation and support body for Volunteer Centres.

This funding is vital to support volunteering and is gratefully acknowledged by Volunteer Ireland and Volunteer Centres.

> Further investment required to adequately support volunteering and ensure that it thrives, is detailed below.



Budget 2026 priorities

The Government relies on volunteers to deliver critical public services in areas like health, disability, homelessness, youth engagement and sport. Volunteers fill crucial gaps in public services. From search and rescue like the RNLI and Civil Defence to community health checks, befriending services, and climate response efforts, volunteers deliver services that would otherwise not be available or would place unsustainable pressure on public sector agencies. Volunteers play a critical role in hospitals, mental health services, patient transport, palliative care, and community-based health programmes. Organisations such as Irish Cancer Society, ALONE, and the Irish Red Cross rely on volunteers to deliver core services. Volunteers are also at the frontline of humanitarian responses to homelessness. Organisations such as Focus Ireland and the Dublin Simon Community depend on trained volunteers for outreach, meal provision, nighttime services, and advocacy. However, these services cannot function without sustained investment in the organisations and infrastructure that support volunteer management, training, safeguarding, and inclusion.

The organisations that deliver these services on behalf of the government, engage and rely on volunteers as part of their delivery model. Organisations like Special Olympics Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association integrate thousands of volunteers into their core service models. Since volunteering is changing and organisations increasingly report difficulty in recruiting the volunteers they need, it is imperative that the government adequately funds volunteering, particularly to organisations that deliver services on their behalf. The true cost of volunteer engagement must be adequately covered in Government funding to organisations that deliver public services and rely on volunteers. Volunteering does not happen without support; it requires significant investment to sustain it.

Develop Volunteer Ireland

Volunteering has played a critical role in Irish society for a long time, has shown its true value in our response to recent crises, and continues to be essential to our social cohesion and service delivery. Volunteering represents a significant return on investment to the State, with volunteers providing many services that would otherwise need to be delivered by the Government. This doesn't even consider additional cost savings around improved health and employability, as well as societal benefits such as decreased isolation and increased citizen engagement.

We appreciate the core funding received on an annual basis from the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht and understand that there is an ongoing review of Volunteer Ireland's funding model. Volunteer Ireland is the national volunteer development organisation and support body for Volunteer Centres, and as such drives developments in volunteering in Ireland. In light of the growing challenges facing volunteering, Volunteer Ireland must be adequately funded to lead and respond to these challenges. We request that Volunteer Ireland's funding review be expedited and that Volunteer Ireland's core funding be increased by about 30% or €100,000, in line with the 30% funding increase granted to Volunteer Centres. This will allow Volunteer Ireland to continue to deliver key elements of the current National Volunteering Strategy sustainably into the future and adequately support Volunteer Centres whose capacity and support needs have increased by about 30% in the last year.

One of the biggest barriers to volunteering doesn't lie with volunteers or society but is related to the limited capacity of the organisations that involve volunteers. Volunteer Ireland continuously works to build capacity in organisations to support, recruit and retain their volunteers. Action 20 in the National Volunteering Strategy is "invest in capacity building in VIOs through the delivery of a suite of training to Volunteer Managers" and Action 30 is "the introduction of a formal gualification in recognition of the skills, knowledge and competencies acquired through volunteering." As a first step in addressing Action 20 in the NVS, Government has already invested significant funds to commission research on the training needs of volunteer managers. That research identified a need for additional training and made several detailed recommendations. We must now deliver these recommendations and ensure that the investment in the research on training needs of volunteer managers does not go to waste. Volunteer Ireland has submitted a proposal with broad stakeholder support, to deliver these recommendations. It will provide volunteer managers with opportunities to increase their knowledge, skills and competencies to implement high quality volunteer management practice, leading to an increase in the quality, quantity and diversity of volunteering in Ireland. The cost of this project is €265,442. and the second second

Between 2021 and 2022, Volunteer Ireland and five Volunteer Centres piloted Volunteer Friendly, which is a user-friendly quality standard to support and recognise groups that excel at engaging and involving volunteers. It is a self-assessment tool for organisations that also provides numerous resources to help them achieve each element of the standard. Through the pilot, Volunteer Ireland and the Volunteer Centres supported 14 volunteer involving organisations to achieve the standard. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. We now aim to roll this out across more Volunteer Centres and volunteer involving organisations, to build capacity in these organisations and support quality experiences for volunteers. In order to move forward on Volunteer Friendly, Volunteer Ireland must take the lead in terms of coordinating the programme, supporting Volunteer Centres and paying associated costs such as licencing and website fees. This cost is estimated at €50.000.

Volunteer Ireland is grateful for the ongoing support provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht for the annual Volunteer Ireland Awards, as part of delivering Action 32 in the National Volunteering Strategy. The Volunteer Ireland Awards are the major annual initiative to celebrate volunteers in Ireland and shine a light on the remarkable achievements of volunteers around the country by honouring them at a national level. We request an increase of €5,000 (from €10,000 to €15,000) to help us continue to deliver the awards amid the increased costs of goods and services.

Recommendation 1: Increase funding to Volunteer Ireland to develop volunteering in Ireland

- Increase core funding allocated to Volunteer Ireland by €100,000 from €378,185 to €478,185 as part of a new funding model, to ensure that we can deliver key elements of the current National Volunteering Strategy sustainably into the future; and adequately support the growing Volunteer Centres.
- Provide additional funding to Volunteer Ireland to continue to support and develop volunteering through the delivery of NVS Actions 20 and 30 (€265,442), Volunteer Friendly (€50,000) and the Volunteer Ireland Awards (€15,000).

Estimated Cost: €430,442

Support to Volunteer Centres

Volunteer Centres provide vital supports to volunteering in our communities across Ireland through the provision of a referral service, maintenance of the national volunteering database I–VOL, delivery of volunteer management training, the processing of Garda vetting and collaboration with other stakeholders like jobs clubs, mental health services and the library service. They also deliver several bespoke projects across a variety of areas, for example, social inclusion for people with disabilities and older people.

As experts in volunteering and the key support to volunteers and volunteer involving organisations in local communities, Volunteer Centres are critical to the delivery of the National Volunteering Strategy. With a new funding model, Volunteer Centres are continuing to grow and increase their capacity to deliver more to support volunteering in our communities. As a result, the support they need, particularly administrative, has increased. To ensure Volunteer Centres can focus on their core work, a dedicated national support is critical. One example of the valuable role that Volunteer Centres play is their work with International Protection Applicants and displaced people from Ukraine. A challenge facing many migrants when they first arrive to Ireland is having little to no understanding of how the Irish landscape works in terms of employment, housing, social benefits, education, etc. Many migrants don't have a network of local contacts or friends that they can ask basic, everyday questions. Volunteering is a unique way for migrants to immerse themselves within Irish communities and get to know people. Migrants also face isolation and loneliness. Through volunteering, migrants can become active members of their new community, meet people and build their own local network.

Volunteer Centres deliver targeted integration projects in their localities such as supporting the delivery of English language classes, befriending programmes and engaging volunteer community drivers to support migrants who are isolated in their accommodation. They also provide extra support to migrants, who may face additional barriers such as language and transport, to find suitable volunteer roles.

Recommendation 2: Fund a full-time Volunteer Network Support Officer to support the growing volunteering infrastructure

Volunteer Ireland supports the network of 29 Volunteer Centres with training, communications, advocacy and general administration. The Volunteer Centre network has grown and plays an important role in delivering elements of the National Volunteering Strategy locally. A full-time Volunteer Network Support Officer is required to provide administrative support for the network to work collectively through various working groups, for example on the future of Volunteer Centres, quality improvement and sharing of best practice.

Estimated Cost: €50,000

Recommendation 3: Continue funding to support International Protection Applicants and displaced Ukrainians

Volunteering plays a huge role in migrant integration in our communities. Volunteering helps combat isolation and loneliness because it allows migrants to meet new people, make friends and learn about their new community. Volunteer Centres play a key role in supporting this by delivering targeted projects and providing additional support to migrants looking to volunteer. Volunteer Centres have been funded at €1,000,000 annually to deliver this critical work, and it is important that it continues.

Estimated Cost: €1,000,000

Fund the Community Volunteers programme

The Community Volunteers programme is a unique way for people to volunteer in distinct one-off instances while also building the quality and community that comes with regular volunteering. It gives people an opportunity to get involved in local events and festivals while also supporting more urgent needs that arise unexpectedly, like we saw with the community response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and recently with Storm Éowyn. The Community Volunteers programme has over 4,000 active and trained volunteers. Having these volunteers in place has greatly increased Ireland's community resilience. Not only are they there ready to act in times of crisis, but they are also involved in many types of community events, festivals, climate awareness and sustainability campaigns. Community Volunteers continue to play an important role in supporting displaced people arriving in local communities. In addition to this, the programme is a powerful integration tool for new arrivals into Ireland, getting people out into their communities, all with a common purpose.

As well as the many benefits volunteers receive from being involved in the programme, the feedback from Local Authorities and volunteer involving organisations is also positive. The Community Volunteers programme has built up a recognisable brand with a reputation for enthusiastic volunteers who are led by good volunteer management. This is demonstrated by requests for Community Volunteers to return, year upon year, to events and festivals. Volunteer Centres have also noticed that their visibility within their county has increased by being a part of the Community Volunteers programme. Where once they were mainly office based, they are now seen out in their communities, and this is having a positive effect on other services that Volunteer Centres provide.

In May 2025, the final review of the pilot phase of the Community Volunteers programme was published with unequivocal feedback from all stakeholders that the programme should continue post pilot phase.

The report made several recommendations including participants' desire to retain Volunteer Ireland as the central coordinator of the programme. It was noted that by doing so, standardisation, support and other important management processes will continue to be upheld nationally.

Also noted was the recommendation to ensure the national roll out of the programme. If the Community Volunteers programme is rolled out nationally and the ten remaining Volunteer Centres come on board, Volunteer Ireland are best placed to provide the support needed and to ensure the programme successfully launches in the remaining Volunteer Centres and across Ireland. We believe that the Community Volunteers programme is crucial to building community resilience to crises as well as meeting local needs as they arise.

Recommendation 4: Continue to fund the Community Volunteers programme on a permanent basis

The Community Volunteers programme was a successful pilot that showed the value of having a trained cohort of local volunteers to be ready in times of urgent need and to support local events and festivals throughout the year. Given the time and investment that has gone into this programme, and its overwhelmingly positive external evaluation, it is important that the Community Volunteers programme is funded on a permanent basis going forward.

Estimated Cost: €591,344

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Secure the future of the national volunteering database

Volunteer Ireland, along with the network of Volunteer Centres, manage the national volunteering database I–VOL. This Salesforce powered platform allows organisations to advertise volunteer roles and allows volunteers to search for roles that suit their interests and skills. It provides a wealth of data into volunteering such as demographic information, volunteer hours and motivations. As a bespoke solution, I–VOL has undergone several developments in recent years including a new user– friendly website and the integration of the Community Volunteers platform.

The National Volunteering Strategy has identified 'more cohesion in the various online volunteering services' as a core action under the goal of increased participation and diversity in volunteering. As such, we have already worked with our colleagues in Comhlámh so that international volunteer roles are now available on I-VOL. We appreciate that there is a planned review of the national volunteering database and that this may lead to the development of a new database on a different platform. However, given that this review has not yet commenced, it is critical that I-VOL is supported in the meantime. Even if a decision was made to move to a new database, there would be a lengthy transition period so it's vital that support for I-VOL is maintained until the end of 2026.

Between 2018 and 2024, Salesforce granted Volunteer Ireland 90 free licenses meaning we could operate the database at minimal cost. However, these free licenses are no longer available and with Volunteer Ireland and Volunteer Centres already operating within extremely limited resources, we need continued support from Government to fund them. With the opening of eight new Volunteer Centres in recent years and the development of the Community Volunteers programme, 90 licenses are no longer sufficient.

It is vital that these licenses continue to be funded so that the national volunteering database not just survives but thrives, enabling the volunteering infrastructure to continue to deliver key elements of the National Volunteering Strategy, into the future.



- Fund Salesforce licenses for the volunteering infrastructure to continue to operate Ireland's national volunteering database, I–VOL, at a cost of €49,778.
- Fund the support and maintenance of I-VOL at a cost of €66,890.

Estimated Cost: €116,668

Adequately fund volunteer involving organisations to support their volunteer programmes

Volunteering contributes significantly to public wellbeing, community cohesion, and service delivery. The Government relies heavily on volunteers to deliver important public services in areas like health, youth, disability, and homelessness to name a few. These are vital services that otherwise would not be delivered or be delivered at great cost to the State.

However, despite the critical role that volunteers play in society, they are often taken for granted. Ireland has always had a strong culture of volunteering but it's not a given, and needs to be supported if we want volunteering, and the services that rely on it, to thrive. It takes significant time and resources to recruit, retain and support volunteers. In our 2024 national survey of volunteer involving organisations, 83% of respondents said they could not operate without volunteers. However, the cost implications of engaging these critical volunteers are rarely considered when Government funding is allocated to organisations to deliver services in local communities. When providing funding to nonprofit organisations, Government must take into account the cost of engaging volunteers in service delivery and provide adequate funding.

Recommendation 6: Funding to support VIO's volunteer programmes

We recommend an initial fund of €1 million to support volunteer involving organisations to engage volunteers and continue to deliver vital services. Organisations can then access this fund to help them meet the challenges of recruiting and retaining volunteers, for example, by delivering recruitment campaigns, providing training, paying volunteer expenses and recognising their volunteers.

Estimated Cost: €1,000,000

Support the International Volunteer Year 2026

The United Nations has designated 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development (IVY2026) – marking 25 years since the original International Year of Volunteers in 2001. This global observance is a critical opportunity for Ireland to reaffirm its commitment to volunteering as a driver of social inclusion, climate action, health equity, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As a signatory to the SDGs and a country with a deep-rooted culture of community volunteering, Ireland is well-placed to lead by example. Active engagement in IVY2026 will raise public awareness, showcase innovation, and help mobilise a new generation of volunteers committed to sustainability, climate resilience, and social justice.

2026 will also mark the beginning of Ireland's second National Volunteering Strategy, something that is the envy of many countries across Europe and further afield. This, combined with Ireland's presidency of the EU in the second half of 2026, make it a perfect time to invest in and showcase volunteering. The Government should allocate funding in Budget 2026 to support Ireland's leadership role in IVY2026, with Volunteer Ireland as the national coordinator of activities. This investment will:

- Promote Ireland's commitment to the SDGs.
- Amplify the role of volunteering in climate action and resilience.
- Inspire national pride and public engagement.
- Generate lasting infrastructure for sustainable volunteering.

IVY2026 aligns with a number of national and global priorities including:

- The Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goals 3 (Good Health), 10 (Reduced Inequality), 13 (Climate Action), and 17 (Partnerships).
- Ireland's Climate Action Plan.
- Securing Ireland's Future Programme for Government (2025).

Recommendation 7: Allocate funding to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support Ireland's leadership role in International Volunteer Year 2026, with Volunteer Ireland as the national coordinator of activities

Ireland is recognised globally as a leader in volunteering. IVY2O26 is a unique opportunity to showcase Ireland's strong volunteering culture and continue to invest in volunteering.

Estimated Cost: €250,000

Conclusion

Volunteers give their time freely—but effective volunteering does not happen without support. Behind every volunteer is a network of training, coordination, safeguarding, and support that must be adequately funded.

The Government has a unique opportunity in Budget 2026 to:

- Recognise the role of volunteering in delivering critical services.
- Sustain community resilience during uncertain times.
- Champion inclusion and civic engagement.
- Future-proof Ireland's social infrastructure.

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



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