



Glossary of Volunteering Terms

Volunteering takes many forms, and understanding the terminology can help you navigate, and make the best of, the opportunities available.

Volunteering is defined as “work done of one's own free will, unpaid, for the common good”, and can take the form of a variety of different types of voluntary service. Whether you're a first-time volunteer looking to give back or someone with years of experience, this guide will help you better understand the different types of voluntary service available in the community.

By learning the language of volunteering, you can better discover how to share your time, skills, and aroha to make a meaningful difference in your community.

Formal Volunteering:

Formal volunteering relates to people giving their time and help to organisations, groups or clubs. As a more traditional form of volunteering, formal volunteering is coordinated directly through an organisation. This can include one-off experiences, such as street appeals or event marshalling, as well as longer-term roles such as teaching English to new migrants, or coaching a sports team.

Informal Volunteering:

Sometimes known as direct volunteering, informal volunteering involves giving time and help directly to other people in one's community, without a coordinating organisation or institution. Examples include shopping for an elderly neighbour, undertaking parent-help through a child's school, or gardening for a sick friend.

Group Volunteering:

Group volunteering is when teams work together in carrying out voluntary projects. This might be a business team, school team, club or special interest group who volunteer together for a day, or half a day, to help a community group achieve a specific outcome. Group volunteering might involve projects such as painting a park fence, weeding and planting in a community garden, or removing graffiti from buildings.

Virtual Volunteering:

Virtual volunteering is the act of volunteering for a cause or organisation using the internet. It is also known as online volunteering, remote volunteering, or e-volunteering. Virtual volunteering may include taking part in or conducting research projects, assisting with social media posting, or editing and transcribing tasks.

Micro-Volunteering:

Micro-volunteering is bite-sized, no commitment actions that benefit a cause. Micro-volunteering usually involves short tasks, that can be undertaken at any time. Examples include signing an online petition, knitting a peggy square, or picking up rubbish on your daily walk.